



Nemzetközi konferencián elhangzott idegen nyelvű előadás

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How NGOs Specializing in Adult Education Can Help to Integrate Disabled People by Providing Guidance and Information

(Educating Disabled People, Integrating them into the Workplace and Integrating them into Society / Baranów Sandomierski / Poland 29.05.2007 – 01.06.2007 / Tarnobrzeg Branch of the Polish Society for People with Mental Handicaps and the Polish office of the German Association of People's Universities (dvv international))

Key words

Disability guidance, multiple disabilities, learning difficulties, second chance to learn, autonomous learning, counseling, web-based knowledge dissemination,

Introduction

In Hungary adult education researchers and trainers have established and operate an NGO called **Association for the Development of Adult Education**. At the time of the establishment we set ourselves these aims:

- Development of the theory and practice of adult education;
- Publication of new results of international research about adult education;
- Strengthening contacts and cooperation with institutes of adult education.

As we began to realize the aims we have put into words in our constitution, we became more and more known in our special field, more and more people have heard about our NGO and its work. Soon we discovered, just like other NGOs, that we can not stick firmly to our original, limited, scientific aims, because some people ask for different information and guidance about education. They say, "You are the experts, no doubt you can help us!"



We had to years to study the special situation of David, son of one of our sponsors, who had difficulties in learning. In crisis situations the family turned to us for help and counsel many times. Step by step we had to face up to not only the grave problems of parents who bring up a disabled child, but our professional shortcomings too. We have decided that we shall invite lecturers to our professional conferences who have studied the problems of in learning and education of disabled persons.

So let us examine the experiences of our own NGO in Hungary and see what we have been able to do about the integration of disabled people.

Types of educational guidance for adults

Educational guidance for adults – this term represents a wide variety of activities with the same intention: first to change the personal decisions of adult people about learning and about their strategies of life, and in the second place to help institutions and agencies with educational and retraining programs which try to satisfy the needs of adult learners.

We can classify the different aspects of educational guidance¹ :

Information: We can provide information about educational possibilities and types of support for the adult education without talking to the disabled adult about the advantages and disadvantages of different choices. Of course, most of the published information about the education is made with the object of advertisement, so unbiased information is a rarity.

Recommendation: We can help interested disabled adults to interpret educational information and to make a better choices, but they must know clearly their educational needs as a condition for effective recommendation.

Guidance: We have to help interested disabled adults discover, clarify, understand their educational needs, and help them to satisfy these needs. Some people do not recognize their educational needs, so guidance sometimes demands personal meetings.

¹ Pordány Sarolta: A felnőttek oktatási tanácsadó rendszerei Nagy-Britanniában. In Nagy Júlia (szerk.): *Felnőttképzés, átképzés, vállalkozások*. Bp., 1990. MKM OKK K, 117–120. p.



Assessment: We can help interested disabled adults formally or informally determine their level of personal and educational development so they will be able to decide about their learning possibilities.

Coaching: We can start special training courses at somebody's request. Coaching can be simple guidance such as how to fill an application form, how to negotiate a change in the content or the framework of a course. Coaching can be the establishment of preparatory or skill development courses, where students may get guidance and skill-development in groups.

Mediation: We can support the interested disabled adults by collaborating with special agencies to ensure that the adults get proper information about educational and training possibilities. We can consult directly with educational or training institutions and agencies in the name of those groups or persons who can not easily take the courses or have problems with the pace of the training (for example: apply for special admission or modification of the course).

Feedback: We can collect and compare suitable and applicable information, survey of the needs, and persuade trainers to improve or change according to the survey feedback. Feedback can stimulate change in the method of training, in the schedule, or in the content of training. It can result in development of new training or changes in the courses of other training with the aim of the better adaptation to the needs of disabled adults.

Among the types of guidance listed above, our NGO was engaged in giving information, recommendation and guidance. We have given personal information to the families with disabled children, and our organization tried to give wider publicity of the results of research about the integration of disabled persons.



Recommendation and guidance of our NGO – helping the disabled

Personal recommendation and guidance – the case of David

One of our organization's sponsors adopted a baby who had been sent to an orphanage shortly after his birth. The family had to face gradually the different disabilities of the child, so they have done everything for help, for the "cure" of the child. We have devoted our attention to their efforts and we tried to help them with our advice.

David's parents needed advice about the following subjects:

- 1) social rehabilitation – adaptation
- 2) medical rehabilitation – treatment for asthma/allergy
- 3) mental rehabilitation – dyslexia, dysgraphia
- 4) educational rehabilitation – find and choosing a schools – distinguishing between learning problems or mental problems
- 5) emotional rehabilitation – answering questions about identity, being different , birth parents

What were our experiences in trying to help the parents of David with our voluntary, informal recommendations?

- Families are completely left alone if they have problems with their children who have borderline problems..
- There are not enough educational or teaching resources to help these families with their problems (books, advisers, CDs, videos, case studies with programs).
- Professional institutions and the network of advisers need much development if they really wish to help these families.
- So-called "borderline-cases" need even more professional efforts with the learning difficulties of and for identification of disabilities in these children.



- There is a need to continue and develop the “second chance to learn programs”.²

Information and guidance in our other regular programs

For the sake of the cause of the information of the families with disabled children, we can do the most through our annual professional conferences. Usually approximately 100 experts attend these two-day national conferences, and we regularly invite colleagues from abroad.³ In the last two years we asked more lecturers to report on their research in the field of disabled people and about their integration into society.

In 2005 we organized a conference with this title: *Adult Education and Democracy – Learning Capability, Knowledge Acquisition in Adulthood*

The speakers contributed to the interpretation of the relationship between adult education and democracy with elaboration on the following topics:

- *Mozgáskorlátozottak a felnőttoktatásban és a közművelődésben. Esély az egyenlőségre? Előadó: Mazzag Éva, egyetemi tanársegéd, PTE. (Physically Handicapped in Adult Education and Community Education. Have They a Chance To Be Equal? Eva Mazzag, researcher, University of Pecs)*
- *Fogyatékossgal élő emberek egész életen át tartó tanulása – az OBZOR cseh civil szervezet példája Előadó: Eva Vosáhlova, Liberec, Cseh Köztársaság. (Lifelong Education of the Disabled – Civil Association OBZOR, Liberec, Czech Republic Eva Vosáhlová, representing the NGO OBZOR - Civic Association for Wheelchair Users and Their Friends)*

In 2006 the subject of the conference was: *Adult Education, Adult Learning and Development*. **Gyorgy Vigh**, IT Client Manager of Hungarian Post Office drew attention to technical solutions which help the blind and the partially sighted use the Internet. The title of his presentation was *Obstacle Clearance of Web Applications*. He described all the small, but significant tricks that enable the blind to reach our web-sites.

² Pordány Sarolta: Második esély – iskolai végzettségekkel nem rendelkezők tanulása. In Horváthné Bodnár Mária (szerk.): *Partnerség az élethosszig tartó tanulásért. Az európai modernizációs folyamatok a magyar felnőttoktatásban*. Budapest, 2002, Német Népfőiskolai Szövetség Nemzetközi Együttműködési Intézete, 97–105. p.

³ Konferenciáink megszervezését a Német Népfőiskolai Szövetség Nemzetközi Felnőttképzési Intézete (IIZ/DVV) támogatta.



Now we have just finished the work of clearing obstacles from our own website: www.feflearning.hu – and we hope that soon even visually impaired people will be able to get some information on this website about research in the field of adult education.

Conclusion

The efforts of the *Association for the Development of Adult Education* are to achieve the goals of the UN's "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (13 December 2006)⁴, and all the objectives of the Hungarian *Equal Opportunities Programme*, in keeping with the targets of the European Union's EQUAL programme for the integration and assistance of disabled persons.

According to our association's experiences there is a need for this kind of guidance, so perhaps it can be proved that NGOs can play an important role in recommendation and guidance although they have not concentrated their efforts for the field of disabled people. Families in trouble usually turn to those organizations which they know the best and where they have friends among their leaders or members.

We have recognized that we must satisfy the needs of the families with handicapped members, we have to give them guidance and information. It seems to us, that the this work can be successful if it is:

- personalized
- family-based
- integrated
- continuous
- community-based
- based on the personal sympathy and trust

⁴ "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (13 December 2006)
<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/enable/conventioninfo.htm>



We believe that the NGOs must be prepared for this kind of work. That's why we are going to continue, extend and develop our work with handicapped people. We will collect and disseminate all of those research findings which would be helpful for the work of professional associations and related professional NGOs.

Edited by S. Irene
Budapest, 2007 May
