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Compensating for lost abilities

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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Compensating for lost abilities

Both the contemporary occupational medicine and the preventive medicine have recognised the importance of the problem of keeping under control and rehabilitating disabled workers. Million hours of work time have been irrevocably lost due to the fact that no adequate attention has been given to disabled workers' rehabilitation and their training for independent work and creativity in a field that would be adequate in terms of their abilities and possibilities. Psychology has also recognised that disabled workers often feel like social outcasts, introverted with no social ties due to their early retirement. Disabled workers are often younger persons abounding with life energy and aspirations and because of a handicap (workplace accident or some other personal accident); they have been deprived of everything. That is why they feel frustrated and sometimes they become unbearable and even aggressive.

However, all these objective and subjective circumstances (objective related to the loss of the creativity and subjective related to the reduction of personal happiness and well-being) might be put under control if we pay more attention to this significant problem. Statistics indicate that there are more and more disabled workers' related problems in the modern industry and the contemporary world. It will not be possible to entirely stop this tendency. Therefore, it is necessary to regard this problem from the scientific point of view and find ways to restore disabled workers to life. It is not even necessary to emphasize the psychological importance of such an enterprise, because every man is capable of living his life fully only when he is able to provide for himself and his family and when society recognizes him. This is true for both active workforce and disabled workers. It is even more important for the latter because they more easily surrender to melancholy, retreat to a world of their own and become more alienated leading to the emergence of a number of unwanted deformities.

Therefore, it is pragmatic and human to take care of disabled workers' rehabilitation because of the increase of productivity and its influence on the national income, which in turn increases their human dignity and restores their faith in life. Bearing all this in mind, it may be said that the preconditions for a successful solution of this issue have been met.

Due to the fact that there are 40,000 distinctive professions in the contemporary world today and that these professions require different skills and abilities it may be stated that there is no man who could not be active in terms of economy and production, providing that the organisation is adequate and providing that disabled workers are given jobs in line with their affinities and capabilities. Although the possibilities to include disabled workers actively into the process of production are more or less limited, it is still possible to employ them on the basis of an adequate schedule. For example, blind men may be very successful telephone operators or dispatchers or they might perform a number of useful activities in basket-making industry etc. Hearing impaired persons or deaf persons may be involved in adequate activities as well. Disabled workers whose lower limbs are impaired may be trained to perform a number of professions in the electronics industry, they may be radio mechanics, they may sort out particular products; attach labels on final products on the assembly line etc. Upper limb impaired workers may be used to perform numerous tasks. There is no disability that would prevent a disabled worker from working, except those with severe disabilities who have no limbs and require special help from other persons.

Since that there is a large number of retired persons in our country the rehabilitation, occupational retraining and revitalisation of disabled workers have become a primary focus of attention.

Disabled workers are often young persons who still have energy and physical abilities to be active and therefore they should be trained to perform jobs in line with their affinities and capabilities.

If 70% of disabled workers would be trained to perform some jobs suitable for them, it would result in the release of large financial resources that could be used to increase retired persons' pensions as well as the income of workers with reduced work ability.

However, this is just one side of the whole issue – productive: disabled workers release Retirement and Disability Insurance Associations' significant financial resources. The other aspect is related to our society and national income. If a larger number of disabled workers would be included in an adequate working process, it would result in the increase of the income and further rationalisation of work. The third aspect is related to the growth of their standard of living, that is, the revitalised disabled workers would achieve considerably higher personal income in their new workplace. There are many disabled workers who are married and provide for their families, their standard would have a positive reflection onto their families' standard and especially children.

It is evident that the benefits are huge and expenses for occupational retraining or disabled workers' adequate education useful, especially if compared to gains. Research show that looking after disabled workers doesn't necessarily have to be regarded as a humanitarian action, which in terms of economics

brings only losses and no gains, but as an investment because its output is always bigger than the input.

Losses are considerable if disabled workers are treated as retired persons and if they are transformed into pure consumers whose only need is to maintain the minimal basic existence. However, if disabled workers are treated like men who can be productive, if they are trained to perform adequate jobs, then their status is radically changed and that should be kept in mind.

We have analysed the economic aspect of disablement and concluded that investing into rehabilitation and occupational retraining is beneficial and profitable. Anthropological analysis indicates that a person capable of providing for his family feels more valuable than the one who receives charity without working.

Man is the only living being on this planet who doesn't feel satisfied when his needs are met. All animals are happy as soon as they satisfy their hunger or somehow secure their existence; on the other hand, man starts to develop his creativity when his existential needs have been met. Therefore, to prevent somebody from being productive and creative by the application of a regulation is the same as to condemn them to lead a dog's life.

Disabled workers' rehabilitation and occupational retraining is not just an economic issue but also anthropological, ethical and political issue. Pjotr Kapica, a famous Russian physicist, stated that the consumer society deprived people of work and creativity and that its boredom might be more dangerous than any atomic bomb, because while the atomic bomb forcefully bended people from the outside, boredom (the old mother of all vices) idleness and passivity destroyed man from the inside. A man who doesn't work and create is automatically alienated and completely rotten. Many physiologists didn't point out in vain that a man could be given everything, to make him swim in suet and fat, as the proverb has it, and that would not make him happy or content.

Therefore, it may be concluded that restoring disabled people to life and work leads to the establishment of a more human and dignified society. If a man is a creative being then the rehabilitation and occupational retraining are not acts of mercy, but society's duty and the right that disabled workers are entitled to. If they live only from hand to mouth, it can't be called the real human living. It is life in the back seat and surviving on scraps with disabled workers' full awareness that if provided with rehabilitation and occupational retraining they might lead a more human life.

Medicine has so far done the most concerning disabled workers' rehabilitation and revitalisation. The adaptation of production and machines to the human nature might be a possible way out.

However, technical measures must be added to social and political ones if we want to reduce work disability. Signalling devices, climatic conditions, more

favourable working conditions, etc. are all preventive measures significantly contributing to the reduction of work disability.

Professional diseases significantly influence disability and therefore it is necessary to do everything in one's power to improve working conditions. It is impossible to prevent professional diseases and reduce them to a minimum and be devoted only to their treatment and healing – from the medical point of view it is all in vain, because we focus on consequences and not causes.

It is a well known fact in psychology that the autocratic rule in which the worker is nothing but a part of a machine without autonomy contributes to deformities as well. There is a strong correlation between anarchic work and a number of accidents at work. Investing the worker with more responsibility and motivation contributes to the establishment of a more human atmosphere in the working process, which in turn contributes to the reduction of a number of accidents and disabilities.

It is evident that the process of production is tinged with natural and human factors and that it is impossible to tackle the issue just from one viewpoint. No wonder that the World Health Organisation has changed the earlier definition of health as the absence of disease into health as the state of complete physical, mental and social man's well-being.

In the context of this definition, it may be pointed out that every abnormal functioning of the body could be considered a disease and disability.

Such an extended and more adequate definition requires a different approach to the determination of preventive activities. Prevention can't be perceived only from the narrow medical point of view any more and a number of different approaches must be employed. Prevention will continue to be associated with medicine and include measures for the prevention of health against dangerous factors. Nonetheless, it will be associated with measures of technical protection at work.

Therefore, different professions will be involved in the organisation of preventive measures: general practitioners, social workers, psychologists and qualified employees in charge of the organisation of recreational activities (hobbies, leisure, competitions, rationalisation etc.).

Abstract

Highly organised process of production and perfect technology as well as the existing disabled workers require all the above mentioned as an expression of the necessity to treat work in a more human and rational way, because the worst thing is when producers waste raw materials and tools as well as labour force as the first and only initiator of the whole process of production.

Key words: disabled workers, the organization of work, technological development.

Kompensowanie utraconych zdolności zawodowych

Streszczenie

Wysoce zorganizowany proces produkcji i doskonałe rozwiązania technologiczne, a w tym istniejący niepełnosprawni pracownicy domagają się konieczności racjonalnego potraktowania ich pracy w pełnym, ludzkim wymiarze. Najgorszą rzeczą jest to, że producenci marnują nie tylko surowce i narzędzia, ale również pracę człowieka (w tym niepełnosprawnego) jako pierwszego i najważniejszego komponentu całego procesu produkcji.

Słowa kluczowe: pracownicy niepełnosprawni, organizacja pracy, rozwój technologiczny.