Promoting training and employment opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities

International Experience

Report to the ILO

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**Forward**

This document was commissioned as a background paper for the sub-regional conference ‘People with Intellectual Disabilities – Opening Pathways to Training and Employment in the African Region’, to take place in Lusaka, Zambia 9 – 11 March, with funding from the Government of Ireland. The aim of the paper is to inform conference participants, including government, employer and trade union representatives, persons with disabilities, disability advocates and service providers from countries in Africa. The following issues will be addressed:

- an overview of what is meant by ‘intellectual disability’;
- experiences in Africa and internationally, in vocational training and employment for persons with intellectual disability, describing effective training techniques and highlighting examples of good practice and successful outcomes;
- policy frameworks that seem conducive to promoting training and employment opportunities for this group;
- an analysis of lessons learned; and
- tentative suggestions about steps that might be taken and measures that might be adopted by governments, social partners and civil society to promote the economic and social inclusion of people with intellectual disability.

The paper will be revised following the conference to incorporate further information gathered, and published as part of the conference report, as well as forming the basis of a more extensive publication on the topic to be prepared by the author in collaboration with the ILO. It should not be cited without ILO permission.

The paper and the sub-regional conference are part of ILO’s activities to promote equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, in line with the provisions of ILO’s international labour standards and in particular the Convention concerning the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) No. 159 of 1983. They are also intended as a contribution to national preparations for the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that entered into force in 2008.
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Executive Summary

In recent years, people with intellectual disabilities have demonstrated their ability to learn and to be valued employees, provided they receive the appropriate training and work in jobs suited to their skills and interests, with supports as required. These opportunities have significantly improved their quality of life. Yet, in many countries around the world, their employment rates are low. Widespread misconceptions remain of their capacity to learn, to work and to take part in society, leaving many to be excluded from education, training, employment and in society more generally.

In the current context where the vision of greater inclusion for persons with disabilities in general is held out by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), more attention needs to be paid by policy makers, service providers and disability advocates to the topic of employment and training opportunities for persons with intellectual disabilities. Its provisions on work and employment require states to recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work on an equal basis with others. This includes their right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible.

Measures to open employment opportunities for this group of persons with disabilities in line with the CRPD and ILO Convention NO. 159 can build on extensive experience in recent decades in developing new approaches to training and employment. The review of international experience carried out for this paper highlights good practice in supporting people with intellectual disabilities in integrated employment settings. Evidence clearly points to better outcomes for employees with intellectual disabilities, when they work in integrated settings, with appropriate supports.

Pointers for Governments

The international review highlighted important steps that governments should take to promote employment opportunities in integrated settings for persons with intellectual disabilities.

Situation analysis

As a first step, governments should collaborate with relevant stakeholders in undertaking an analysis of the current employment situation of persons with intellectual disabilities in urban and rural areas of the country to identify barriers and factors that facilitate integrated employment.

National employment policy

The situation analysis should form the basis for a national policy on the integrated employment of people with intellectual disabilities. This should be set in the framework of a comprehensive law concerning persons with disabilities.

Implementation strategy

An implementation strategy should be agreed to give effect to this policy, specifying time frame for the achievement of the goals set, human and financial resources to be allocated, and the relevant responsibilities of government and non government agencies (NGOs).
Inter-agency coordination
Governments should mainstream disability into all the work of all departments and support programs. Policies should have mechanisms in place for the coordination of disability services across different jurisdictions so as to produce better outcomes for people with disabilities and their families. Of particular importance is the dissemination and availability of information about disability support services.

Monitoring
A system of data collection should be set up to track progress in the attainment of the goals set, and enable adjustments to the programmes in place, to deal with problems encountered, and to build on successes achieved.

Pointers for Practitioners
For the successful achievement of the goals of supported employment model, the following points are critical.

Value System
It is of critical importance that the value system underpinning it be well established and shared by all involved, - namely, a commitment to the principles of equity and of equality of opportunity for persons with intellectual disabilities; and the understanding that the barriers they face arise from the interplay between the person’s impairment and the environment, rather than their impairment alone.

Sound person-focused planning
Long term success is also influenced by sound initial planning which must start in the transition years at the secondary school level and be ‘person-focused’, involving all stakeholders, including families. Emphasis needs to be placed upon the person’s strengths, interests and the support system that needs to be provided to achieve personal goals. The importance of matching the person’s preferences, wherever possible, to the job placement cannot be stressed too strongly.

School-to-work transition
A well-planned transition process from school is one of the better indicators of successful employment outcomes, especially if work experience is a feature.

Social skills
Job-related social skills are important to successful outcomes in integrated settings.

Positive attitudes and expectations
The cultivation of positive attitudes concerning the ultimate satisfactory employment outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities have to be addressed at the family, employer, co-worker and general community levels. Success stories of positive employment outcomes are one of the best ways to convince potential employers that people with intellectual disabilities can be loyal productive workers, and to dismantle mistaken stereotypes and assumptions about the capacity and roles of people with intellectual disabilities in society.
**Career planning**

Career planning is also important, as many work placements generally start with entry level jobs. There is a danger that the person may never move onto more challenging tasks.

**Specific skills training**

For people with higher cognitive skills, some targeted specific skills training prior to employment placement may be effective. In some circumstances, however, the ‘self-fulfilling’ prophecy that the person is not ‘ready’ for open employment may operate. This is the situation in many sheltered workshops where people are seldom seen as “ready” for alternative options. It is also questionable as to whether a sheltered placement is necessary before graduating to open employment for performance in the sheltered environment is not always a good predictor of performance in the integrated setting.

**Pointers for Employers**

**Workplace culture**

The workplace culture is an important factor in the ultimate success of this model. It is critical for the leadership of the firm or company to be supportive of the employment of people with intellectual disabilities. It is suggested larger organizations may be better suited, because there is a range of jobs that can be performed. Smaller organizations sometime have less flexibility and often require employees who are multi-skilled. Co-worker support needs to be engaged to replace the paid support system in the long term.

**Job Coaches**

Well-skilled support staff, in the form of job coaches, are required to facilitate job matching and support in the initial stages of the job. This requires careful planning to ensure the disabled worker is not over-protected in the initial stages or alternatively, discriminated against. In some cases, the employer might prefer for a regular staff member to teach the skill. This person may subsequently become a ‘mentor’ to the person with the disability. Irrespective of who does the initial training, research consistently shows that ongoing ‘natural’ supports (that is, training by someone within the company) lead to greater sustainability of the job placements than external supports. However, while natural supports are proving to be a promising method of increasing the integration and support of people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace, a combination of job coaching and natural supports may be needed, tailored to individual circumstances and needs.

**Concluding remarks**

In conclusion, the paper recognises that good policies do not always lead to good outcomes, especially in the short term. In redressing the inequalities faced by people with intellectual disabilities in employment, it must be appreciated that historically these people were not considered able to work in competitive employment. The prevailing view was that they needed care and protection throughout their lives. The paradigm shift brings immense challenges, but there is sufficient evidence to support the fact that people with intellectual disabilities can work in real jobs with appropriate supports. What is required is a commitment to find innovative ways to ensure this goal will be achieved.
Introduction

The rights of persons with disabilities have been given new attention with the entry into force of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in May 2008. The provisions of the CRPD signal a dramatic shift in international policy terms. In relation to training and employment, for example, States are called on to provide opportunities for disabled persons alongside non-disabled persons.

People with intellectual disabilities are entitled to benefit from the provisions of the CRPD as well as people with other kinds of disabilities. Yet, they are frequently not well placed to gain from this changed emphasis on inclusion. In many developing countries, in particular, they are often excluded from school and deprived of opportunities to acquire relevant vocational skills at all, presenting further disadvantages when it comes to seeking jobs. Yet, experience in many countries shows that, with the right training, supports in the workplace as required and the right opportunities, they can make valued contributions in the workplace.

Many countries of Africa have already declared their commitment to the goal of inclusion of persons with disabilities through ratification of the CRPD or have signed it with a view to ratification. The time has now come to begin addressing the question of how training and employment opportunities can be effectively opened up for person with intellectual disabilities who number some 10 – 15 million people in Africa. Joint-action is required by governments, employers, trade unions and civil society.

1. People with intellectual disabilities

People with intellectual disabilities would like the opportunity to take part in a range of life experiences, like any other non-disabled person or persons with people with other types of disability. Yet, they face difficulties in doing so, in one of more of the following areas:

- learning
- communication (receptive and expressive language; verbal and non-verbal)
- social skills
- academic skills
- vocational skills
- independent living.

In particular, they may face barriers arising from negative attitudes and mistaken assumptions in the community at large.

Research has shown that intellectual disability is not a unitary, but a multi-faceted phenomenon. People with an intellectual disability often have multiple secondary impairments, including complex physical and mental health problems. They may experience problems of agility, mobility, speech and language; and emotional problems including anger control, anxiety and depression. They are also more likely to experience loneliness through lack of friends.

What is an intellectual disability?

Intellectual disability is characterised by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18.

Shalock et al, 2010
IQ testing

The situation of children with disabilities, and especially those with intellectual disabilities, was a challenge to the concept of universal education in the early twentieth century. Tests were originally devised to assess children who needed special attention, but these were later used to deny groups of children access to schooling, because they were deemed to be ‘ineducable’. They were also used to banish many people considered a ‘danger’ to society to large institutions.

Early psychological tests involved a number of everyday problems of life requiring processes of reasoning. The tasks were arranged in an ascending order of difficulty, with age level assigned to each task, giving rise to the concept of mental age and subsequently, the intelligence quotient (IQ). The reasoning tasks were related very much to the context of the school curriculum.

Over the last 90 years the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) has published manuals which have defined and classified intellectual disability. Earlier editions classified the level of intellectual disability in terms of bands of IQ levels - mild, moderate, severe and profound).

Over time, it was found that rigid stereotypes concerning the behaviours and needs of persons within a specific IQ band fail to predict the needs of an individual. In addition, this approach does not fit comfortably with the social and rights models of disability where environmental factors must be taken into consideration – the understanding of disability that now prevails.

Support needs framework

The definition of intellectual disability based on IQ levels has been gradually replaced by the concept of levels of intensities of support required by a person to function satisfactorily in the community. Rather than addressing a person’s particular cognitive impairment, this approach assumes that it may be more effective to make an accommodation to the person’s environment by the provision of a support that lessens the impact of the impairment. These supports are linked to difficulties faced by a persons with intellectual impairment in the areas mentioned above.

This development represented a significant shift in the way intellectual disability was conceptualized. It was no longer seen as an absolute trait of the individual alone. The definition and the reformulated accompanying classification system of supports acknowledged that the disability resulted from the interaction of the person with his/her environment.

Disability terminology

There have been many changes in the way people with an intellectual disability have been named and categorized in recent decades, with implications for the way in which their identity is defined. Terms formerly used such as idiot, imbecile, feebleminded, mentally subnormal, moron, mentally deficient and retard, are now seen as highly offensive, demeaning and stigmatizing, although at the time of their use they were acceptable terms in the scientific literature.

Nowadays, terms such as person with a learning disability, learning difficulty or developmental difficulty are used as well as person with intellectual disability.
With appropriate training, and supports, in jobs suited to their interests and abilities, people with intellectual disabilities can perform jobs up to high levels of complexity.

Relevance to training and employment programmes

In the planning and delivery of educational and vocational programs for people with an intellectual disabilities, the support needs approach to classification has significant benefits in contrast to the earlier practice of classification based upon IQ levels (i.e. mild, moderate, severe and profound).

First, it calls for a personal and individualised approach to service delivery which meets the individual support needs of that person.

Secondly, in line with the social and rights models of disability where environmental factors must be taken into consideration, it seeks to make accommodations to the person’s environment through the provision of support that lessens the impact of the impairment. Support needs assessment instruments which assess a person’s needs across a range of everyday life domains, including health, are now available (Arnold et al, 2009).

Learning and working capacity

People with intellectual disabilities have the potential to learn, but their learning is highly dependent upon the quality of the teaching they receive. The person’s learning will often take longer and require systematic teaching methods, including breaking down the material to be learned into smaller steps than would be required by average learners. Frequent revision is required to enable the learner to master the skills.

Marc Gold, through his groundbreaking applied research in the early 1970s, demonstrated that people with quite high cognitive support needs could learn to complete quite complex tasks (Gold, 1972, and 1975). Linked to the research findings on learning capacity, it has become apparent that with the appropriate training, and supports, people with intellectual disabilities can work in real jobs up to high levels of complexity.

Experience has shown that teaching and training should take place in practical situations as far as possible. Support staff should also be aware that making modifications to the person’s environment may be an alternative way to assist them to handle the requirements of a job. Therefore, support staff should be encouraged to target both their learning needs and adjustments to the workplace. In addition to a good knowledge of work practices, support staff require training in the basic teaching procedures and principles used by special educators.
Areas of functioning important to employment in which people with intellectual disabilities that may need specific supports include:

- literacy and numeracy
- comprehension of instructions and information
- interpreting non-verbal language
- short-term and long-term memory
- attention span and concentration
- motivation
- problem solving and decision-making skills
- making choices
- time telling/management and organization
- ability to travel and/or live independently
- appropriate behaviours and social skills
- grooming and self care
- The degree of difficulty will vary from person to person.

2. Employment options

Despite a more enlightened approach to the needs of persons with a disability generally, fostered by human rights initiatives and the application of research and technological findings, their participation in the open labour market is considerably lower than that of the general population. Disappointingly, the situation for those with intellectual disabilities is even worse. Evidence indicates that irrespective of the culture or the economic circumstances of a country, the employment situation of those with intellectual disabilities are equally depressing. Just as they are denied education, they have been denied access to jobs. This depressing state of affairs has come about largely through ignorance and superstition.

In Canada, for example, a survey reported by the Canadian Association for Community Living in 2006 (CACL, 2006) revealed that people with disabilities continue to experience some of the lowest rates of employment in Canada, a situation common across the world. The survey found that people with disabilities who are working: work only half as many weeks per year as people who do not have a disability; are unemployed longer, and spend three times as long outside the labour force. People with intellectual disabilities were found to experience even lower rates of employment with only 27% being employed at the time of the survey and 40 % had never worked. In terms of income nearly 50% of people with intellectual disabilities had incomes below the Statistics Canada low income cut-off, a widely used measure of poverty.

In countries of the European Union, the unemployment rate for people with intellectual disabilities was found to approach almost 100%. The vast majority who do work are found in sheltered workshops and those with high support needs are generally directed to day activity centres.

2.1 Sheltered workshops

For those children who lived at home and who were denied access to public schools because of their intellectual limitations, family and charitable groups established special schools. Not surprisingly, once their children reached late adolescence, these same groups
established sheltered workshops and day activity centres, often with government financial support. Sheltered workshops were essentially segregated facilities established for persons considered unable or unlikely to obtain or retain a job in the open labour market. The majority of those employed have tended to have an intellectual disability. Basic training or occupational therapy is usually provided. The workshops engage in productive work to cover some of their costs. Workers are often paid a training allowance in addition to their disability pension, and very minimal or no wages – sometimes in the form of a bonus if production targets are met. Up to recently, contracts of employment were not issued and the provisions of general employment legislation did not apply. In many countries they were described as rehabilitation and training facilities, but very few workers ever graduated to the general employment market, even when financial incentives were offered.

Thanks to the research carried out by Marc Gold, in combination with the realization that that a real job in the community gives people a strong sense of identity, it came to be recognised that segregated settings send a message to people with disabilities, and to the population at large, that they are different from the rest of society, and that alternatives were needed to allow them to have the same conditions of life as everyone else.

### 2.2 Supported Employment

In the early 1970s, developments in the USA, in particular, led to the emergence of alternatives to sheltered workshops and day activity centres as the major employment facility for people with intellectual disabilities.

Several of these are still relevant to the present day international context. First, the impact of the principle of normalization led to the deinstitutionalization movement which called for people with a disability to live in normal community settings. Second, a number of projects in the 1970s across the USA demonstrated the employment potential of people with an intellectual disability. A third factor was the increasing dissatisfaction with the then prevailing major model of adult services, namely sheltered workshops. This lead researchers working with people with very high support needs to develop four alternative ‘supported employment pathways: the ‘supported jobs’ model; the enclave model, the mobile crew model and the benchwork model. Each of these models specifically targeted people with intellectual disabilities who had high support needs.

Together, these influences led to the establishment of an Employment Initiative for Persons with Developmental Disabilities which promoted the concept of supported employment (SE) to business leaders, community groups,

Supported Employment was defined in US legislation as

… competitive work in integrated settings for individuals:
(a) with severe handicaps for whom competitive employment has not traditionally occurred, or
(b) for individuals for whom competitive employment has been interrupted as a result of severe disability; and who, because of their handicap, need ongoing support services to perform such work. The Rehabilitation Amendments of 1986 (P.L. 99-506)

… involving paid work, integrated work environments, and ongoing supports.


In essence, SE is for people with disabilities who need on-going support to work in competitive open employment. Most of the studies which have addressed outcomes for supported employees have made comparisons between SE and segregated programs, including sheltered workshops and day centres, on factors such as wages and quality of life. SE programs by their very definition give people with intellectual disabilities access to real wages. Especially in programs for persons with high support needs, these are adjusted according to the person’s productivity and pro-rata amounts are paid. A high rate of part-time jobs is also reported in SE programs. Overall, however, people in SE programs earn significantly more than those employed in segregated programs.

2.2.1 Supported job model

This ‘supported job’ employment model involves a ‘place and train’ approach, rather than the practice in rehabilitation facilities where the model is ‘train and then place’. Therefore, to provide employment, a job is required at the outset of the service, and not just at its completion.

The ‘place, train and support’ model for SE usually involves job coaches working with the potential employee to identify interests and skills. This is followed by job seeking, matching and placement. The employer might also be encouraged to make adaptations (ie accommodations) to a specific job in order to match it with the abilities and skills of the employee with an intellectual disability. In many cases the job coach might learn to do the job first, in order to subsequently teach the employee with the disability. In other circumstances, the employer might prefer for a regular staff member to teach the skill. This person may subsequently become a ‘mentor’ to the person with the disability, become part of the ‘natural’ support for the person, within the workplace.

Irrespective of who does the initial training, research consistently shows that ongoing ‘natural’ supports are leading to greater sustainability of the job placements than external supports. However, while natural supports are proving to be a promising method of increasing the integration and support of people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace, a combination of job coaching and natural supports may be needed, tailored to individual circumstances and needs.
2.2.2 Enclave model

This consists of a group of people with disabilities who are trained and supervised among workers who do not have a disability; usually in an industrial or commercial environment. In its original design the workers were to be paid at a level commensurate to the workers without a disability, often adjusted on their relative productivity. As the model was taken up by sheltered workshops, more often than not, the contract for the enclave was between the company and the sheltered workshop management. This meant that wages for the person with a disability continued to paid at the sheltered workshop rates. This model does provide opportunities for interactions between the persons with a disability and the regular workers in the company.

On-going support is provided to the enclave workers in much the same way as the job coach does in SE. In some cases companies have been willing to take on the job coach role along the principle of natural supports described above. There is a danger that there may be little opportunity for work and social interactions. For instance, in some cases the enclave group may not share the common facilities of the company, such as lunch rooms. Limited research found some positive gains for people in the program. They used regular transport to get to work; they gradually became productive enough to go onto regular award wages; there were increased interactions on work-related and social tasks; and the program was cost-effective for the taxpayer as welfare and support costs decreased substantially.

2.2.3 Mobile crew model

This model is a combination of service and business. It may consist of a crew of five people with disabilities working from a van rather than a building, performing service jobs in community settings. Examples include lawn cutting, window cleaning, and general ground maintenance. In its original conception, a Mobile Crew is set up as a small, single-purpose business, rather than as an extension of a large organization. As with the Enclave Model, sheltered employment services have expanded to include this as another option to their services.

Again, it is more common in these circumstances for the workers to remain dependent upon the sheltered workshop for their wages and conditions. The model does give increased opportunities for community participation and interaction with people in the general community, possibly more so than the Enclave Model. The full time presence of the Crew supervisor is generally required to monitor the Crew’s performance.

2.2.4 Benchwork Model

This model was developed in the early 1970s by the Specialized Training Program at the University of Oregon, USA, as an alternative to day activity programs to provide long-term employment to people previously denied access to any vocational services. This model operates as a small single-purpose, not-for-profit commercial operation. The model requires a number of highly qualified staff skilled in instructional technology with no more than 1:5 staff-to-worker ratio. Although designed for people with very high support needs who would not normally be employed in a sheltered workshop because of their supposed low productivity, the Benchwork Model shares many characteristics and constraints with traditional sheltered workshops. It initially also depended heavily upon contracts from the electronics industry, many of which have disappeared as this industry has become more automated. However, in its early phases this model provided
opportunities for its workers to have opportunities for greater community participation. The size of the business was limited to 20 workers and they were located in close proximity to stores, restaurants, and other community avenues that can provide opportunities for integration and participation into the regular community activities during lunch breaks and before and after work. The model was initially faithfully replicated in five states of the USA and in Australia. The costs of operating the facilities was no more than those in the day activity centres, but employees received wages based upon their productivity for the first time in their lives. Follow-up studies also showed that opportunities for community participation were realised.

2.3 Self-directed employment

Business considerations for persons with intellectual disabilities are little different from those for persons who do not have a disability. In the case of the former, it is usual for someone to perform duties not dissimilar to the role of a job coach. Sometimes this is a family member. The following five major steps have been found to be useful in setting up a business: i) developing a business plan; ii) obtaining the required skills; iii) securing start-up capital; iv) implementing the business plan; and v) expanding the business. Again, the skills necessary to support self-employment will be very similar to those for SE, and may include task analysis of the jobs, skills training and ongoing provision of support. It is also possible for the support worker to initiate contacts with natural supports such as unpaid volunteers and mentors who have experience as entrepreneurs who can act as an ongoing resource.

This model has also been described as a Micro Enterprise- a small business created around one person. The main strengths of the model for people with intellectual disabilities are as follows:

- it respects the capacity and the assets of people with intellectual disabilities, focuses on people’s interests and strengths, and can be more flexible than mainstream employment and working conditions;
- it pursues equality by opening up the self-employed sector of the labour market, where people with an intellectual disability are not represented;
- micro-enterprises reflect aspects of government thinking on increasing employment for disadvantaged groups, and that services should be developed to meet individual needs;
- for some a small business is a way of gaining income from a hobby or an interest and that person-centred planning, direct payments and individualized budgets are ways to help the person get supports and funding;
- micro-enterprises are another way of people with intellectual disabilities moving from being a client to being a citizen. (Beyer & Robinson, 2009: 65-66).

A review of over 120 self-employment projects across low, middle and high income countries, found that there was considerably more experience in low to middle income countries in supporting entrepreneurship for people with disabilities, than in high income countries (Neufeldt and Albright,1998).
2.4 Social Firms

Social Firms are one type of social enterprise initially developed in the European context. Social enterprises are businesses which trade for a social or environmental purpose, and their profits are reinvested back into the company to help them achieve this purpose. The specific social purpose of Social Firms is to create jobs for people who find it hardest to get them.

The criteria used to assess whether a business is a Social Firm can be found in the Values-Based Checklist. These criteria are based around three core values that Social Firms will subscribe to within their businesses: enterprise, employment and empowerment. There are several examples of sheltered workshops establishing small businesses which are labeled as ‘social enterprises’. In this case, the majority of the workers are people with a disability with few opportunities to engage in regular work-related or social-related activities within the general community.

2.5 Community Economic Development (CED)

There are many and varied definitions of Community Economic Development, but the following one captures the essential characteristics.

CED is a community-based and community-directed process that explicitly combines social and economic development and is directed towards fostering the economic, social, ecological and cultural well-being of communities and regions. As such it recognizes, affirms and supports all the paid and unpaid activity that contributes to the realization of this well-being. CED has emerged as an alternative to conventional approaches to economic development. It is founded on the belief that problems facing communities - unemployment, poverty, job loss, environmental degradation, economic instability, and loss of community control - need to be addressed in a holistic and participatory way.  

(Simon Fraser University Community Economic Development Centre http://www.sfu.ca/cscd/gateway/sharing/principles.htm)

CED projects may provide an alternative approach to providing support to people with disabilities. In the highly urbanized communities in high income countries policies and services are generally managed in a top-down fashion and controlled by large government bureaucracies, increasingly delivered through also large bureaucratized not-for-profit organizations. In order to overcome barriers to the employment of people with disabilities, connections must be made with existing groups of people in order to overcome prejudice and discrimination.

2.6 Relevance of international models to Africa

One of the difficulties in transferring a concept from high to low income countries is the radically different support systems that have been used in high income countries. Most of these countries have provided direct welfare benefits to people with a disability, and in many cases their families. In the USA, and other countries which were responsible for the initiation of integrated employment, governments have provided financial resources for systems change, by establishing and evaluating pilot projects. Financial inducements have also been offered to employers to take on employee with a disability.
The presence of welfare benefits has also been a disincentive leading to only marginal, if any, diminution of numbers of people with intellectual disabilities in segregated employment settings. There is of course a need for a balance, so that equitable support arrangements are provided. One of the most significant correlates of intellectual disabilities, even in high income countries is poverty.

In some countries self-employment models and social firms have been avenues for increasing the financial rewards to people with a range of disabilities. Community Economic Development approaches may be particularly relevant in countries with a high rural population and those where the informal economy is the major employment avenue, and where formal support provisions for people with disabilities are almost non-existent. The clear message is that once there is a commitment to the essential principles of integrated employment, there may be alternative pathways to the achievement of satisfactory outcomes.

3. Supported Employment in Africa

A literature search revealed four SE projects in South Africa and one in Zambia, for people with intellectual and related disabilities.

1. Durban and Coastal Mental Health

The SE Programme is targeted at empowering individuals with mental health disorders to develop the socio-emotional capacity and vocational skill necessary for finding employment in the open labour market. The Programme offers a range of strategies that facilitate economic empowerment and self sufficiency. It also helps to foster a change in attitude within the corporate sector. It seeks to change the thinking of employers and society with each successful placement and to open up a range of opportunities for employment for people with mental health disorders. (http://www.changemakers.com/en-us/node/58425).

2. The Living Link

The Living Link, a non-profit organization, was founded in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2000. It supports the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into society and facilitates their transition from school to work to independent living. Students at the Living Link complete an Adult Integration Program aimed at integrating them into society and in the community. The program is life skills based and focuses on practical components of daily living that are essential. After students have graduated from the program, The Living Link assists to place their members into suitable positions in the open labour market and supports both the member and the employer in a way that is mutually beneficial.

The Living Link Placement Services Department seeks to place their graduates into integrated open labour market employment by implementing the Supported Employment model. Adults are placed in ordinary working environments, doing regular work where salaries and benefits are realistic and reflect work performance. The following services are provided:

- Job market screening
- Job site observations/job analyses
- Job sampling
- Recommendations on job restructuring
- Data base prospective employees with intellectual impairments
- Job matching and placement
- Job coaching/on-site training and support
- Employer and co-worker sensitization and training.

Traditionally graduates are placed into entry-level positions that are fairly repetitive and provide a certain degree of structure. Graduates have been placed in a variety of work environments including:

- Hospitals
- Offices
- Warehouses
- Factories
- Schools
- Gardens/outdoor environments
- Hotels
- Kitchens.

This organization is seeking to make a transition from a protective (sheltered) employment model to one where people with intellectual disabilities can access real jobs in open competitive employment. It has described this as the ‘Workshop Transition Programme’. This Programme also addresses the empowerment of people with disabilities working within protective workshops (http://www.thelivinglink.co.za/).

3. The Ntiro Project for Supported and Inclusive Employment

The Ntiro Project for Supported and Inclusive Employment, founded in 2000 in the Tschwane South District of the Gauteng province, targets the multiple barriers that persons with intellectual disabilities face in the areas of education and work. It seeks to address in a holistic way the many overlapping grounds of exclusion— from poverty and disease to problems of language and curriculum relevance.

Of particular significance, is the Ntiro Project’s emphasis on changing attitudes and building integrated community-based support. It gives strong focus to providing information and skills to district officials, NGOs and community organizations, and to building partnerships among them. The inclusive model has proved extremely successful, serving to progressively replace older segregationist models throughout the district.

The project gives concrete expression to the new vision of inclusive education in South Africa and to the call for more inter-sectoral approaches.

(see http://www.inclusionflagship.net/Inclusion_1_06.pdf).

4. Astra Centre

This centre is located at the foot of Table Mountain within an affluent suburban/central business district. The project provides sheltered employment to 60 Jewish men and women with varying degrees of intellectual disabilities and psychiatric illnesses.

The main aim is to develop the potential of people with disabilities through meaningful employment. Astra develops and provides individualized programmes and services by
utilizing an interdisciplinary approach based on Jewish principles and values. Astra focuses on individual strengths needs, abilities, interests and desires. In addition to the provision of sheltered employment, the project provides opportunities for supported employment in the open labour market.

(see http://www.jewishshelteredemployment.org.za/)

5. Supported Employment in Zambia

The Finnish Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (FAIDD) in association with the Zambia Association on Employment for Persons with Disabilities (ZAEPD) supported a project to create an employment model suited for Zambia. The project, which concluded at the end of 2005, also aimed to increase knowledge and understanding of disabilities through public and media relations and education. In 2006 FAIDD also started a development cooperation project in Zambia to increase opportunities for women and girls with intellectual disabilities to participate in social life, to improve their employment opportunities through peer support, co-op society activities, plain language material and public awareness campaigns.

A study of experiences of vocational training and employment for people with an intellectual disability in Zambia revealed both opportunities and challenges of using a supported employment model in Zambia (Koistinen 2008). Through this approach more than a hundred graduates had been placed in the open employment market and community projects.

Factors affecting their job opportunities included personal characteristics of the job applicant, location, gender, vocational training course, and the level of support available. Following an analysis of data from different stakeholders relevant to vocational training and employment, recommendations were given for the planning of vocational training and employment for persons with an intellectual disability.

Commentary on initiatives required in Africa

The employment examples presented, although small in number, represent an emerging potential which can be built upon with replications and modifications, where required by local conditions. Given the nature of the African continent and its history, there are opportunities for ‘grass roots’ initiatives following a ‘bottom-up’ approach at community levels to development.

A recent commentary on the situation of people with disabilities in Uganda (Moiza, 2008) highlighted limitations in addressing issues confronted by people with intellectual disabilities and those providing services to this group, that are relevant to many other countries also. The limitations include:

- missing data on intellectual disabilities both at national and district levels;
- limited resource personnel to deliver services such as special needs educators to teach in inclusive settings;
- limited resources to meet the special needs of persons with intellectual disabilities;
- inability to meet demand for services. Limitations in services causes demand-driven service delivery, which is impossible for persons with intellectual disabilities;
• scarcity of NGO involvement in programs for this group, as their programs are result oriented and time bound, and this field is considered by some to be a ‘no-comfort’ zone;
• donor directed programs at times have limited coverage, target population and time frames; and
• limited employment opportunities.
Proposals were then made for how provisions for persons with intellectual disabilities might be better organised:

• establish data base at the district level, including the type, level and location;
• build the capacity of Community Development Officers and local leaders (Councillors for persons with disabilities);
• Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) volunteers to include issues for persons with intellectual disabilities in CBR activities;
• conduct participatory planning strategy to develop a project to address issues around intellectual disability;
• raise awareness on issues on intellectual disabilities in the community;
• advocate for Skills Training Centre for persons with intellectual disabilities; and
• train persons with intellectual disabilities in employable skills.

It is interesting that many of the above proposals might be appropriate for any country, irrespective of its income status, because people with intellectual disabilities are uniformly discriminated against in the provision of employment support services internationally.

4. Supported employment - lessons learned

Research evidence has pointed to the conditions required for SE to result in or predict successful employment outcomes in integrated settings for people with intellectual disabilities. It is recognized that almost all of the research has been conducted in high income countries. Hence, not all the findings may be applicable to low income countries.

An important point emerging from research is that people with intellectual disabilities have the potential to contribute to society and to the economy if they have the opportunity to work. The ‘burden of disease’ mentality has portrayed them as a mendicant population solely in the need of care and protection. Cost-benefit analyses of SE have reported clear gains to both the individual and the taxpayer.

Employment has been shown to impact upon the quality of life of people with intellectual disabilities. This is an important factor in the possible reduction of emotional disorders in this population, where the prevalence of mental health problems is much higher than that in the general population.

In terms of quality of life and life satisfaction, studies generally report that those in SE programs had a higher rating than those unemployed or in alternative disability programs. An Australian study found that those in open employment had a significantly higher quality of life than those in sheltered workshops or who were unemployed. A Spanish study found no differences in quality of life between those in SE and those in sheltered workshops. However, there was a direct relationship between how typical the employment setting is and quality of life of those in SE programs. There was also a
negative relationship between the intensity of external support and quality of life, suggesting that such support should be used when only absolutely necessary.

In general, however, it applies in every setting that, with appropriate instructional technology and support, people with intellectual disabilities can learn, despite their cognitive impairments, and that good teaching and an environment which fosters a motivation to learn will consistently produce excellent results.

**General pointers**

Some of the lessons learned apply to all stakeholders, whether they be governments, service providers, employers, trade unions of disability advocates.

**Cultural factors**

There is a need to understand how disability, and intellectual disability in particular, is perceived in a particular environment, as this will impact upon the translation of research into policy decisions. If this is not clearly articulated there will be a clash between policy and its implementation. Policies formulated in one country may need modifications before being embraced by another country or locality.

**Sound values base and commitment to people with intellectual disabilities**

Programs where all the stakeholders including government, employers, service providers and families were committed to the principles of equity and equality of opportunity for people with intellectual disabilities led to successful and sustainable integrated employment outcomes.

The move from a medical to a social, rights based policy recognises the interplay between the person’s impairment and the environment. The concepts of activity limitations and barriers to participation should be incorporated into policies (WHO, 2001).

**Needs assessment and characteristics of people with intellectual disabilities**

A comprehensive needs assessment of the person with intellectual disabilities has shown to be important, not only for the purposes of employment, but also for other life activities, including community living and leisure activities. It has been shown that work cannot be dealt with in isolation from other life activities.

**Person-centred planning**

Person-centred planning, because it puts the person with the disability at the centre of the decision making processes, takes into account the person’s wishes and desires. In the employment area, strong motivation has been shown to be a significant predictor of a satisfactory outcome. Whilst more work remains to be done on assessing the impact of person-centred planning upon client outcomes and satisfaction, research to date has shown promising results. Allocating financial support to the individual in conjunction with person-centered planning provides the person with a disability greater opportunity to exercise self-determination and freedom of choice.
Pointers for governments

Legal framework: necessary but not sufficient

An enabling and supportive legal framework is essential, but not sufficient in itself to bring about improved employment opportunities. For example, research has found that the presence of anti-discrimination laws, in itself, does not seem to encourage effective employment outcomes in many cases for people with intellectual disabilities.

Employment policies

A clearly written policy on employment for people with disabilities which articulates the underlying values and sets out specific goals sends a clear message which has greater opportunity to be implemented. Policies must set realistic goals which can be achieved. Policies which are complemented by implementation strategies and mandatory standards of performance are more likely to achieve policy goals. Policies which have meaningful input from people with disability, their families and advocates help to build a spirit of partnership.

Policies should meaningfully incorporate principles of Articles 27 and 28 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006) and Optional Protocol; and those contained in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention Concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation, 1958, (No.111) as well as the ILO Convention concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons), 1983, (No. 159). They should also indicate how these principles will be applied and evaluated.

Provision of support staff

Research indicates the policies which supported the growth and nurturing of dedicated support staff with a variety of skills and competencies provided the human resources necessary to support people with disabilities and their families. Support agencies which addressed support needs in a holistic manner achieved better employment outcomes which tended to more sustainable.

Interagency coordination

Governments have tended to develop a ‘silo’ approach to service delivery with each government department protective of its own resources. Some countries have set up special departments of disability, but this can continue the isolation of people with disabilities from mainstream society. An alternative approach is to encourage government and development agencies to mainstream disability into all support programs along the lines of the principle of universal design.

Government policies which had mechanisms in place for the coordination of disability services across different jurisdictions and ministries produced better outcomes for people with disabilities and their families. Of particular importance is the dissemination and availability of information about disability support services.

Need for adequate population information

Good policies are based on good information. There is a dearth of data on the actual incidence and prevalence of intellectual disability in the countries in the region. Current data are incomplete and possibly unreliable. However, estimates based on the South
African studies may be a guide. The use of typical epidemiological methodologies may not be entirely relevant given that disability is a culturally specific phenomenon. What counts as a disability in an urban context may not be seen as such in a rural community.

**Systems change initiatives**

Countries which have made a commitment to policy change have applied resources to effect a systems change. Investment in system change projects, such as pilot SE programs, has assisted in the development of new models. If the use of these resources is not carefully monitored, however, the system may fall back to former practices once the additional resources are expended. Thus, it is crucial that these projects explore sustainability beyond the life of the pilot.

**Research policy**

Countries which developed and supported strategic disability research policies on employment and related issues were able to benefit from the input of university research centres. Without such input the initiatives on SE in the USA would not have been achieved. Basic and applied research which was able to demonstrate the educability of people with intellectual disabilities helped to dispel myths and stereotypes which had been built up over centuries.

**Outcomes**

Many countries, driven by the need to trim disability budgets, have called for a greater accountability for the resources expended. Increasingly, outcome measures are being applied to assess the benefits of expenditures on disability programs. However, policy developers have a duty to clearly articulate outcomes, not simply to justify expenditures, but equally important, as a responsibility to the people being supported.

**Pointers for educators and trainers**

**Transition from school**

One of the keys to a successful transition process from school to work is for the secondary school to implement a transition policy, ingredients of which should be the development of individual transition plans (ITPs) for each student early in the secondary school years. Gradually agencies such as employment providers and post school education providers need to be involved in the planning in a coordinated way. This approach has been found to help produce better employment outcomes.

**Early acquisition of job-related skills**

The acquisition of job-related skills is a process which should begin long before a student with intellectual disabilities leaves school. Towards the end of schooling part time work experience has been shown to be a major factor predicting later employment success.

**Importance of social behaviour**

In terms of the sustainability of integrated employment, there is overwhelming evidence that people with intellectual disabilities tend to lose jobs, not because of their inability to perform the job tasks, but because of negative social behaviours. While people with disabilities can be generally well accepted by supervisors and co-workers in integrated
employment settings, such acceptance was contingent upon people with disabilities ‘blending in’ or ‘fitting in’ and not drawing attention to themselves.

Appropriate placement
The fit between the person and his/her environment is of central importance. It may be more effective to find the right environment, rather than trying to change a particular social behaviour. This principle is especially relevant for people with intellectual disabilities and high support needs.

Support to employees
A US study found several factors which can be put forward as ‘good practices’ in human supports (Rogan et al. (2000).

- Individuals should be able to choose the kind of job they enter,
- Work should allow individuals to obtain independence from paid support.
- Supports should be tailored to each person’s needs.
- ‘getting to know the person well’ is the key to successful workplace support,
- the possibility that a person may not be ready for work should be accepted when appropriate, and
- existing contacts and other natural supports should be used as inroads into the workplace.

Support to families
Another role for the job coach is to support to families who may initially have negative attitudes to their son/daughter working in a regular work environment, because of fears they may be victimized. Parents of children with a disability are frequently overprotective. For others, cultural factors may encourage them to persist in hiding their child with a disability because of negative community prejudices.

Support to workplaces
To assist potential employers to be more accepting of people with an intellectual disability as genuine workers, and to counter the negative views often rooted in the stereotypical attitudes of the general community, there is a need for intervention strategies at three levels: the individual co-worker/supervisor, the work group, and the whole organization.

Pointers for employers
Role of employer attitudes
United States studies have shown that employers of all sizes have favourable experiences in employing people with intellectual disabilities and value the training done by SE service providers (Olsan et al, 2001). Accommodations frequently made include extra supervision time, providing flexible hours and using the services of a job coach. These accommodations were perceived to be of minimal cost to the company. In terms of human resource management, employees with intellectual disabilities were viewed as costing companies the same or less than employees without a disability.

However, negative employer attitudes can be one of the most serious threats to the success of a SE program. Negative views on the concept of intellectual disability and
mistaken assumptions about the working capacity of people with intellectual disability are deep seated and prevail in most countries.

In a survey of 360 employers of persons with disabilities, a Hong Kong study found that four major factors influenced decisions to employ people with a disability: a) the personality of the worker, particularly whether an emotional problem was present; b) the person’s ability to do the job; c) the availability of low-level jobs; and d) the person’s productivity as a worker (Tse, 1993, 1994).

Another study reported that the existence of policies on employing persons with a disability; previous contacts with a person with a disability and level of the disability were associated with more favourable attitudes (Smith et al. 2004).

Previous positive experience with a person with a disability that is job- related is one of the most reliable factors in predicting employers’ favourable attitudes to people with intellectual disabilities (Rimmerman, 1998). This suggests the importance of working closely with employers to ensure their satisfaction with the employment outcome. Hence, advertising ‘success stories’ involving the employment of people with a disability has been found to be an important strategy. Research has shown that contrary to the negative stereotypes portrayed throughout history; persons with an intellectual disability can be loyal, trustworthy and diligent workers who seldom fail to turn up for work (Ward et al, 1978).

**Support on the job**

As mentioned earlier, the ‘place, train and support’ model of SE usually involves job coaches working with the potential employee to identify interests and skills, followed by job seeking, matching and placement, though in some cases, the employer allocates a staff member to provide instruction. Irrespective of who does the initial training, research consistently shows that ongoing ‘natural’ supports – that is, training by someone within the company - lead to greater sustainability of the job placements than external supports through job-coaches. However, while natural supports are proving to be a promising method of increasing the integration and support of people with intellectual disabilities in the workplace, a combination of job coaching and natural supports may be needed, tailored to individual circumstances and needs.

**Workplace culture**

A congenial workplace culture has been found to be critical for the successful placement and maintenance of people with intellectual disabilities in integrated work environments. Four key characteristics of a supportive and interactive work setting include, a) multiple context relationships, for instance including opportunities to mix with co-workers after work has finished for the day; b) specific social opportunities, including designated lunch/break rooms where everyone is welcome; c) personal and team building management style, where managers build a sense of teamwork and take a personal interest in employees, and schedule work around workers’ personal strengths and needs.; and d) interdependent job designs, which may include ‘cross training’ employees on several different tasks.

This workplace culture also has the opportunity to create career pathways for supported workers, who in many cases, do not progress beyond entry level jobs. Such a culture also helps the development of strong relationships between workers with and without
disabilities. These relationships are often characterized by the presence of humour and informality which ultimately assist the processes of job retention. Good practice suggestions for increasing the social interaction of supported employees include strategies such as: targeting social skills instruction, communication instruction, problem-solving and co-worker assistance.

5. Moving forward

Various countries have clear policies concerning employment for people with disabilities in general, which affirm the goal of community integration and support for individual choice. Despite this, however, this review has highlighted the reality that the vast majority of people with intellectual disabilities still do not have access to integrated employment; and in many cases no access to meaningful day activities.

The following suggestions are relevant to countries presently attempting to revise old policies and, develop new policies which will go some way in addressing the inequalities experienced by people with intellectual disabilities. Applicable at either a national or regional level, they may provide a way forward in improving opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities to work in fair and just conditions.

National level

Conduct a systems analysis of current situations

- In collaboration with all stakeholders, including schools, in the field of people with intellectual disabilities conduct surveys, consultation meetings and individual interviews to determine the current status of employment for this population.
- Analyse barriers and facilitators to the achievement of integrated employment for this population, across the various geographical areas of the country in order to tap the experiences in urban and rural communities.
- A documentation of current models of employment for other disability groups would inform this process.

Develop goals and objectives for the way forward

- Using the same consultative processes, with the input of all relevant stakeholders, develop a set of goals and objectives to guide the implementation of SE initiatives for people with intellectual disabilities.
- A variety of models may need to be explored given the particular circumstances of local communities.
- A statement of the underlying value system which has informed this process needs to be agreed upon.

Develop a national policy on integrated employment for people with intellectual disabilities

- Responsible government departments, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, will develop a clear written policy articulating its values and the corresponding goals and objectives of integrated employment services for people with intellectual disabilities which flow from these values.
- The recent initiative, Valuing Employment Now, by the UK government could be a guide to the process.
• Elements of the Community Economic Development (CED) model is worthy of investigation, as are aspects of the social enterprise approach.

**Develop a national implementation strategy**

• Establish a timeline for the achievement of goals, together with resource allocations.
• The strategy should indicate relevant responsibilities of government and non-government agencies, including human resources.
• The strategy may include the setting up of a small number of pilot programs, together with evaluation processes, in order to initiate a systems change process.
• Identify potential leaders in government and the community to champion the systems change process.

**Development of an effective data collection system designed to track progress**

• The system may be developed to provide information on people supported (inputs); details of the various program models (processes); details of wages earned, days worked, level of community integration, and skills achieved (outputs); and measures of satisfaction and quality of life of the employees (outcomes).
• This system also allows for program modifications following feedback, and the identification of environmental barriers and facilitators.
• Develop coalitions with university research centres. National universities should be encouraged to collaborate on issues such as program development and evaluation, and staff training.
• Liaisons with universities in other countries which have a track record in research into employment of people with intellectual disabilities are an additional possibility.
• The basic aim is to develop local research capacity which can help to maintain the ongoing sustainability of programs.

**Communicate the results of programs**

• To assist the process of community attitude change, positive results of pilot projects should be disseminated widely through all available media.
• The involvement of community leaders acting as “champions” would assist this process. Success stories can stimulate further successes.

**Regional level**

**Develop a Regional Association of Supported Employment**

• To assist in the sharing of information and technical assistance, consideration may be given to the establishment of a regional support organization modelled along the lines of the European Union for Supported Employment (EUSE) (See p.30).
• Links with the EUSE and similar national associations for supported employment would give access to training materials and other technical assistance.
• Such an organization could organise workshops and training programs at regional and/or national levels.
6. In conclusion

Despite enormous challenges, including extreme poverty and difficulties faced from attitudinal and policy perspectives in the provision of support to persons with disabilities in general, and those with intellectual disabilities in particular, there are some positive trends. Of special significance is that the majority of countries have subscribed to the various contemporary human rights principles relating to people with disabilities. What remains is the need for a genuine commitment to ensuring these principles are not only incorporated into national disability policies, but they are put into practice and monitored to the best level possible in terms of the socio-economic conditions prevailing.

For the vast majority of people with intellectual disabilities, the opportunity to engage in real work in the general community has been denied them for reasons explored above. The first step in bringing about change in this situation is a genuine commitment and belief that change is desirable and there is a genuine commitment to effect change. African countries, along with the many of the world countries, have ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Article 27 of the Convention states:

States Parties recognize the right of persons with disabilities to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the right to the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities. States Parties shall safeguard and promote the realization of the right to work.

This statement provides a compelling reason then to explore how a country with limited resources might embark upon a program to assist one of its most disadvantaged groups in its society to become engaged in work ‘that is open, inclusive and accessible’.
Annex 1
Supported Employment - International experience

This section examines features of SE which have been reported in high income countries and analyses factors which seem to support the successful implementation of SE models.

USA

A strong factor in the take up of SE in the USA was the existence of a strong legal and political base. A major study of the more successful SE programs (Mills, 2006:3) found that seven factors explained impressive integrated employment outcomes:

1. The existence of strong, clear and unambiguous state developmental disabilities agency policies, rules and programmatic requirements intended to support a clearly articulated agency preference for, and commitment to, integrated employment for people with developmental disabilities;
2. Use of funding incentives to encourage the expansion of integrated employment opportunities and/or funding disincentives to discourage the use of facility-based employment and non-work services;
3. Liberal definition for the kinds of employment arrangements which qualify for SE funding;
4. Adequate state agency staffing dedicated to employment;
5. Investment in on-going training and technical assistance;
6. Commitment to supporting organizational change among facility-based (sheltered) providers, and
7. Use of a comprehensive data tracking system focused on integrated employment outcomes.

Research in the USA has paid particular attention to factors which facilitate the growth of SE programs in an effort to correct the imbalance with facility-based models of employment. Program size appears to play a role in the type and range of day and/or employment services offered. A national survey of rehabilitation agencies reported that smaller agencies, providing support to 50 or less were found to be more likely to provide integrated employment exclusively than larger organizations.

Australia

The development of employment services for people with disabilities in Australia has followed a similar pattern to that of the USA, especially the presence of a strong legislative base for disability support services.

In order to stimulate the development of paid employment in integrated settings the Australian Government sponsored several open employment pilot projects, a number of which concentrated on supporting people with high support needs. One of these, Jobsupport, has continued since its inception in 1986 and has achieved one of the best records in the country for supporting people with intellectual disabilities and high support needs (see http://jobsupport.org.au/main/).

There has been no reduction in the numbers of people with a disability employed in segregated settings. In fact the Commonwealth Government, despite earlier attempts to limit funds to this area of employment, has given way to the strong lobby groups,
including parents and service organisations by accepting segregated options a viable employment alternative.

However, many sheltered workshops (known as Australian Disability Enterprises) are expanding into SE options in addition to the traditional segregated model. Government policies which emphasise immediate outcomes from disability employment services have directly affected support for people with intellectual disabilities who generally require a little longer to adjust to the demands of open employment. Hence there are signs of ‘creaming’ the easier to place clients.

**Canada**

Canadian SE programs are funded by the federal government under the Opportunities Fund, some Labour Market Development Agreements and by provincial/territorial governments, or by cost-sharing with the federal government. In 2000, the SE model was fairly well established in the four provinces of Nova Scotia, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta (Neufeldt et al (2000).

Factors such as disincentives to employment arising from income and disability support programs, lack of information about job availability, inadequate training and comparatively low education levels, lack of accessible transportation, and employer discrimination were limitations to being recruited into SE programs.

**New Zealand**

In the early 1990s a small group of people who had been pioneering SE in New Zealand set up the Association for Supported Employment New Zealand (ASENZ). Over the past few years, ASENZ have developed and refined the following principles of SE. These are now accepted as the core principles and are central to all aspects of SE in New Zealand.

- **Open Employment:** The employment and inclusion of people with disability in the mainstream workforce.
- **Wages and Benefits:** The provision of the same wages and related conditions of employment that are the expected norm in any mainstream workplace.
- **Placement First:** Direct access to the labour market through a precise job/person match and without prolonged "getting ready" activities or training.
- **Inclusiveness:** No exclusions or screening from supported employment programmes on the basis of perceived "severity" of disability.
- **Individualised and Ongoing Support:** Support services and strategies that are not time limited, are tailored to the individuals needs, and maximise job retention.
- **Choices and Career Development:** Services and outcomes based on the preferences and aspirations of the individual and a commitment to ongoing pursuit of careers.

The Association has given significant attention to training and development for people who work in SE. For details of the strategic relationship the Association has developed with a training provider to develop and deliver Certificate and Diploma level training to build the capacity and capability of SE (see: [http://www.asenz.org.nz/index.html](http://www.asenz.org.nz/index.html)).
United Kingdom

SE in the UK had its early beginnings around 1985, about the same time pilot programs were being sponsored in Australia UK Beyer et al. (1999).

Two important UK Government initiatives provide a useful framework in which to examine the penetration of SE in improving the life quality of people with an intellectual disability. The first is the Disability Discrimination Act (UKDDA) which was passed in 1995. The UKDDA defines a person with a disability as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The Act seeks to prevent discrimination on the grounds of disability in employment and other areas.

The second important initiative was the release in 2001 of Valuing people: A New Strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century which identified significant difficulties in the coordination and delivery of services to people with an intellectual disability in the UK. While Valuing People has been seen as an important government statement to assist in changing community and government attitudes and supports to people with intellectual disabilities, the policy includes no specific objectives that will assist in evaluating its success.

In recognition of the slow progress being made in achieving objectives in employment for people with an intellectual disability, the UK Government has recently released Valuing Employment Now- Real Jobs for People with Learning Disabilities. This is a strategy which sets out an ambitious goal to increase radically the number of people with intellectual disabilities in employment by 2025. The strategy will focus on people with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities, because they have benefited least from previous initiatives. The strategy specifies that by ‘work’ it means real jobs in the open labour market that are paid the prevailing wage, or self-employment.

The British Association for Supported Employment (BASE) provides a mechanism for SE agencies to share information. (See: http://www.base-uk.org/links/index.htm).

Singapore

Singapore is a small island state with a population of about 4 million. Educational and employment services for the majority of people with intellectual disabilities are provided by two large voluntary agencies; The Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN) which conducts schools and employment services for those with ‘mild’ intellectual disabilities; and the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) which conducts schools, employment services, day activity programs and residential living for those in the ‘moderate’ to ‘severe’ range. Both organizations conduct traditional sheltered workshops and programs known as ‘social enterprises’.

The Singapore Government is encouraging all disability organizations providing employment services to conduct community-based programs. To this end both, APSN and MINDS have made efforts to place people in competitive, open employment. In the case of APSN a special program is being conducted at one of its senior schools to assist students to make the transition from school directly into paid work in the community, a feature of which is extended work experience placements. In the case of MINDS the open employment program is an adjunct to the sheltered workshop program. People are
selected to make the transition from the segregated setting to community-based jobs on the basis of their interests and performance in the sheltered environment.

An example of a social enterprise is a car wash “crew” which works in a regular community setting, but the employees are paid by the welfare organization rather than earning wages directly from the business. Another example of a social enterprise is a ‘thrift shop’ which sells re-cycled clothing. The employees who work there do not receive wages generated by the business. In some cases these enterprises are located in regular community settings, but they do project a welfare rather than a regular commercial image.

Netherlands

The situation for people with intellectual disabilities in the Netherlands is not dissimilar to other countries with a history of welfare provisions for persons with disabilities. Likewise, the Netherlands’ extensive legal and policy framework establishes an approach that supports active independent living and access to employment for this population.

In the Netherlands, in addition to special secondary schools, there are two options for students with intellectual disabilities within the mainstream system- the ‘supported learning route’ and the ‘practical education’ route. The former is more appropriate to students who will graduate with a diploma, provided they receive special needs support. The prevocational practical education route is for students with higher support needs who would not qualify for a diploma even with additional support. The evidence suggests that the placement results of the prevocational practical schools are more encouraging, reflecting a 60% placement rate in open employment, in sheltered employment, or in continuing education.

There is evidence that insufficient time is devoted to exploring what students are interested in doing. This conclusion is consistent with research which has shown the relationship between a person’s motivation towards work and satisfactory open employment outcomes. The principles of person-centred planning, together with a personalized assessment of support needs, would help to ensure that a person’s preferences would be seen as one of the most critical factors leading to an effective employment outcome. The increasing move in many countries to provide individualised funding has also increased the development of self-determination of people with disabilities, leading to better and more sustainable employment outcomes.

Finland

The situation of SE in Finland is instructive to the question of the sustainability of efforts to increase the participation of people with intellectual disabilities in the regular labour market. With Finland’s entry into the European Union (EU) in 1995, it was able to access the Community Initiative Programs of the EU Social Fund (ESF) to start several pilot projects on SE for people with intellectual disabilities.

Regular surveys of the state of SE in Finland have been conducted since 1998 (Saloviita & Pirttimaa, 2007). In the latest survey (2003) of the 93 responding organizations, 22 had workers in SE. In 1999 there were 21 such organizations and in 2001, there were 19. Thus, while it appeared the number of organizations providing SE remained stable, there were many changes. Some agencies have ceased providing SE and new ones entered the field, but the scale of activity was very small.
Of the organizations, 17 employed only one or two persons in SE. The organization with the highest number employed in SE was one which supported people with mental health problems. Most of the organizations were sheltered workshops providing employment for people with intellectual disabilities and other marginal groups.

Since the introduction of SE programs in 1995, no more than 100 people had been supported. Clear changes in the composition of the people being supported changed markedly during the period 2001-2003. There was a major increase in the proportion of people with mental illness and a similar decrease in the proportion of those with an intellectual disability being supported. It was concluded that the original concept of SE had been distorted.

Maintaining the fidelity of the new paradigm has been a significant challenge in most countries, and the experience so starkly revealed in the Finnish study is not unique. It clearly indicates that there are differing moral, political and economic value systems operating when the question of how best to support people with intellectual disabilities is considered, in contrast to other marginalised groups in a society.

**Other European Countries**

Across the other European countries which have been monitored, only a relatively small number of students with an intellectual disability are in mainstream schools; the majority being in special schools, and many are totally excluded from education. The quality of education in the special school settings has been found to be variable, with insufficient attention being given to the social skills necessary to live in the regular community.

At the transition level from school to post school options there is little evidence of adequate planning and opportunities for preparation for employment. Nor are there opportunities for access to ongoing adult education programs, with the exception of Sweden, which is noted for its life-long adult education programs for people with intellectual disabilities.

The unemployment rate for people with intellectual disabilities was found to approach almost 100%. The vast majority who do work are found in sheltered workshops and those with high support needs are generally directed to day activity centres. However, there was evidence of attempts to increase the participation of people with an intellectual disability in SE.

For example, the European Union of Supported Employment (EUSE), established in 1993, and now with 19 national associations for SE, is a driving force to increase employment opportunities for their clients. EUSE conducts regular conferences and training workshops across Europe. It has recently received support from the Leonardo Partnership to develop a European Supported Employment Toolkit which is planned to be completed in mid 2010. (See [http://www.euse.org/](http://www.euse.org/)). It is also about to launch a comprehensive research project which will inform the further development of SE across Europe.

A comparative analysis of employment services for persons with intellectual disabilities in Australia, Finland and Sweden emphasised the necessity for education and training as a key factor in improving the participation of people with an intellectual disability into the regular labour force.
In order to increase the expansion of those good models that do exist, the reports highlighted the need for Government and European support, if they are to become the rule rather than the exception. To increase the replication of good models at the national and international levels will require strong government support. A severe impediment to the development of strong policy in this area is the limited availability of data, particularly data disaggregated by individual type of disabilities. This has posed a barrier in analysing the actual situation for persons with intellectual disabilities.

One of the critical features to be recognised when examining the impact of SE on the lives of people with an intellectual disability in countries such as Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the UK and parts of Europe, is the long history of welfare support those countries have provided to people with a disability. The SE model challenges the very core of the welfare model, and it is not surprising that many of the negative attitudes and in-built disincentives inherent in the welfare system have, to some extent, impeded its growth as a strong alternative to segregated employment options.
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