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Health, Working Life and Welfare

INTELLECTUAL DISABILITY AND WORK

Most young adults with intellectual disabilities in Sweden are outside the labour market → Environment-related factors (not just those related to the individual) affect their employment opportunities → More knowledge is needed about what persons with intellectual disabilities themselves find to be helpful when it comes to gaining and retaining a job

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SUMMARY

Persons with disabilities are among those groups in society that have the most difficulty establishing themselves in the labour market.

Several factors are relevant to one's opportunities for getting a gainful employment. Studies indicate that individual circumstances and abilities play a role, but so too do environment-related factors such as legislation, access to personalised and long-term support, and employer attitudes.

Most young adults with intellectual disabilities in Sweden are outside the labour market. 22% are engaged in paid employment to some extent; in most such cases, the employer receives a wage subsidy of some sort. To increase the proportion of persons with intellectual disabilities (particularly women with disabilities) in the workforce, more attention must be paid to factors at various levels, and to how they interact.

More knowledge is needed about what persons with intellectual disabilities themselves find helpful when it comes to establishing themselves in the labour force, as well as how different support systems affect their employment possibilities.

1. Introduction

Most young people who complete compulsory school and set about establishing themselves in adult life have their sights set on finding employment, either immediately or after they have concluded a higher education programme. Young adults with disabilities cannot expect to establish themselves in the labour market to the same extent as young persons without disabilities. This is true despite the fact that workfare, which emphasises employment over financial aid, has long been enshrined in Swedish politics (Björklund et al 2014). Work is considered to be essential to achieving participation in society, something that is also a central objective of disability policy. One way to describe the situation is to say that persons with disabilities are marginalised in the labour market.

Compared to the general population, the employment rate for persons with disabilities has remained at a stable, low level for a considerable amount of time (the Swedish Ministry of Employment 2012), and the efforts that have been made to reduce this discrepancy have not succeeded in offsetting the differences (Larsson Tholén & Danermark 2016). However, in comparison with the rest of Europe, the proportion of persons with disabilities who are employed is slightly higher in Sweden (Danermark & Larsson Tholén 2016). The percentage who work, however, varies greatly depending on the type and degree of disability (see e.g. Szebehely et al 2001, Tideman & Tössebro 2002, the Swedish Ministry of Employment 2012). This review focuses on one of the groups that is furthest from the labour market: persons with intellectual disabilities (Olin & Ringsby Jansson 2009, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare 2012).

In addition to becoming financially self-sufficient, employment can have other positive consequences for the individual, such as giving the opportunity to develop social networks, enhancing self-esteem and identity, and adding structure to his/her daily life (Ahrne 1987, Mulinari & Selberg 2011). The positive effects of work on both health and quality of life are also emphasised (Marmot et al. 2008).

Despite the central importance of employment (both for society and to individuals), questions regarding work and persons with disabilities have generally received relatively little academic attention (Rönnerberg et al 2012, Johansson et al 2011, Mineur et al 2009, Nolén 2005). The research is even more limited when it comes to persons with intellectual disabilities and work.

How intellectual disabilities are defined, as well as what counts as paid work, is different in every country and varies from study to study. This also applies to how reduced working ability is understood, measured, and assessed. (cf. e.g. Tössebro 2012). Moreover, it is relatively common that the studies do not differentiate between different types of disabilities, which means that sometimes it is not possible to discern the specific results for persons with intellectual disabilities. The scope of this short text, however, is not intended

to develop reasoning about the study results based on differences in definitions and categorisations, nor will it address the interpretation of results from different welfare systems.

1.1 Intellectual disability

Different words have been used throughout history to refer to people who today are considered to belong to a group commonly referred to as “persons with intellectual disabilities”. The use of the word “developmental disorder” has long been common in Sweden, and the term “people with developmental disability” is used in legal texts. However, this term is perceived by many as stigmatising, and as harkening back to an outdated healthcare ideology (Svensson & Tideman 2007). The relatively new concept of “intellectual disability” has been implemented, and the term is now being used increasingly in official contexts. It is also the internationally accepted term, and corresponds with the terminology used in international conventions (the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs 2008). Therefore, the term “intellectual disability” is employed in this text.

How intellectual disability is understood depends on perspective. In an outsider’s perspective, which is a traditional way to consider and describe a person’s diagnosis and to categorise individuals, the focus is often on flaws and shortcomings. In an insider’s perspective, it is people’s individual experiences that give meaning, significance, and relevance to the definition of what constitutes an intellectual disability. This does not mean that the lived experience of having an intellectual disability is the same for every individual. Persons with intellectual disabilities are a very diverse group, with different circumstances and personalities as well as varying individual traits and abilities.

Persons with intellectual disabilities may need support when processing information, communicating, developing new knowledge, and using the knowledge they have developed in other contexts (that is to say, they may need help abstracting and generalising). Some need extensive support in their everyday lives, while others only require support in specific contexts or activities. The variety of intellectual disabilities and their resulting needs is large, and some people have additional disabilities. A combination of factors - in particular, the extent of the disability, environmental design, and the quality of support - determine what impact an intellectual disability has on a given individual.

The designing of support and customisations requires knowledge of the difficulties that may arise as a result of reduced intellectual and adaptive functional capacity. At the same time, Karlsson et al (2016, page 105) argue that cognitive abilities develop “when we deal with and interact with our environment.” This means that the ability to work has to do with much more than a given individuals’ abilities and traits. The environmental design of the workplace, the demands of the situation, and the type of support that is provided are equally important (cf. Gustafsson 1999).

To determine if a person has an intellectual disability, intelligence tests are conducted (of which the results should

indicate an IQ of less than 70), as well as an assessment of adaptive behaviour (i.e. the ability to interact in social situations and to cope with the various demands of everyday life). The psychological foundation, together with social, medical and (in the case of children and young people) educational evaluations, should provide a solid basis by which to exclude other causes and to determine if the individual's difficulties are the result of an intellectual disability.

The need for specific concepts and terms by which to describe an individual's functional ability is the subject of much debate, particularly among younger persons with disabilities. The argument is made that functional abilities vary from person to person, and that the difficulties that arise are due to flaws in the relationship between the individual and the environment (such as in the workplace, where support and demands are not adapted to suit the needs and conditions of the individual). Others believe that diagnoses and specific concepts can lead to a more understanding environment, and thereby provide better support and a more accessible environment.

1.2 Schooling for pupils with learning disabilities

Children and adolescents with intellectual disabilities may enrol in special primary and secondary school programmes. The special programme is a distinct form of school programme (separate from primary and secondary schools) that accepts pupils who, due to their intellectual disabilities, are not expected to be able to handle the demands of a typical primary/secondary school education.

The education provided at special upper secondary schools for pupils with intellectual disabilities should be adapted to the pupil's needs and circumstances and give the pupil a good basis for gainful employment, further education, personal development and active participation in society (SFS 2010). Graduating from a special upper secondary school does not qualify pupils to continue their studies at college or university level. Folk high school courses or education programmes for adults with intellectual disabilities (formerly known as "särvox" programmes) are the most common forms of higher education.

In 2013, reforms of the national upper secondary school education programme were implemented. Among other things, the changes take a more targeted approach to preparing pupils for active participation in the labour market. However, this overview cannot provide answers to how successful the "new" secondary school programmes have been in achieving their objectives, because the first pupils to complete the new programmes graduated in the spring of 2017.

1.3 Daily activities

Persons with intellectual disabilities who are not working or studying may qualify for Swedish state's Daily Activities initiative. The initiative is outlined in the Act on Support and Services for Persons with Certain functional impairments (LSS) and is intended to provide meaningful

occupation and to help prepare participants for working life (the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare 2008). Participants in the Daily Activities initiative are expected to support themselves with the aid of activity compensation or sickness compensation.

1.4 Support in the case of employment

Employers who hire persons who have reduced working ability due to a disability can receive wage subsidies and other social support. Wage subsidies, the most common form of financial aid, are intended to contribute to wage costs and to compensate for any necessary adaptations of work duties and the workplace. The purpose of wage subsidies is to increase opportunities for persons with disabilities to obtain jobs where a given individual's competence and skills are taken into account.

2. Labour and employment after special upper secondary school

A national comprehensive study (Arvidsson et al 2015) provides information on the frequency of work and other employment for young adults (approximately 20–30 years of age) with intellectual disabilities. By merging a register that includes virtually all pupils who graduated from special secondary school programmes from 2001 to 2011 with the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare's LSS-registers and Statistics Sweden's LISA register, researchers were able to map the employment situation of 12,269 former special secondary school pupils.

The results showed that in 2011, 22.4% had paid work (on a part-time or full-time basis); of this number, 87.6% were employed through a wage subsidy arrangement. 47% had their unpaid occupation through the Daily Activities initiative, and 6.6% were students (enrolled primarily in municipal adult education programmes or folk high school). Nearly a quarter, 24%, lacked identifiable employment (Arvidsson 2016, Luthra et al 2017).

The study includes only young adults with intellectual disabilities (approximately 20–30 years of age), which means that we currently have no corresponding information regarding the work and employment situation of persons with intellectual disabilities who are over the age of 30.

Previous Swedish studies have shown that the proportion of persons with intellectual disabilities who were actively employed has varied between 1.2% and 16% (Rosénqvist 1988, Sonnander 1990, Tideman 2000, Umb-Carlsson & Sonnander 2006). As a point of reference, in 1995 74.6% were engaged in work through the Daily Activities initiative, 2.4% were students, and 1.4% had no known employment (Tideman 2000). However, when comparing the current results (Arvidsson et al 2015) to previous studies, it

is important to note that the latter were based on a smaller demographic sample. Legislation and support measures have also changed over time, and a somewhat different method of categorising children and young persons with intellectual disabilities has developed (Tideman 2015).

3. Factors that facilitate or impede employment

To understand what affects the ability of persons with intellectual disabilities to find work, it is necessary to consider various factors at multiple levels, and to examine how they interact with each other (cf. Gustafsson et al 2014, MacIntyre 2014). Relevant legislation and policy decisions does exist at the national level, but overall attitudes and norms must also be considered; all of the above may be described as different discourses. At the organisational level, the legislation is implemented in a practical context. This is where policies have real impact for the individual and create both opportunities and obstacles. The individual level relates to individual traits, such as personality, functional ability, desires, and aspirations. It also includes the individual's immediate surroundings and environment.

In practice, the focus is usually on the individual's ability and individual difficulties, and on how the individual should be trained so that he/she can get and keep a job. Such an individual focus is challenged by research (see e.g. Danermark & Larsson Tholén 2016) that indicates that it is the interaction between environment-specific and individual factors that is crucial.

3.1 Employment or work

The employment activities for individuals with intellectual disabilities reflect the values of workfare (due, among other things, to the fact that many businesses have similar forms of “normal” jobs, i.e. cafe, car wash, manufacturing and packaging businesses, etc) (Lövgren 2013, Olsen 2009). One of the aims of the employment activities – namely, that they can prepare people for regular employment – ends up conflicting with the realities of an increasingly specialised labour market with fewer low-skilled jobs (Jacobsson & Seing 2013). The ideal of ensuring that everyone, including persons with intellectual disabilities, has the opportunity to participate in working life can be said to collide with the required traits people are expected to possess in order to be granted entry into the labour market (cf. Jacobsson & Seing 2013, Lillestø & Sandvin 2014).

The term low-skilled, or “simple” jobs, usually refers to work that does not require post-secondary or specialised training, as well as jobs that do not require a high degree of independence. These are characterised by strict routines or highly repetitive tasks (such work has long been considered to be a good fit for persons with intellectual disabilities). However, this concept is overly simplistic. Persons with

intellectual disabilities also have other needs and interests when it comes to their professional development (see Kiernan 2000).

The manner in which persons with intellectual disabilities are supported in the workplace should also be considered more broadly; co-worker experience shows that the initial need for support may largely concern aspects unrelated to the duties that the disabled person has been hired to perform. The individual may need help to develop strategies to keep track of time and to help him/her get to and from work. Another example is the need of support from co-workers when it comes to understanding the rules of the workplace, which are often implicit rather than explicit (Lövgren et al, forthcoming).

3.2 The attitudes of the employer

Studies show that political decisions regarding financial incentives, subsidised employment, and state-funded contributions to adaptation costs can increase employers' willingness to hire persons with disabilities (see e.g. Forslund et al 2004, Forslund & Vikström 2011, Gustafsson 2014). Employers with past experiences of persons with intellectual disabilities (in their professional or personal lives) are more receptive to the idea of employing persons with intellectual disabilities than employers who lack such experience (Andersson et al 2015, Gustafsson et al 2014).

3.3 Socioeconomics

One of the few socioeconomic studies carried out in this field indicates that it would be beneficial to develop procedures and strategies to help more persons with intellectual disabilities enter the workforce (Hultkrantz 2016). According to Hultkrantz (ibid), the most promising strategy would be to offer practical training and work experience to persons who already have an occupation through the Daily Activities initiative. Such an effort will entail a relatively expensive investment, but the potential socioeconomic and personal financial profitability of such an approach is deemed to be high (Aneglov & Eagle 2014).

3.4 Collaboration

The structuring of employment promotion support for persons with intellectual disabilities is often based on the assumption that the individual in question will gradually advance from the Daily Activities initiative to employment (Lövgren et al 2014). This process may involve working one day a week and spending the rest of the work week participating in activities within the Daily Activities initiative. According to representatives from different areas, such flexibility may be a prerequisite when it comes to transitioning the individual into the workforce (ibid). However, it has proven difficult to create such combinations, because the criteria for the Daily Activities LSS initiative require that the individual have no gainful employment and not be enrolled in an education or training programme (Act 1993:387, § 9 p. 10). In practice, the interpretation of these

criteria has become slightly more lenient, making it possible to combine employment and daily activities for as long as activity compensation is paid (up to the age of 30).

The above example highlights the importance of coordination and collaboration, both within and between government agencies and businesses (all with different responsibilities and roles) as regards employment and work for persons with intellectual disabilities. Studies describe conflicts between different regulatory frameworks and recurrent reorganisations as barriers for successful collaboration, which thus impede the individual's path to employment (see e.g. Lövgren et al 2014). It also appears that the special secondary school programmes for pupils with intellectual disabilities have focused too much on transitioning pupils into the Daily Activities initiative. The special secondary school programmes have built close contacts with the Daily Activities initiative, and this has sometimes been to the detriment of exploring other employment opportunities. This is particularly problematic for special primary school pupils with borderline (between primary and special school) needs and abilities (cf. Ineland, Molin & Sauer 2013). Numerous studies show that young people with mild intellectual disabilities may have an ambivalent attitude when it comes to Daily Activities and other initiatives directed toward persons with disabilities, or may reject them altogether. Reasons for this include the fact that they found it stigmatising to be involved in such programmes (see e.g. Ineland et al, 2013 Ringsby & Olsson 2006). However, even pupils with more extensive difficulties may prefer work or further studies to daily activities, if given the option (Szönyi 2005).

One aspect repeatedly highlighted in national and international research studies is that young people with intellectual disabilities have remained in the Daily Activities initiative or similar activities programmes because they have not received adequate support in finding employment (e.g. Butcher & Wilton 2008, Gill 2005, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare 2008). Several studies provide examples of how daily activities, which are organised to provide a service to the public or to companies, rely on the most competent of their participants in order to run their operations. This can lead Daily Activities initiative staff (consciously or unconsciously) to avoid encouraging and providing support to persons with intellectual disabilities who have the skills that could allow them to enter the workforce, and who wish to do so (Gill 2005, Lövgren et al, forthcoming).

3.5 Gender

Mineur (2013) found that the manner in which the special upper secondary schools prepare pupils for jobs favoured boys over girls; overall, boys were given more opportunities to influence where they would carry out their internship. The previously mentioned study about employment after special upper secondary school for pupils with learning disabilities showed that women with intellectual disabilities

were employed to a lesser degree than men with intellectual disabilities (Arvidsson et al 2016b). The same trend also emerged in a Norwegian longitudinal study in which approximately 500 young adults with special educational needs (a broader category that included persons with intellectual disabilities) were followed over time (Båtevik & Myklebust 2006, Myklebust 2012). Wage work increased men's chances of becoming financially self-sufficient (ibid).

3.6 Education

No systematic study has been made in Sweden concerning how special upper secondary school programmes prepare their pupils for the workplace and the impact of different educational strategies and support on pupils' employment opportunities. International studies have shown that contact with workplaces and workplace-based learning during their time in school helps pupils with intellectual disabilities to find employment once they have graduated (see, e.g. Siperstein et al 2014, Wehman et al 2015).

When school staff in the United States were asked about the barriers to pupils with intellectual disabilities finding work, they expressed the opinion that pupils' unrealistic expectations about what type of job they could get was a major problem (Riesen et al 2014).

3.7 The significance of parents and social networks

In Sweden 2011, persons with highly educated parents were employed through the Daily Activities initiative at a higher rate than those whose parents were less educated (Arvidsson et al 2015, 2016a).

In international studies (primarily conducted in the United States), additional relationship-related factors have been identified as influencing the ability of young persons with intellectual disabilities to find work. Parents' expectations regarding what kinds of jobs their children would be able to handle played a role (Doren et al 2012), especially in combination with the parents' ability to represent his/her intellectually disabled child when necessary (Simonsen & Neubert 2013, Gillian & Coughlan 2010). High socioeconomic status was another important factor, meaning that parents with such standing could affect the amount of social support their child received, which led to greater chances of receiving work-related support (Wagner et al 2014).

3.8 Insider's perspective

Personal experiences and assessments constitute an important source of knowledge in understanding capabilities and limitations. In Sweden, studies that take an insider's perspective regarding intellectual disabilities have primarily focused on young people's experiences of inclusion and exclusion at school and their expectations of the future (Löfgren-Mårtensson 2003, Szönyi 2005, Mineur 2013), as well as on the experience of finding oneself caught in a limbo between working life and disability programmes following graduation (Molin 2008).

4. An employment promotion method

Employment promotion support efforts geared toward individuals should be individualised, have a clear structure and be clearly job-oriented (Lövgren et al 2016). Individualised support means that the focus is on the specific individual and on the conditions in that person's environment that could potentially hinder his/her ability to find/keep a job. This includes the importance of achieving a "good match" as regards workers' preferences and employers' needs and preconditions. Structured support means that organisational readiness exists, with support functions and established forms of co-operation.

One way to work in a structured manner is to implement established methods. In international and national research, Supported Employment (SE) is the method that has been studied the most. SE was developed to support persons with intellectual disabilities. The basic principle in SE is "Place, then train". The guiding principle is that skills develop best in the context in which they are to be used. This has been described as a shift in perspective (see Kiernan 2000, among others). Traditional job training is based on "Train, then place"; that is to say, on the idea that the individual must first develop adequate skills in an artificial environment before he/she can be employed "in real life." SE's basic principles are: 1) Persons with disabilities should be employed in the open labour market; 2) The individual's willingness to work is the only requirement to receive support; 3) Support shall cover both the individual and the workplace, and be offered for as long as it is needed. The aim is that the intensity of support efforts should decrease over time, but with the understanding that those involved should be prepared for the need for support to remain at the same level for a long period of time, or for the possibility that support efforts may require expansion (Gustafsson 2014). Because it has become evident that support may also be necessary to help those who find work to keep their jobs, the maxim of "Place, train, and maintain" is now increasingly discussed (e.g. Antonsson 2003, Jahoda et al 2008).

In research, the importance of support from family, friends, and workplace-based social networks is emphasised. Studies show that when individuals become part of their workplace's social network, their professional lives become more stable and inclusive (e.g. Cheng et al 2017, Luftig & Muthert 2005). Workplace support can be formal (such as when someone is given the task of acting as a support person) or informal (such as when colleagues provide support spontaneously).

In Sweden, SE is implemented by several different actors, including the Swedish Public Employment Service, municipal employment promotion activities, and private actors (Flygare Wallén 2016, Gustafsson 2014). SE has been

adapted to the Swedish regulatory framework, which has sometimes led to deviations from the method's guiding principles.

Internationally, SE is considered a relatively successful method, and a Swedish evaluation of efforts targeted at young people who receive activity compensation shows similar results (the Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2017). The study included more than 1,000 young people, who received activity compensation, were regarded as good candidates for participating in work-focused initiatives, and who were interested in participating. Approximately 18% of them had an intellectual disability. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following initiatives: Strengthened Co-operation (FS) (control group), Supported Employment (SE) and Case Management (CM). FS involves greater co-operation between the Swedish Social Insurance Agency and the Swedish Public Employment Service. Those who were assigned to CM also received FS, and were additionally supported (through the municipality) by a case manager who worked to support the individual's circumstances as a whole. Those in the SE initiative were supported according to the basic principle of "Place, then train". Because the participants were randomly assigned to the various interventions, there was no room for "cherry-picking" (i.e. that some initiatives were directed at those who are already close to the labour market—a phenomenon that is otherwise described as relatively common in studies of SE initiatives) (e.g. Kiernan 2000, Spjelkavik 2012).

After 15 months, 26% of participants who received SE were employed; the corresponding results for FS and CM were 18% and 20%, respectively. Analysis showed that participants with daily activities experience were equally likely to have gained employment as those who had not been enrolled in such a programme. An in-depth analysis showed that SE (which is a more staff-intensive support method than FS and CM) was more cost effective, and that its effectiveness lasted for at least nine months (at which time the last follow-up was carried out).

The positive effect of SE applies to men; in female participants, there was no significant difference in the results achieved through the three different initiatives. This could not be explained by gender-related differences in the scope of the study, nor by the assumption that women were more likely to be parents or that women and men were hired by different types of employers. In the report, it is proposed that this be studied further, and that the outcome should be followed over a longer period of time (the Swedish Social Insurance Agency 2017).

5. Knowledge gaps

Research about work and employment for persons with intellectual disabilities is very limited. There are many gaps in knowledge and areas that need to be systematically examined. We find the following most important.

5.1 The meaning and significance of work

No studies investigate what employment means to persons with intellectual disabilities. More knowledge is needed about their experiences of the path to employment, what working means to them, and social relationships in the workplace, as well as the factors that encourage a good work environment and a smooth introduction to working life. Systematising experiences and identifying success factors can contribute to the development of better support initiatives. More knowledge of people's personal experiences is needed, and has also been sought internationally (see e.g. Redgrove et al 2016).

5.2 Longitudinal register studies

Longitudinal register studies that follow the professional development of persons with intellectual disabilities over time is of great interest, in particular to increase knowledge about job mobility and the effects of reforms and support initiatives.

5.3 The significance of structural mechanisms

More research is needed to elucidate what level of impact that structural mechanisms, such as legislation and resource allocation, have on the participation of persons with disabilities in working life. Better understanding is also needed of the interactions between the different support systems and how they affect individuals' employment opportunities.

5.4 Gender, ethnicity and age perspectives

Studies that highlight intellectual disabilities and work from a gender, ethnic and age perspective are needed. There is very limited information about how these factors affect employment opportunities.

5.5 The significance of experience and education

Special secondary school programmes should provide pupils with knowledge and skills that prepare them for work or further studies. Studies that examine how pupils' skills and experiences affect their ability to work are yet lacking. No studies examine the effect of education on the employment opportunities available to persons with intellectual disabilities. It is particularly important to monitor how successful the reformed special upper secondary school programmes prove to be in preparing pupils for entry into the labour market.

5.6 Socioeconomic analyses

Socioeconomic studies are very infrequent in the field of disability studies. Further socioeconomic analyses can provide a more solid basis for initiatives and can help to challenge frequent short-sightedness.

5.7 Longer-term supported employment

Supported Employment (SE) is the most effective method by which to support individuals with disabilities in their efforts to enter the workforce. Existing studies also show relatively good short-term effects. However, an interesting research

issue is long-term sustainability. There are almost no studies examining the effects of longer-term SE (Spjelkavik 2014).

5.8 Employers' experiences

There is a need for increased knowledge of employers' experiences with workers with intellectual disabilities.

5.9 Opportunities for lifelong learning

Studies can complement, and (for certain periods) provide an alternative to employment. There is a need for research that analyses the opportunities for lifelong learning that are also available to persons with intellectual disabilities.

5.10 Alternatives to work

Most persons with intellectual disabilities are both willing and able to work. However, some persons with significant intellectual disabilities (who sometimes have additional disabilities), also need other options when it comes to finding a meaningful occupation. There is a need to increase awareness of alternatives to "normal" employment, especially for persons with significant intellectual disabilities. How do other employment options, such as daily activities, succeed in offering meaningfulness and positive effects?

6. Conclusion

Workfare emphasises employment as a right and a duty for people who are able to work. However, the labour market is not sufficiently accessible to people with intellectual disabilities who are willing and able to work (see e.g. Lövgren et al 2016). Employment for persons with intellectual disabilities still appears to be characterised by an integrationist approach; i.e. only individuals who are able to cope with the demands of the labour market are welcomed. The goal of inclusion that exists in many other social arenas, and which argues that everyone should be given the opportunity to participate, is not as evident when it comes to work.

The opportunities and difficulties that characterise the relationship between persons with intellectual disabilities and work should be seen as a result of interactions between numerous factors (on or between different levels). This means that employment promotion support must go beyond simply trying to change or train individuals. To successfully increase the proportion of persons with intellectual disabilities who work, multiple levels of factors (and their interactions) must be addressed. In Article 27, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2008) emphasises the right of persons with disabilities to work on the same terms as other citizens. The convention indicates that the state must promote the realisation of the right to work and encourage work experience in the open labour market for persons with disabilities who want to work. Persons with intellectual disabilities are no exception. To achieve this, significant new research-based knowledge and ongoing efforts are necessary.