

INCLUSIVE AND SPECIAL EDUCATION: GLOBAL AND LOCAL CHALLENGES OF MODERN WORLD

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CAPABILITY APPROACH AS THEORETICAL BACKGROUND FOR PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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Abstract. The professional vocational education of people with disabilities is an important part of the disability policy. The effectiveness of disability policy corresponds to the expectations and needs of disabled people, which appears to be a major problem in modern society. Social inclusion of people with disabilities is largely associated with vocational education, since education is one of the most effective social resources aimed at overcoming social exclusion and economic dependence. The system of vocational education of people with disabilities requires the development of new theoretical approaches that would meet the values of modern civil society. The purpose of this study is to consider the capability approach as a basis for the vocational education of persons with disabilities. The capability approach continues the methodology of the social model of disability. From the perspective of the social model, the important task is not only to improve the health condition of individuals, but also to overcome structural, institutional barriers which lead to social exclusion of people with special needs. The findings concerning capability approach are the follow. The capabilities approach is developed by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. It could be a useful framework for understanding disability. Sen's concept assumes an interpretation of capabilities in terms of poverty and social inequality, and people with disabilities have always been considered as the most economically vulnerable groups. Following Sen's approach, disability is manifested as a deprivation of capabilities or as a deprivation of functionings, while deprivation is understood as the result of the interaction of individual characteristics (including physical or mental impairment), the

resources available to the individual and the environment (physical, social, economic, political). Disability correlates with a lack of instrumental freedoms, that are interdependent on the one hand, however they influence each other on the other hand; and education is one of manifestations of instrumental freedoms. The idea of connection between freedom, including the freedom of choice, and capabilities is a key point in Nussbaum's concept of the capabilities approach. The approach of M. Nussbaum offers a slightly different look at capabilities, which is more philosophic. Nussbaum argues that the problem of modern development, at both the international and national level, is to allow people to live a full creative life, to provide the grounds for full potential to exist in accordance with dignity equally inherent to all people. She claims that the capabilities approach "takes each person as an end". Nussbaum distinguishes two types of capabilities: internal and combined capabilities. Internal capabilities are dynamic characteristics of a person (intellectual, emotional capacities, health conditions and so forth). Nussbaum defined combined capabilities as internal capabilities together with social, economic, political conditions in which a person can actually function. The key point of Nussbaum's approach is a set of central capabilities that should be supported for each person, regardless of his state of health or other personal characteristics (for example, gender, and age). A very important aspect emphasized by Nussbaum is that capabilities belong to individuals, but not groups. This approach changes the focus of disability policy, because now an individual with a disability is in the center, and not a group. Therefore, disability policy should be aimed at supporting and creating fundamental or central (as they are called by Nussbaum) capabilities for each person with disabilities. The capability to get a professional education is one of the mechanisms for people with disabilities to become independent and live the life they want. The concept of capability itself is presumed to be, on the one hand, individual abilities for education, and on the other hand, the existence of a social infrastructure and social resources for education.

Keywords: capability approach, people with disabilities, professional education

Introduction

The professional education of people with disabilities is an important part of the disability policy. Despite the national and cultural differences in relation to persons with disabilities, the global trend is seen in a social integration and inclusion of people with special needs. According to the official data, there are 650 million disabled people worldwide, constituting roughly 10 percent of the world's population and representing the largest minority

group (World report on disability 2011). The effectiveness of disability policy corresponds to the expectations and needs of disabled people, which appears to be a major problem in modern society. Social inclusion of people with disabilities is largely associated with vocational education, since education is one of the most effective social resources aimed at overcoming social exclusion and economic dependence. Vocational education allows people with disabilities to raise their social status and wellbeing, to be included in the social life of society. The system of vocational education of people with disabilities requires the development of new theoretical approaches that would meet the values of modern civil society.

The purpose of this study is to consider the capability approach as a basis for the vocational education of persons with disabilities.

Methodology

The capability approach continues the methodology of the social model of disability. Since the 1970's, British scientists and activists Oliver, Shakespeare, Campbell, and Watson have argued that disability is the consequence of social institutions and criticized the medical view on disability (Oliver M., 1990, Oliver M., 2009, Campbell J. & Oliver M., 1996, Shakespeare T.N. & Watson N., 1997). The attention to the interaction between the disabled person, environment and society as a whole is a key point of the social model of disability, which considers disability as a social product. (Hughes B. & Paterson K., 1997, Shakespeare T.N. & Watson N., 1997). From the perspective of the social model, the important task is not only to improve the health condition of individuals, but also to overcome structural, institutional barriers which lead to social exclusion of people with special needs. Palmer and Harley noted rightly that 'in focusing on ways in which disability is socially produced, the social model has succeeded in demedicalising and deindividualising disability (Palmer M. & Harley D., 2011). Disability is understood more as a social and political issue rather than as a medical one (Oliver M., 2009, Oliver M., 1990); meaning that disability is not just a condition of a person, but also the result of his or her relations with the social environment. M. Oliver claimed that 'disablement has nothing to do with the body', and 'impairment is in fact nothing less than a description of the physical body' (Hughes B. & Paterson K., 1997: 96).

The social model of disability has received broad support, however, at the same time, there has been a great deal of criticism of this model, mostly related to its practical implementation. Critique, first of all, stems from the fact that this model ignores the specific problems of everyday life which the majority of persons with disabilities face (Bury M.A., 2000: 1075). In other words, the implication of this criticism is that the model does not pay

enough attention to everyday life of disabled people. In addition, criticism is related to the fact that the inequality between disabled people is considered by the proponents of the social model only as a consequence of discrimination and oppression (Reindal S.M., 2009: 157). Prospects for the development of a social model in relation to the education of persons with disabilities could be connected with capability approach.

Results

The capabilities approach is developed by Amartya Sen (Sen A.2009, Sen A., 1999) and Martha Nussbaum (Nussbaum M., 2006, Nussbaum M., 2011). The capability approach could be a useful framework for understanding disability, and this approach could help to define disability at the conceptual level (Mitra S., 2006). Sen did not pay a special attention to disability issues in his work. Sen's interpretation approach is much more economy-related. His concept assumes an interpretation of capabilities in terms of poverty and social inequality, and people with disabilities have always been considered as the most economically vulnerable groups. Following Sen's approach, one may consider disability in two different dimensions: capabilities and functionings. Disability is manifested as a deprivation of capabilities or as a deprivation of functionings, while deprivation is understood as the result of the interaction of individual characteristics (including physical or mental impairment), the resources available to the individual and the environment (physical, social, economic, political). So, one of the key points of Sen's approach is dividing capabilities and functionings. Capabilities mean "practical opportunities" and functionings are something that a person engages in a desired activity. For an understanding of disability and disability policy Sen's concept of instrumental freedoms has paramount importance. Freedom, according to Sen, is not only the main objective, but at the same time, the main means of development. Sen identifies five types of instrumental freedom: political, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees, and protective security (Sen A., 1999). Disability correlates with a lack of instrumental freedoms; and education is one of manifestations of instrumental freedoms that are interdependent on the one hand, however they influence each other on the other hand.

The idea of connection between freedom, including the freedom of choice (what a person is able to do and to be), and capabilities is a key point in Nussbaum's concept of the capabilities approach. The approach of M. Nussbaum offers a slightly different look at capabilities, which is more philosophic. Nussbaum argues that the problem of modern development, at both the international and national level, is to allow people to live a full creative life, to provide the grounds for full potential to exist in accordance with dignity equally inherent to all people. She claims that the capabilities

approach “takes each person as an end” (Nussbaum M., 2011:20). With regard to this thesis, this approach has been criticized in that it does not consider the impact of social groups or social institutions. That is not precisely correct. Nussbaum distinguishes two types of capabilities: internal and combined capabilities. Internal capabilities are dynamic characteristics of a person (intellectual, emotional capacities, health conditions and so forth). Nussbaum defined combined capabilities as internal capabilities together with social, economic, political conditions in which a person can actually function (Nussbaum M., 2011: 21-22). This approach “is focused on choice or freedom, holding that the crucial good which societies should be promoting for their people is a set of opportunities, or substantial freedoms, which people then may or may not exercise in action: the choice is theirs.” (Nussbaum M., 2011: 18). The key point of Nussbaum’s approach is a set of central capabilities that should be supported for each person, regardless of his state of health or other personal characteristics (for example, gender, and age). A very important aspect emphasized by Nussbaum is that capabilities belong to individuals, but not groups (Nussbaum M., 2011: 35). This approach changes the focus of disability policy, because now an individual with a disability is in the center, and not a group. Therefore, disability policy should be aimed at supporting and creating fundamental or central (as they are called by Nussbaum) capabilities for each person with disabilities. One aspect of this problem is social justice required by people with disabilities. An essential aspect of ensuring equality of opportunity is to realize substantive freedoms in practice, not just in the form of political declarations.

The crucial point, which Nussbaum notices, is: the capabilities approach requires ensuring equal respect as a basic principal, and in relation to persons with disabilities, which is often a problem (Nussbaum M., 2011: 151). In this regard, the capabilities approach is closely connected with Nussbaum’s concept of social justice (Nussbaum M., 2006). Creating opportunities or substantial freedoms requires the involvement of authorities, particular concerning educational program for disabled people. Thus, contemporary disability policy, focused on the concept of independent living, should be based on the capabilities approach. The capability to get a professional education is one of the mechanisms for people with disabilities to become independent and live the life they want. The concept of capability itself is presumed to be, on the one hand, individual abilities for education, and on the other hand, the existence of a social infrastructure and social resources for education.

The data of empirical studies demonstrated that one of the main obstacles to the vocational education of people with disabilities in Russia is still the

insufficient development of social infrastructure (accessibility of the environment and universities, etc.) (Borodkina O., 2014, Borodkina O., 2015). In addition, disabled people themselves pointed to financial difficulties and the lack of the opportunity to acquire the necessary technical equipment for training and study, the lack of training programs adapted to the needs of disabled people, the lack of necessary technical equipment of rehabilitation and limited access to special equipment and programs, a sense of psychological discomfort in the group of fellow students, lack of readiness societies accept the problems of the disabled (Borodkina O., 2015).

Conclusion and discussion

In the frame of contemporary disability policy, the capabilities approach should occupy a special place. This approach takes into account not only personal and social characteristics, but it also proclaims the principle of “each person as an end”. The focus on personal freedom makes a vast difference for disabilities policy, because it requires that government create conditions for the development of different capabilities of each disabled person, apart from improving the economic and social situation of disabled people. Creation of capabilities could be a crucial point of social justice and a principal matter of disability policy, and vocational education is an important component.

Russia is a vivid example of changing disability policy due to changing models of disability. The transition from the medical model to the social model of disability has led to improvements in the quality of life of disabled people during the last ten years. The improvement has resulted from special governmental programs, the activism of disabled people and the changes in public opinion in relation to disabled people. The next step is connected with the capabilities approach, which is associated with greater choices and freedoms for individuals with disabilities, including education opportunities. These issues of interaction between capabilities and education within the disability policy are still a matter of discussion that needs further studies on both theoretical and applied levels.

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