ILO

Research Report

The Question of:

The labour participation of disabled workers

Introduction

The situation of people with any kind of disabilities was never thought to be easy, and despite the significant measures that were taken in the last decade, there is still much to do. Looking at a disabled person like an "object" of charity and medical treatment is not only discriminative but, alas, was also a way of thinking that proved to be pretty common. However, time has changed, and thus more and more people work on changing attitudes and approaches towards people with any impairment or disability. Several researches have been conducted about the labour participation of disabled workers, including the reasons for why an individual with disability might not want to seek a job, what is the reason behind this person left their job or factors of the differences in labour market participation between disabled and non-disabled people. These are just a few aspects that this research report will examine in order to provide respecting information about the issue, with the aim of making improvement of it.

The Committee

The ILO was founded in 1919, and since then it brings together governments, employers and employees with the aim of creating labour standards, developing policies and conceiving programmes that could help in the promotion of decent work for all men and women. The ILO has 187 member states; 186 of the UN members and the Cook Islands. In 1946 it became the first specialized agency of the UN. The unique tripartite structure gives an equal voice for governments, employers and workers for the debates. The mission of ILO includes the promotion of rights at work, enhancing social protection and working towards decent working opportunities.

Key Terms

impairment: any loss or abnormality of psychological, physiologic, or anatomic structure or function (WHO)

disability: is a term covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions; being more than a health problem but rather a complex phenomenon (WHO)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): a UN convention with the aim of the promotion, protection and provision of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people with disabilities

discrimination on the basis of disability: it means any distinction, exclusion or restriction on the basis of disability which has the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal basis with others, of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. It includes all forms of discrimination, including denial of reasonable accommodation (A/RES/61/106)

cognitive difficulties: an innate impairment; an individual is born with these difficulties

acquired disability: a disability that is not hereditary or innate, but developed during a person's lifetime, e.g. as a result of an illness or working conditions

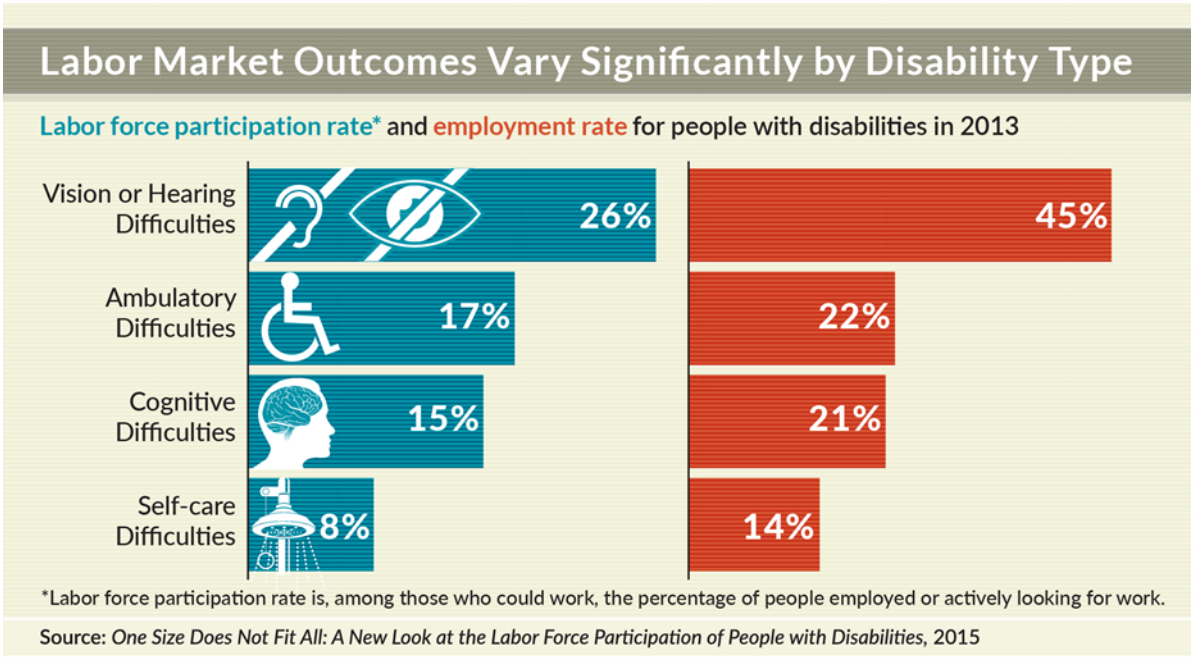
The World Bank: a global partnership between five institutions aiming for sustainable solutions that helps reducing the poverty in countries

labour force survey (LFS): inquiry directed to households, designed to obtain information on the labour market and related issues through a series of personal interviews (Eurostat)

General Overview

Some people may think that disability is just a distant phenomenon that makes a few people something else. However, in reality, about one billion people, or 15% of the world's population experience some kind of disability. People with disabilities usually face more adverse socioeconomic outcomes, such as less accessible education, health and employment possibilities or higher poverty rates. According to the article of the World Bank, poverty and disability walk hand in hand. This statement implies that poverty can induce disabilities through limited education and health care, unsafe working conditions and inadequate access to sanitation. On the other way round, disability may increase the hazard of poverty, through limited working and education opportunities, lower wages and costly living conditions.

By studying the research *Disability statistics -labour market access* published by Eurostat, we can examine many factors that influence the situation of the labour participation of disabled workers. For instance, we can find information about reasons for these people not seeking a job. The most popular answers are the followings: own illness or disability and retirement. Other common answers include family or personal responsibilities, being in education or training and the thought of there is no available work for them. In other cases, it can be a matter of incentives: states support them in such an extent that they are not motivated enough to find a job. That can be understandable, since most of the disabled workers can only fill positions like janitors, cashiers, stock movers; so definitely not the high-paid ones. The willingness to work in the case of disabled people can highly depend on the severity of their disability. The picture below shows how labour market outcomes vary by disability type.



Considering the factors of why workers with disabilities left their last job can prove to be useful as well. Own illness or disability is again a common answer, but besides that many claimed being redundant or dismissed, and having a job of limited duration that ended. Lesa Bradshaw, disability integration specialist, has brought up very interesting topics in one of her talks. She said "people have set very low benchmarks of expectations for people with disabilities". She suggests that people tend to assign which works are suitable for disabled workers. On many occasions the tendency is to find people with disabilities fitting into the already existing structure. However, disability integration is more about changing the structure to suit disabled workers. Flexibility, judgement and recognizing individual cases are key factors. Employers should set their sights on minimizing the barriers in a workplace so that the environment wold not disable people from fulfilling a task.

Author Trond Bliksvær sees a strong connection between disability, labour market participation and the effect of educational level. In his research he focuses on how higher education can improve the chances of disabled people in their attempt to find a job. He thinks that "higher education is the route to reducing inequalities and enhancing societal inclusion for disabled people". Despite working with different data sets and values, scholars seem to be agree on the benefits of higher education (university level) and came to the conclusion that "the effect of higher education (university level) as compared to compulsory education is about twice as high for disabled people compared to non-disabled people".

Apart from education, some other factors were regarded as important in the differences in labour market participation between disabled and non-disabled people. These are health status, gender, age, whether the impairment is congenital or acquired and ethnic background.

Another important topic related to this issue is the flow of information and the data available. More researchers in the area raised their concerns regarding the lack of information about the types of jobs disabled workers are employed in. The statistics of Eurostat emphasizes that many workers with disabilities are not recognised in reported figures and are not recognised as workers with limitations. This hardens the situation of conducting researches with valid values and in addition to that, results are also influenced by the data sets, definitions and statistical methods. Making this procedure more universal may result in a prompter and more efficient way of working.

Last but not least, we have to bear in mind that during working on this issue we are not dealing with numbers, but real, feeling human beings who are just like us. Prejudice and the lack of evaluation can force these people behind the eight ball. Even if we have to change our views and attitudes in some terms, doing our best is the least we can do. It is our common responsibility to help these people on the level of individuals, companies, governments and states as well.

Major Parties Involved

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD): body of independent experts that deal with the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Eurostat: the statistical office of the European Union, based in Luxembourg. It publishes official, harmonised statistics on the European Union and the euro area, offering a comparable, reliable and objective portrayal of Europe's society and economy (Eurostat).

United Nations Sustainable Development Group: this group works with several countries and partners around the world for the 2030 Agenda. This Agenda makes clear steps against the discrimination of people with disabilities.

Human Rights Commission: clarifies the meaning of disability and gives further information about it, plus give a description about how disabled people can make a complaint to the United Nation if laws are violated based on their disability.

The International Disability Alliance (IDA): an alliance that aids the United Nation "for a more inclusive global environment for persons with disabilities and their organisations". Their touchstone is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Timeline of Events

In this section some significant events related to this issue will be outlined. They are not necessarily connected to each other, but rather to the topic itself.

1700s - Disability history dates back to hundreds of years ago, and these are the times when early progress was observed (e.g. institution for blind children and the first military disability law)

1800s - Continued progress and human rights

- 1829: Braille invents the raised point alphabet
- 1849: First "sheltered workshop" for the blind

1900s - Modern advancements and civil rights

- 1935: Signing of the Social Security Act (program of permanent assistance to adults with disabilities)
- 1964: Civil Rights Bill Bypasses Persons with Disabilities
- 1982: UN encourages global equality and participation for the disabled
- 1990: Americans with Disabilities act becomes law

2000s - Paving the way for future progress

- 2004: First disability pride parade in Chicago
- 2006: Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

2000s+: Continued implementation of policy, legislative and social change agendas

Previous attempts to solve the issue

Being an important issue and involving quite a few members of society, there have been previous attempts to solve this issue. The biggest achievements of these for the UN is the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Adopted in 2006 at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, it gained the highest number of signatories in history to a UN Convention on its opening day. By now it has 177 ratifications and 161 signatories. (See the link of the ratifications and signatories at the "Further Reading" section.) The CRPD entered into force in 2008.

As it was mentioned at the "Key Terms" section, this UN convention is present to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities. It takes the attitudes towards these people to a whole new level, where we can ensure that people having some kind of disability are able to fit into society and make their own decisions based on their free consent. There are 50 articles elaborating on topics such as equality and non-discrimination, women with disabilities, children with disabilities, education, health etc.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) is a body of independent experts that deal with the implementation of the Convention. The Committee generally meets twice a year and the meetings are held in Geneva. (For more information about the Committee go to the "Further Reading" section.)

The Future

Noticeably, there are many possible ways by that either individuals, companies or governments can make the present situation better. Spreading the ideas of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities could make a great difference. It could achieve the protection of rights by legal actions in many states. Laws and policies against the discrimination of disabled workers were introduced in many states and this is the example that other states should follow.

Paying more attention to raising awareness in this field (e.g. in forms of lectures, campaigns, festivals etc.) could also make a change. More importantly, the obtaining a methodology of collecting and working with accurate and valid data is undoubtedly essential.

Questions a Resolution Must Answer (Q.A.R.M.A.)

These are questions delegates can use to solve the issue. However, these are not more than points to think about. Delegates are encouraged to think about other solutions and plans themselves.

- What kinds of job should a worker with disability take?
- Should self-employment be supported?
- How could global awareness and co-ordination in the area be raised?
- What types of incentives/subsidies should be provided for these workers?
- How would disabled workers' salary differ from non-disabled workers' salary?
- How could the main reasons for not seeking a job in the case of disabled people be reduced?
- To what extent high education could help workers with disability in retaining a job?
- Should companies that employ workers with disabilities get subsidies from the government? If so, how much and on what basis?
- How could the situation of children with disabilities could be improved?
- What kind of methodology of collecting accurate and complete data on persons with disabilities expedient?

Further Reading

These websites and pages can be useful to read through. There will be information about this issue and possible solutions will be suggested.

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/34420.pdf

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=_en

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/CRPDIndex.aspx

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https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/06/559402-unprecedented-conference-rights-persons-disabilities-gets-under-way-un#.WlNvjf6osSk

https://www.sjdr.se/articles/10.16993/sjdr.3/

https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/CRPDIndex.aspx

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-15&chapter=4&clang=_en

https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/disability

https://treaties.un.org/doc/source/docs/A_RES_61_106-E.pdf

http://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/

https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W3_RjJtd6Eo

http://www.ncld-youth.info/index.php?id=61

https://idpwd.org/pages/disability-timeline