



Social and Labor Adaptation of People with Disabilities by Means of Production of Items of Folk Art: Evidence from Sociological Study

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ABSTRACT

The article looks at the issues of integration of people with disabilities into a contemporary Russian society by means of utilization of their labor potential in the production of items of folk art with consideration of experience of this kind of activities in Vietnam. The relevance of this theme arises due to the lack of a much needed attention on the part of the government in formation of socially adequate and non-discriminatory conditions for life and activities of people with disabilities, which would allow them to overcome an image of a passive and dependent disability in the mass consciousness and disabled peoples' own self-consciousness. The most important condition of a successful integration of people with disabilities is their professional self-determination and employment. The study shows that people with disabilities face significant difficulties in identification of their place in life from the perspective of their professional employment. A priority area of employment of people with disabilities is their involvement in decorative arts, which encourages their full integration in a society, as most often they cannot adapt to the usual conditions of life and cannot compete on the labor market as equals with people without disabilities. Considering the fact that labor rehabilitation of people with disabilities by means of their involvement with decorative arts is not sufficiently spread in Russia there is a need to actively spread the media message about the advances of the people with disabilities in Vietnam in the sphere of production of items in decorative arts.

Keywords: People with Disabilities, Social Integration, Labor Rehabilitation, Social Policy, Labor Market, Professional Niches, Folk Art

JEL Classifications: I14, J71, J23

1. INTRODUCTION

Currently it is an open secret that a number of people with disabilities is extremely high not only in Russia, but also in the whole of the world. According to the UN statistics, in the beginning of 1990s there were about 0.5 billion of people with disabilities around the world, which would constitute about 10% of the human population at that time.

Russia has 12.8 million of people with disabilities, 3.39 million of whom are the people of an active working age. According to the

data from the Russian Ministry of Health their number increases by 1 million each year. It is estimated that by 2015 their number might reach 15 million people. A little more than 1 million people with disabilities are employed, even though over 4 million of them in Russia are recognized as those able to work (Nikitin, 2009). For a comparison: 40% of Britons and 25% of Americans with disabilities are employed. At the same time the challenge of adaptation of social environment and living conditions to the disabled people and to their special needs was almost never addressed before. A large-scale attempt of implementation of social rehabilitation of people with disabilities in Russia was made

for the time in 1995, when a law “on social protection of people with disabilities in the Russian Federation” was adopted. To date a new policy of rehabilitation of people with disabilities has been developed in Russia. In 2011 “an accessible environment” program was adapted to address the needs of people with disabilities through year 2019. In the context of this program social integration of people with disabilities should affect all spheres of their lives, from construction of houses of a new type to organization of entertainment and employment of the disabled people. However, it needs to be recognized that issues related to the quality of life of people with disabilities remain unaddressed while the opinion of these people themselves is not always considered. The most difficult problem remains to be recruitment and employment of people with disabilities.

People with disabilities are often not employed under different pretenses, discriminated in their rights while certain types of jobs are left inaccessible to them due to their poor adaptation to the labor capacities of these people. All of that creates additional tensions in a society as it makes a large portion of a population “unnecessary.” These specific circumstances have made a major impact on the goals and methods of this sociological study, which touches upon many major issues related to the prospects of the social and labor rehabilitation of people with disabilities in the contemporary Russian society from the perspective of utilization of their social and professional potential by means of production of items of folk art.

2. METHODS

A literature review of an issue under a study demonstrates that sociologists around the world started to study adaptation in the end of XIX - beginning of the XX century. General theoretical framework of study of issues of social adaptation is established in the works of Émile Durkheim who looked at individual’s internalization of social norms in the process of adaptation, Max Weber who substantiated adaptation as a goal-oriented rational action, Talcott Parsons who considered adaptation as a mutual adjustment between an individual and a society, and Robert K. Merton who described adaptation in the conditions of social disorganization.

Besides, integration of people with disabilities into a society were studied by such authors as A. Baler, R. Gruber, M. Meiry, S. Rumej, F. Pelc, G. Anns, U. Frikey and others.

Among the Russian sociologists who wrote on social adaptation are such scholars as N. Naumova, L. Shpak, A. Sakhno, R. Bulatova, A. Shalyto, O. Golub, J. Toshenko, and others.

However, a limited number of the contemporary Russian sociologists study the problem of professional rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Amongst the scholars in this field the works of the following ones could be identified: N. Sock, E. Belozeroва, A. Dyskin, S. Kavokin, E. Naberushina, N. Malofeyeva, D. Shevchenko, P. Romanova, A. Chernetskaya and others.

Theoretical framework of scholarship of folk art is established in the works of V.E. Guseva, A.S. Kargina, M.A. Nekrasova, L.E. Mikhailova, where folk art is perceived as a self-sufficient field of the Russian culture, which not only preserves national traditions and cultural values, but also develops a creative potential and spiritual forms of cultural and leisure activities of the Russian people.

Giving the credit to theoretical and practical significance of publications of the aforementioned scholars, it needs to be clarified that scholarly development of the field of social adaptation of people with disabilities cannot be considered deep and able to provide conclusive answers. Virtually non-existent are studies of social and labor rehabilitation of people with disabilities by means of production of items of folk art. The problem situation of the study emerges out of the following contradictions that have ontological foundations:

1. Contradiction between the needs of a society in utilizing the potential of people with disabilities in public production and non-existence of conditions for doing that.
2. Contradiction between facilitation of a process of integration of people with disabilities in Russia in the framework of one government policy-suggested model of integration of people disability and a variety of ways (models) of resolution of their problems that exist in the world.

Meanwhile the specificity of sociological scope of research of folk art is defined by understanding of its hidden mechanisms of social adaptation by means of varied forms of social communications, social activities and cooperation of people with disabilities.

It should be accepted as a fact that today there exist an objective need for formation of an effective mechanism of rehabilitation of people with disabilities. Its formation should focus not only on the achievement of successful fulfillment of labor potential of people with disabilities, but should also concentrate on formation of adequate conditions of self-actualization, self-development and expansion of contacts with the outside world and on leading of a more active social life.

This sociological study was conducted to investigate the needs of people with disabilities in different spheres of life, to analyze major problems of employment on the labor market of Primorsky Krai province of Russia, and to examine regulation of the process of professional adaptation of people with disabilities, which would help adapting individuals achieve an adequate model of self-identification and which would assist them in gaining new knowledge, skills and experiences useful for their vacation and their social integration. Some 144 persons have participated in the study; they were primarily people with hearing, vision and locomotive disorders who live in Primorsky Krai province of Russia and those who live in Vietnam.

This study uses probability sampling because the study did not imply additional quota sampling and formation of additional filters, which would exclude some representatives of the general population from the survey or would presuppose domination of certain groups of the general population, or distribution of the

sampled population in relation to certain parameters of the general population.

This study uses a minimal sample size, which would meet the criteria of reliability and validity of the acquired results in respect to the general population. The study aims to address the following tasks:

- To analyze disability as an individual condition of a person who participates in integration processes and who is a carrier of social problems.
- To characterize a Russian society as a social space, which requires optimization of processes of professional integration of people with disabilities.
- To identify significance of employment in the structure of life plans of people with disabilities in Russia and in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
- To study satisfaction of people with disabilities with their jobs.
- To characterize institutions and agents that participate in the professional integration of people with disabilities.
- To give recommendations on modeling of integration processes of people with disabilities in the Russian society from the perspective of use of their social and professional potential by means of production of items of folk art.

The topic being analyzed in the study is the social adaptation of people with disabilities by means of production of items of folk art.

Research hypothesis is based on an assumption that production of items of folk art is an effective way of professional integration of people with disabilities into contemporary society.

Interpretation and operationalization definitions of major terms:

Person with disability is a person who has partially or completely lost an ability to work due to a health impairment, which resulted from a health condition, trauma or congenital defect of development.

Social disadaptation is a disruption of an individual's ability to adapt to the changing social environment.

Labor disadaptation is an inability to perform labor operations in the conditions of the present-day technological processes due to psychophysiological reasons.

Folk art is a creative collective activity of the people, which reflects its main life values, views and ideals. Ascending to antiquity, it remains to exist as a historical foundation of the world's artistic culture, the source of national artistic traditions and the voice the national consciousness.

The procedure of empiric study includes three blocks. The first block includes the issues of social and demographic character, which help better understand the object under study with its social, demographic, physical and psychological characteristics.

The second block of issues presupposes identification of social attitude of people with disabilities towards proper labor integration

into society. In the end it was this element of socio-cultural integration that was recognized as the most influential and as the most significant, not only because employment offers people with disabilities an additional source of income, but also because it empowers them to perceive themselves as full-fledged members of society the quickest and the fullest way.

The third block of issues addresses matters of study of mechanisms of adaptation of people with disabilities in the Russian society by means of production of items of folk art. The third stage implied development of comprehensive recommendations for continuous personal integration of people with disabilities in all spheres of life by ways of dissolution of tendencies towards segregation, separation and dependency along with strengthening of their civic status and improvement of their self-confidence.

3. RESULTS

The study has demonstrated that majority of people with disabilities do not perceive the environment where they live and their emotional attitude towards this environment as comfortable. Interviews have shown that most of people with disabilities (64% of the interviewees) are ready for a fuller and more active participation in all spheres of life. 30% of respondents believe that in recent years the public attitude towards people with disabilities has dramatically improved.

At the same time 94% of people with disabilities are not satisfied with their financial standing. Only 6% of interviewed people with disabilities perceive their financial standing as good. At the same time, 10% of respondents count on themselves to solve their material problems in the future, while 43% said that they would need external help, and the remaining 47% said that they count on the government assistance.

That said only 10% of interviewed people with disabilities do not aspire to be employed or do not consider employment to be necessary for them. For others it remains to be a matter of major concern. It is unfortunate that in the provincial program on "social support of people with disabilities in Primorsky Krai province for 2012-2015" (Novikov, 2007), the issue of employment of people with disabilities is not even addressed. The study has also shown that 45% of interviewees are seeking employment for over a year. It also became evident that the most important issue for people with disabilities at the stage of finding a job is the availability of welfare benefits, and not the sheer size of salary that could support their comfortable living per se. Most of respondents (73%) do not believe that someone would offer them a high salary. In general, analysis of the situation regarding the size of the future salary that the respondents would want to receive reveals that 30% of them would want to earn from 10 to 19 thousand rubles per month, while 23% dream about a salary over 30 thousand rubles per month.

44% of respondents seek employment through friends and acquaintances, while 37% are looking for jobs through newspapers and the Internet. Less than 5% of people with disabilities refer to the employment centers and employment bureaus being unable to present themselves to the employer.

If most of people with disabilities unambiguously demonstrate their high interest in employment, not every one of them is ready to acquire a new profession. 60% of respondents are not ready to change their qualification, which is why it becomes extremely important to overcome their inertness, their social passivity to reveal and to develop their creative talents, to strengthen their confidence in their importance for a society. There is a pressing need to develop and to expand a system of continuous professional education for people with disabilities and also to attribute more attention to the issue of inclusive education, which implies creation of conditions and infrastructure for learning for people with disabilities not only in specialized educational institutions, but also in community colleges and institutions of higher learning.

The answers to third block of questions of empiric study have revealed a tendency that people with disabilities lack knowledge and experience in production of items of decorative arts, but would very much want to engage into this kind of activity professionally (76%). The decorative arts is closely associated with the daily lives of people, it encourages creation of the household culture for people with disabilities, it improves their culture of labor, their culture of interactions with others and fosters an aesthetic attitude towards the world.

Analysis of a sphere of decorative arts (beading, fur-, fabric- and leather-works, ceramics, wood-, bone- and stone carving, needlework, toy-making, weaving, knitting, etc.) in Primorsky Krai province, as demonstrated by the study, has a low potential of development. Major barriers for development of decorative arts on the territory of Primorsky Krai province are associated with availability of professionals, who could teach people with disabilities this kind of arts, who could educate them in sales and promotion, in gaining government support, in acquisition of raw materials for production along with equipment and facilities.

This creates a necessity to develop methodological approaches toward production of items of decorative arts by people with disabilities along with the necessity to develop certain production methods for different stages of work of people with disabilities while they work with these items.

Main methodological approach aimed at solution of this problem should be formulated in the following manner: Production of items of decorative arts by people with disabilities should be made one of the most promising ways of their employment. For this purpose in the conditions of formation of touristic clusters in Primorsky Krai province there is a pressing need to create different forms of ethnic cultural centers with decorative arts workshops on the traveling routes of the tourists. For instance, in Khasansky county there is an opportunity to create not only "The Russian cultural centers," but also to establish "A Korean house," as this county is located on the route, which was used by the ethnic Koreans during their voluntary migration to the territory of Primorsky Krai.

The second methodological approach is formulated based on the values of not only separate ethnic and cultural communities, but on the values of Russia as a whole. At this point, there emerges

a need to create a souvenir brand of the province. At the same time, today there is a little variety of Primorsky Krai souvenirs available on the market. These are plastic-surfaced photo magnets of different shapes, sets of postal cards, porcelain items with the photos of Vladivostok landmarks, and sometimes the key chains with the coat of arms of Vladivostok. This is what the souvenir variety is limited to. The province almost does not have souvenirs associated with the Russian Far East.

The third methodological approach is based on the principle of professional training and professional support of folk art makers with disabilities by a mentor, who could assist them depending on their type of disability in working with complex materials, as for instance there are limitations on working with varnishes for people with immune health conditions and respiratory diseases. People with locomotive disabilities experience difficulties in carving and working with sharp objects. Here it requires producing certain master plates for certain abilities of a maker.

Creation of a brand of a region should provide jobs for the residents of the region while the variety of items produced should increase. This is why this article aims to encourage production of handicraft items by people with disabilities, which could be competitive on the market of souvenir products of Primorsky Krai province. The handmade items should carry the symbols of the region and should be produced using simple chains of production.

This could be illustrated by the data from the experiences of Vietnam, where 5.3 million people out of the 90 million people population of the country have disabilities, which constitutes 5.9% of the total population. This being said, almost 2 out of the 5,3 million persons with disability in Vietnam are able to work (Sharonova, 2008). This is the framework that was used by the Government of Vietnam to adapt a national employment program. Welfare system in Vietnam is built on the principle of shared responsibility of the state, the region and the individual (Alekseeva and Zrutina, 2013). In the framework of this national Program the share of the trained labor force has increased from 12% in 1993 to 17,8% in 1998, while the coverage of the population with basic education has increased to 90%. Non-government-sponsored forms of education have become widespread, which resulted from the policy that aims to develop a mixed economy (Alekseeva and Zrutina, 2013). In the framework of this program decorative arts also became widespread in the form of traditional crafts. Some 60% of the rural population in Vietnam are engaged into this kind of activity. The whole communities including all of their members irrelevantly of the age, sex and physical condition produce handicraft items that their region is known for. A special feature of this kind of situation is that each province of Vietnam specializes on a particular kind of craft. One of the quarters of Hanoi is home to the rehabilitation center of HOA DON (TRUTH, KINDNESS AND BEAUTY), which was created by Mr. Doan Xuan Tiep to offer professional training and employment opportunities to people with disabilities. The Center was established in September 1996 with the support of the local government. As of today over 600 thousand people have been rehabilitated in this center. They are engaged into all types of decorative arts, including jewelry.

Chuyên Mỹ commune (Phú Xuyên District, Hanoi) incorporates 7 villages with a developed industry of pearl incrustation, a handicraft, which gives jobs to many residents of Phú Xuyên and adjacent districts. Annually Chuyên Mỹ masters of pearl incrustation produce millions of incrustated products, such as furniture, sign plates, traditional calligraphic hanging scrolls, paintings and many other things. The main raw production material in Chuyên Mỹ is the pearl shell brought from different places. In their work they use both domestic shells and shells imported from Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia. The experience of Chuyên Mỹ commune can be applied in Primorsky Krai.

But people with disabilities in Vietnam do not produce only handicrafts. UNESCO-sponsored ICEVN factory produces energy-saving light bulbs that can be used for different purposes - from home to street lighting. Considering physical capacities of people with disabilities the whole production process is broken into smaller cycles.

A study of organization of labor of people with disabilities in Vietnam has revealed one very important feature of the process, which exists in a form of a distinct differentiation of physical condition of each person involved in production. Experienced mentors reveal capacity of each individual with disability to produce certain kind of action (to saw, to sew, to glue, to paint, etc.) and put this person on a specific cycle of production. Understanding a role of their labor in the large process of production, people with disabilities consider themselves full-fledged members of a society as they gain an opportunity for self-actualization. It needs to be pointed out that public opinion in Vietnam does not separate people with disabilities from others, which is encouraged by a smoothly running system of formation of public opinion by mass media.

It is unfortunate that in effect members of the Russian society do not look so tolerant when it comes to dealing with the fellow citizens who have disabilities. The study has demonstrated that majority of citizens agree with the notion that employment of people with disabilities should be done in the framework of special programs (in the way of creation of separate groupings of employees working together). There were even those who said that they were not ready to attend public celebrations and events where people with disabilities would be present. Public service advertisement in mass media, which would address the problems of people with disabilities, does not receive its much-needed attention. In this vein, in the opinion of 63% interviewed persons with disabilities in recent years there hasn't been any changes in public awareness of the problem of people with disabilities.

Analysis of an existing situation shows the need to adapt a national program of socio-psychological adaptation and labor integration of people with disabilities on the principles of social responsibility of the state, the region and the individual. To solve the problems of people with disabilities their social adaptation should become a priority task for the entire society.

4. CONCLUSION

The care that the society can provide to its fellow citizens with disabilities is a criterion of its spiritual and social development.

So far Russia is in the very beginning of its long way of formation of tolerant attitudes towards people with disabilities and towards recognition of their problems. In Russia the attitude towards people with disabilities that took Europe several generations to achieve, has only started to emerge. However, a positive dynamics is also apparent, which encourages many people with disabilities to return to an active lifestyle, to return to work and even to improve their health status.

As a result of an analysis of problems of people with disabilities in Primorsky Krai the following possible recommendations can be given to help develop a sphere of decorative arts on the territory of the province:

1. To develop and to put into an operation a special regional program on labor rehabilitation of people with disabilities by means of production of items of decorative arts.
2. To create a system of collection and storage of information that relates to the items of decorative arts in the region.
3. To provide tax deductions to the craftsmen, who offer training to people with disabilities in decorative arts.
4. To develop a system of organization of selling exhibitions of decorative art items produced by people with disabilities on the traveling routes of tourists in the tourism clusters that are currently being developed in the province.
5. To provide space for advertisement materials of decorative arts companies and to establish distribution points on concessional terms, to open an online store that would sell decorative arts items.

Implementation of a mechanism of labor adaptation of people with disabilities by means of their engagement in the production of branded items of the decorative arts is a long-term, but important task, which aims to improve the conditions of life of the population, its social well-being and its self-development.

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