

### Ch. 13: The Career Development of Youth and Young Adults with Disabilities

This chapter is all about assisting those who have disabilities to find their best fit for employment. Specifically, it is speaking of youth and young adults with disabilities. There are many limitations faced by those living with disabilities. This chapter promotes the need for employers to make accommodations as required by law through the ADA. The ADA includes physical, mental, and emotional impairments, those with an impairment (e.g., cancer), and those thought to have a limitation (e.g., facial disfigurement). The writers seem to believe this chapter's focus groups are limited partly due to employer attitudes and discrimination, lack of post-high school preparation, and lack of assistance from the federal level.

Many factors make employment difficult for this group. One is the much lower likelihood of graduating high school, which by direct implication limits the number of this population who go to college. More availability to early workforce opportunities and other efforts to promote opportunities for those under age 18 is needed, even though the federal government has spent some 58 billion dollars to improve these issues. Although this sounds discouraging, the efforts have improved the situation, but the employment range between those with disabilities and those without disabilities is drastic (i.e., 19% with vs 66% without). They wrap the chapter up with career theories to assist the chapter's focus populations.

This chapter covers a challenging topic! We have a young lady at our church who has a disability that makes her extremely socially awkward to the point it is very distracting for her to be in a class of her peers (she is 19). She is just as sweet as she can be but can go on a tangent that has nothing to do with the class. Everyone there is so kind as to try not to react negatively. To share this young lady's story is to say there are no simple and inclusive answers to this type of

disability. The writers of this chapter seem to speak in terms that are too broad regarding disabilities. I sometimes wonder if people who put forward ideas about employers making accommodations for those with disabilities have ever had a business. There are indeed situations where this makes sense. Still, it seems employers are often considered part of a privileged class and, therefore, should pay a privilege tax and make these accommodations at their own expense. I suspect (or hope) there is some way that employers can write such expenses off on their taxes. Regardless, it can burden an employer to absorb the cost of the accommodations required for the discussed population.

It seems reasonable to question what is a disability that is worthy of assistance. It would be interesting to know the number of people who could make minor life adjustments to improve their situations and help them be more employable. I know this can appear insensitive in our current world, but personal responsibility is a reasonable factor to consider. One thing I struggled with in this chapter is grouping issues like depression, diabetes, AIDS, and multiple sclerosis as disabilities. These are drastically different issues. They each have factors to consider but considering them equal would be quite the stretch. The world is promoting an idea of equality that sounds very altruistic without considering all the potential outcomes or likely repercussions.

Looking at this from a career path discussion seems more appropriate (i.e., directing the person rather than reshaping the career). We must be aware of limitations and strengths and then consider a career that aligns with our limitations and abilities. Human nature lends itself to some people being better suited for careers requiring more sophisticated thought patterns, while others are better suited for lower-level processing careers. The whole I.Q. test idea supports this by

demonstrating that it is more than a stigma or discrimination to say a person has a lower I.Q. Instead, well-accepted intelligence testing backs up varying intelligence levels.

To say that there should be equity of outcomes (pay) would be to display that the ability to produce an exceptional product versus the ability to create a subpar product is no different. Imagine you and your neighbor purchase a refrigerator for \$1,500 each. They look almost identical but work very differently. One works to perfection, whereas the other has an intermittent problem where it only cools to 55 degrees (if you keep the door shut) only half the time. We would never accept this as being okay. A person who could only work intermittently and produce a subpar product should not be acceptable or forced on employers. Stating a person who would likely have an inferior outcome is different is not to say that a person who is qualified and able to be a consistently present employee but speaks with a lisp or maybe in a wheelchair should suffer setbacks for these challenges. As stated earlier, this is a complicated issue that has many levels and variations of challenges to overcome.

When teaching Master level students, it will be a critical part of the process to help students consider any biases or areas where they may be oblivious to the realities and perspectives of the people involved on both sides of an issue, like employing those with disabilities. Students must have a general idea of the ADA guidelines that may help career counseling clients succeed. Students will need to have a general understanding of the various career theories to be well-equipped to assist clients in learning things about themselves to help them succeed in their chosen careers. Further, students will need to understand the potential long-term effects of early career patterns on a person's beliefs about their future work opportunities. Helping clients with disabilities consider their self-efficacy and their outcome

expectations can help them consider their preferred future desires and how they develop into reality.