

Social Work Intervention Space and Intervention Path for Integrated Employment of Disabled Persons—Based on the Analysis of Y City in J Province

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Abstract: With the concept of integration and sharing widely accepted by people, the traditional employment model has been unable to adapt to the development of the new era, integration employment will become the general trend. Based on the analysis of the employment status of disabled people and integrated employment services in Y City, J Province, although the employment rate has increased steadily, there are significant deficiencies in integrated employment, such as vague policy guidelines, insufficient service supply, low social awareness, limited family support, and lack of individual abilities of disabled people. Social work can advocate policies on the macro level and build support networks on the medium level. Microscopically, group cognition is reshaped and individual energy is enhanced, and concept, goal, environment and behavior are integrated in turn.

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Raising

The Party's 20th National Congress stressed that “we will strengthen the employment-first policy, improve the employment promotion mechanism, and promote high-quality and full employment.” Employment is the biggest livelihood of people with disabilities, is an important way to improve their income and life. In recent years, although under the strong support and promotion of the government, the employment of disabled people has achieved remarkable results, but compared with the comprehensive construction of socialist modernization and the realization of common prosperity of a series of requirements, there is still much room for improvement. According to the Statistical Communique on the Development of Persons with Disabilities in 2021, there are more than 85 million disabled people in China, and more than 10 percent of them fail to find employment within their working age range. Due to the agglomeration of disadvantages such as impaired function, limited movement, psychological frustration and blocked participation, the problems of low employment rate, poor employment stability and low level of employment of the disabled are still widespread. With the continuous development of social and economic development in our country, isolated and sheltered forms of employment can not meet the increasingly diverse employment needs of contemporary disabled persons. Different from isolated and sheltered employment, integrated employment emphasizes the equal employment rights and interests of persons with disabilities and their participation in social life, which is an effective way for them to get rid of social isolation, remove the label of “marginalization” and “stigma” and realize their individual social role. It is also an inevitable trend of the development of employment mode for persons with disabilities who have the willingness and ability to work. Therefore, how to promote the localization of the employment service for the disabled and improve the employment quality of the disabled has become a topic worth studying.

There are some shortcomings in the integrated employment of persons with disabilities, such as narrow application group, lack of specific policies and legal protection, imperfect construction of barrier-free environment, and unclear positioning of each party. In the field of employment services for the disabled, social work has been playing a positive role, and has a certain policy foundation and conditions. On July 8, 2021, The State Council issued the 14th Five-Year Plan for the Protection and Development of persons with Disabilities, which put forward the requirements for

developing social work services for persons with disabilities and speeding up the training of professional personnel for social work for persons with disabilities[1]. In view of the current difficulties in the development of integrated employment for people with disabilities, social work can exert its intervention advantages in micro, meso and macro levels through its unique working methods.

1.2 Literature Review

1.2.1 Research on Integrated Employment of the Disabled

On the dilemma of integrated employment for the disabled, most Chinese scholars start from the research and practical experience of foreign supportive employment modes. Shen Renhong (2017) found from the evolution of supportive employment services for people with disabilities in the United States that the strength of the traditional service system, the negative attitude of employers, conflicting policies and value orientations, and the lack of control of people with disabilities all restrict the development of supportive employment services[2]. Xu Huanbin (2020), inspired by the experience of Germany, believes that integrated employment needs to target the problems such as insufficient employability, fewer employment channels and unstable positions of the disabled in China[3]. Gong Yan (2021) summarized the overall status quo of supportive employment in China based on empirical investigation and pointed out a series of factors hindering integrated employment of people with disabilities, including the conflict between the existing welfare system for people with disabilities and employment, the government's participation and the lack of professional personnel construction, among which the lack of legal and policy protection is the key and needs to be improved[4].

In terms of the path to realize the integrated employment of people with disabilities, Li Caimao (2018) believes that the social role of people with disabilities should be defined as the active subject rather than the object of support, so that the integrated employment ability and opportunities will not be restricted[5]. Scholar Zhang Yanmin (2020) takes disabled college students as the research object and points out that the stability of employment of disabled college students depends on whether they can adapt to the workplace environment smoothly. Therefore, the construction of barrier-free environment should be improved[6]. Wu Xia (2020), taking the mentally disabled as the research object, believes that only by constructing social support system, mining and developing human resources can the sustainable development of integrated employment be promoted[7].

1.2.2 Research on social work intervention in integrated employment of the disabled

Jianshe Xie and Huancheng Peng (2017) pointed out that vocational rehabilitation supported by social workers can provide a good basis for the employment of disabled people in competitive places through the service practice of supporting employment of disabled people in the social system.[8]. Li Shaohang (2017) believes that social workers can play the role of pioneers of employment opportunities, training of employment skills and case managers in supportive employment services for people with intellectual disabilities[9]. Lin Chengyan and Zhuo Caiqin (2021) turn the perspective of social work action research into the relationship between the suppliers of welfare triangle, and propose that relevant government departments can add family welfare policies in the design of welfare system to make welfare distribution fairer among vulnerable groups such as the disabled[10]. Zhang Yunan and Zhou Pei (2023) believe that assisted employment is different from sheltered employment, and service organizations should adhere to the concept of “helping others and helping themselves” in social work to improve the self-ability of disabled people and promote their integrated development[11].

In the aspect of social work's involvement in the integrated employment of the disabled, the research quantity is small, the research object is relatively single, and the research degree is relatively shallow. Most scholars have studied the mode of supportive employment for people with disabilities through social work practices, or discussed the role that social work can play in the process of integrated employment for people with disabilities, which has certain reference value, but still needs further systematic and in-depth research.

2. The Current Situation and Dilemma of Integrated Employment of the Disabled in China: A Case Study of y City in J Province

2.1 Current Situation of Integrated Employment of Persons with Disabilities

In recent years, the employment situation of the disabled has been relatively stable in most areas of China, and the number of newly created jobs has increased overall. Taking Y City, J Province as an example, the employment rate of the city's people with certified disabilities within the employment age group is 43.38%, including the auxiliary employment which belongs to the nature of employment participation. Different categories of disabled people have different employment conditions. The employment rate of physical disabled people is 49.93%, accounting for 52.48% of the total number of employed people, which is the most optimistic among all categories of disabled people. However, the employment rate of mental disabled people only accounts for 8.36% of the total number of employed people.

According to the feedback information from the special survey and household survey, the income level of some disabled people is low, and the income level of employed disabled people is lower than the national or provincial poverty standard, accounting for 16.92%. Although many disabled people have achieved employment, they are engaged in repetitive and simplified work, and the employment stability is poor, and there is a certain gap between reaching the standard of integrated employment.

Y City Disabled People's Federation regards integration as a key way to improve the life quality of disabled people, and has made some efforts in integration employment, such as supporting the construction of H Integration Development Center in 2020. The institute mainly provides skills training, rehabilitation training, psychological counseling and other integrated services for people aged 18 to 35 with third and fourth degree intelligence, autism and other disabilities. It has also established a mechanism of employment connection and labor transportation with “homes for the disabled” and caring enterprises. At present, several disabled students have been successfully recommended for trial employment in relevant enterprises, and 91% of them have the desire to find jobs, and 35% of them have the ability to find jobs.

2.2 The Dilemma of Integrated Employment of Persons with Disabilities

2.2.1 Government Level: Insufficient Service Supply

In terms of policy protection, there are no relevant laws and policies to define the concept of integrated employment for the disabled and provide specific implementation measures. There are institutional conflicts between competitive employment and welfare relief, low coverage rate of barrier-free facilities construction and lack of standardized and unified design standards. These problems make some equal rights and interests of people with disabilities not effectively guaranteed in the process of integrated employment, and they are in a vulnerable position in an open working environment.

In terms of employment service supply, Y City Disabled Persons' Federation mainly plays an administrative function and plays an employment guidance role. It adheres to a set of traditional and relatively fixed standardized procedures and service teams for the employment of disabled persons, and its subordinate districts and subdistricts almost completely depend on the arrangement of the Federation. Although this maintains the stability of the service, the working mode lacks of subjective initiative. Administrative staff are only satisfied with the hard criteria to measure the employment of the disabled, such as the employment rate of the disabled and the number of new jobs, and it is difficult to fully take into account the diverse needs of different disabled people. In the face of difficulties such as poor adaptability to the environment in the process of integrated employment of the disabled, the staff did not take the initiative to seek breakthrough and timely improve the service. At present, there is only one demonstration educational institution of H Integration Development Center in Y City. Due to a series of access restrictions, the number of disabled people who can participate in it is very limited, and the supply is far from enough.

2.2.2 Social Dimension: Stereotypes Die Hard

In reality, the public stereotype of disabled people includes defects, lack of ability, solitary character and so on. The result of such social prejudice and discrimination is social exclusion, which not only restricts the number of jobs for the disabled in society, but also easily leads to the “learned helplessness” of the disabled[12]. It also ensues the hidden contradiction between the disabled and the able-bodied, resulting in the unfair treatment of the disabled when they enter the open labor market. Thus resulting in the actual integration of employment of low sustainability, unstable problems.

2.2.3 At the Family Level: Insufficient Support

Families are closely related to the employment of persons with disabilities. Many families of people with disabilities face both economic and mental pressure, or even poverty due to disability, and are unable to provide necessary support for people with disabilities to get out of their homes and into regular employment. However, disabled families with better material conditions tend to over-protect their children, often ignoring the psychological and spiritual needs of disabled people, and failing to encourage them to make bold attempts in the field of integrated employment.

2.2.4 Individual Level of Disabled Persons: Lack of Subjective and Objective Abilities

Individuals with disabilities are the fundamental factors affecting integrated employment. Subjectively, the pessimistic employment thoughts of the disabled will hinder the employment process. Most unemployed disabled people enjoy a variety of exclusive preferential policies and welfare. Partly due to high employment requirements and comprehensive subsidies, they hold a passive attitude towards employment and are reluctant to fight for jobs on their own. Some of the disabled who have been employed are unable to adapt to the working environment and interpersonal communication smoothly due to their poor personality sensitivity and adjustment ability, resulting in poor work effect, short integrated employment cycle and low personal satisfaction. Objectively, due to physical defects, disabled people often do not have the same high labor skills as able-bodied people, so the most direct problem is that the range of occupations they can choose is greatly reduced. In addition, with the increasingly fierce competition in the job market, education is more important in employment, and Chinese disabled people generally have a low level of education, lack the necessary ability to participate in some competitive jobs, and their job hunting status is in a disadvantageous area.

3. The Intervention Space of Social Work in the Integrated Employment of Persons with Disabilities

3.1 Enhance Individual Ability and Promote Behavioral Integration

In the process of integrated employment, people with disabilities are often in a passive and negative position. Taking H Integrated Development Center in Y City as an example, its service objects need to go through preliminary professional evaluation and screening. Such “threshold” prevents some disabled people with insufficient abilities from entering the environment of integrated education to receive relevant education services, and thus they are left in inefficient activities for a long time. In this regard, social workers can act as enablers and provide transitional support for people with disabilities who do not meet the barriers to entry, including vocational skills and social competence. In addition, social work can also help disabled people get rid of the barriers of socialization in the workplace, change from the role of helper to the role of producer, and achieve the difference of integration with the healthy people in behavior.

3.2 Reshape Group Cognition and Promote the Integration of Ideas

Group cognition plays an important role in promoting the integrated employment of the disabled. “The 14th Five-Year Plan for the Development of the Cause of Disabled Persons in Jiangsu Province” proposed to adhere to the combination of enabling employment and supporting the

mentally and mentally, and to promote the internal driving force of the employment and income of the disabled by “supporting both the mentally and mentally”[13]. The “Zhi” and “wisdom” are aimed at the disabled themselves. The long-term condition of being rescued and isolated in reality makes them have negative self-cognition and feel powerless towards competitive employment. To this end, social work can use cognitive behavioral therapy to promote action optimization through positive changes in cognition. Starting from the specific cognitive limitations of the disabled, social work can help them establish a correct employment outlook, rebuild self-esteem and confidence, and actively remove the improper label of “vulnerable group”. Integrated employment is an unfamiliar concept to the general public, whose past sheltered concentrated employment has led them to stereotype that people with disabilities cannot work competitively alongside the able-bodied. To this end, social workers can act as advocates, spreading knowledge and ideas about integrated employment, and guiding the public to view people with disabilities fairly. When the stereotypes of both the disabled community and the general public are corrected, the breadth and frequency of two-way interpersonal communication and social interaction will naturally increase, and the possibility of integrated employment will also be improved.

3.3 Unite Family Forces and Promote Target Integration

People with disabilities have a strong dependence on their families, and social support at the family level is a strong relationship, which plays a key role in the integrated employment of people with disabilities. However, the society does not pay enough attention to the disabled family, only treating the disabled as the object of assistance, but ignoring the combined force of the whole family. Due to the habit of caring for the disabled for a long time, the parents themselves lack the awareness of protecting the rights of disabled shoji girls to integrate into society and work independently. To this end, social workers can treat the family of the disabled as a subsystem, provide services to the family from the perspective of resource integration[14], tap the strength and resources of the family of the disabled, or use group work to create a relaxed communication environment for the disabled and their parents, so that they can reach an agreed goal of integrated employment. Plan and find suitable employment opportunities together.

3.4 Expand Social Support and Promote Environmental Integration

The subjective initiative and enthusiasm of individuals are generated in the interaction with the external environment. The core of integrated employment is the establishment of a supportive workplace environment. However, the support range and strength of the social network of individuals with disabilities is very limited. In this regard, social workers can act as an intermediary between the subject of the disabled and the external environmental objects based on the perspective of “people in the situation”, so as to broaden the support network for the disabled and build a multi-dimensional identity relationship, so as to realize the integration of the disabled and the workplace environment. At the macro level, policies and regulations on barrier-free construction need to be improved to lay an objective foundation for people with disabilities to adapt to the workplace environment. At the intermediate level, social workers can spread the value proposition of integrated employment through extensive collaboration with other social organizations at all levels, universities and social enterprises interested in recruiting persons with disabilities, and encourage enterprises to develop and design jobs and positions suitable for persons with disabilities. At the micro level, individual or group work can improve the adaptability of individuals with disabilities.

4. Pathways of Social Work Intervention in Integrated Employment of Persons with Disabilities

Social work and the integration of employment of persons with disabilities has a strong conformation in theory, values and practice. According to the current situation and plight of the integration of employment of persons with disabilities, social work can adopt the following methods:

4.1 Develop an Integrated Service Model for the Sustainable Empowerment of Individuals with Disabilities

In our country, the increasing energy of vulnerable groups consists of individual active increasing energy and external forces[15]. As one of the vulnerable groups, the disabled are provided with external help to help themselves. Social workers can use the three professional methods comprehensively to implement the three-stage step-by-step intervention service model of “empowering”, “re-empowering” and “empowering” for the disabled from the perspective of advantages. The first is “empowerment”. On the basis of assessing the ability of disabled people and understanding their needs, the power of example, namely the experience of disabled people who have successfully achieved integrated employment, is used to motivate them. The second is “rehabilitation”, which requires social workers to flexibly use professional skills such as listening, empathy, encouragement and so on to carry out vocational rehabilitation training, so as to help people with disabilities in need to recover their integrated functions in employment, including self-care ability, social communication ability and job-hunting skills, and subjectively enhance their cognitive level and emphasis on integrated employment. Objective training integration employment related skills and improve their matching degree with competitive jobs. In the process of “empowerment”, social workers can design work life simulation activities for people with disabilities, plan the life style of healthy people, and cultivate the social emotional skills of people with disabilities, including perseverance, problem-solving ability and collaborative ability. At the same time, social workers can also use case work to help people with disabilities develop personalized career plans and continue to follow up.

4.2 Strengthen Public Awareness of the Concept of Integrated Employment

As advocates, in addition to promoting the core values of “equality, participation and sharing” of the disabled[16], social workers should use various forms of publicity activities or exhibitions to show the abilities of the disabled to the public, change the public's negative attitudes towards the disabled, and create a non-discriminatory employment environment. Community is the main place where people with disabilities live. Social workers can tap the community's human and organizational resources, promote the atmosphere of helping people with disabilities through the backbone of residents and leaders of various organizations, and mobilize the community to participate in activities jointly with the neighborhood committee and other organizations, so that people with disabilities can intuitively feel the tolerance and care of other social groups, so as to improve their sense of self-efficacy. In view of the lack of local awareness of integrated employment, social workers can make use of “Internet +” technology to carry out public service advertising, build barrier-free information systems, widely publicize the significance and feasibility of integrated employment for people with disabilities, attract more social forces to participate, and thus increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

4.3 Assist Families with Disabilities to Play a Positive Supporting Role

The family of the disabled is the most basic informal social support. Mobilizing the intention and enthusiasm of family integration in employment is the key to realize the two-way organic interaction and integration of service subject and object. Social workers should first integrate employment knowledge, the latest employment policy and post information interpretation, promote the integration of old and new ideas; Secondly, various forms of groups should be established to encourage deep communication between each other, restore emotional support functions, and form a good family atmosphere. For families with disabilities facing similar difficulties, social workers can guide them to interact and help each other and share their experiences and practices in the face of difficulties, so that families with disabilities can cooperate with each other, relieve pressure and learn positive experiences from the group[17].

4.4 Work with Multiple Entities to Build an Integrated Employment Support System

The limited individual power of social workers is not enough to change the current plight of

integrated employment of disabled persons. However, social work is oriented towards multiple subjects and has the expertise of resource linking, which can enhance the level of intervention by combining multiple subjects. In the face of the inadequate policy guarantee of integrated employment, social workers should cooperate closely with judicial organs and legal aid organizations, actively advocate policies, improve relevant laws and regulations, and consolidate the foundation of integrated employment. In order to solve the problem that service supply is too administrative and not professional enough, social work should follow the principle of differentiation, professionalism and development, cooperate with organizations such as integrated education institutions and vocational training institutions for the disabled, and design relevant training services for workplace adaptation according to the needs and personality of the disabled and the ecological environment of different individuals.

5. Conclusion and Discussion

The research and pilot of the integrated employment of the disabled started relatively late and is still at the exploratory stage. By analyzing the current employment situation and plight of the disabled in Y City, J Province, from the region to the whole, we find that the integrated employment of the disabled is a progressive and two-way systematic process. As an intermediary role, social work has certain space for intervention at individual, group, family and social levels, which can promote the integration of ideas, goals, behaviors and environment in turn. Among them, concept integration is the premise, which requires social workers to intervene in group cognition. Objective integration is to ensure that social workers should assist families and persons with disabilities to coordinate with each other and reach consensus. Behavioral integration is the foundation, reflected in the ability of people with disabilities to do competitive work, and colleagues can cooperate in the workplace, to achieve a state of harmony between health and disability. Environmental integration is the key. On the one hand, people with disabilities should get out of their comfort zone and learn to adapt to the competitive workplace environment. On the other hand, social workers should promote the interconnection of multiple subjects and improve the construction of barrier-free environment.

The integrated employment of the disabled is not only the pursuit of the disabled themselves, but also needs the attention and support of the government, society, family and other parties. Similarly, social work itself needs to constantly improve intervention paths in practice, strengthen cooperation, enhance its own professional qualifications, and play the intervention role more effectively. Although there are many difficulties in the integrated employment of persons with disabilities, it has aroused the attention of the community and pilot trials. We believe that the cohesion of all parties can overcome the obstacles and help persons with disabilities achieve a higher level of employment. It is also hoped that this study can provide some expansion ideas for the promotion of the integrated employment of persons with disabilities in our country.

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