

# THE ROLE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIATOR WITHIN THE DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SYSTEM

**Maria Dorina PASCA**

Associate Professor, PhD, psychologist,  
The University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Targu Mures, Romania

*For people with disabilities, to find a way to improve life quality by having a job and by developing independent living skills is a “sine qua non” condition for their social integration. The social mediator working within a disability employment support system facilitates the logistic implementation of a viable and plausible program, which can identify, and maintain a workplace for people with disabilities, and acts as a motivational guarantee of these persons’ chance for a better life while also providing life lessons to all of us. Hence, the major role of the social mediator is to develop a new cognitive structure of communication for disabled people so that they can act as our equals and not as marginalized human beings.*

**Key words:** *acceptance, motivation, adaptation, social mediator, disabled people.*

We live in a period in which social and communication metamorphosis acquires new dimensions which, in time, shape a certain way of perceiving and evaluating the cognitive evolution of human beings [1]. As a result, the individual as a communicator and community member has felt an urgent need to find a third party, that is the third person to intercede in order to negotiate an agreement and/or action with.

Thus, the definitions provided by the new universal dictionary of the Romanian language (2007) [2]: a) mediation (mediere) = act of mediation and its outcome; b) mediation (mediație) = official intervention of a person for resolving a dispute peacefully, a conflict; = arbitration; c) mediator (mediator) = person who makes an act of mediation; intermediary, determine us as specialists to take into account the following dimensions and

variables when establishing the role of the mediator: the target audience, the social scene and sequence of steps to address the needs of the direct beneficiaries.

One particular quality of the social mediator is to engage into disability employment support systems by bringing together the specialists and direct beneficiaries. Thus, the role of the mediator is to give the opportunity for success in a field where attending a normal life can be truly a chance. Therefore, the theoretical anchoring of this article is into identity of the social mediator and its delineation.

We are accustomed to the mediator as a settler of conflicts and harmonizer of contradictions concerning problems between people, and hence to the following professional scripts: a) listener to both versions but without any right to be judgmental about who is right or not; b) creator of an atmosphere

into which those involved in the conflict, can express their feelings and interests; c) facilitator of communication between parties in order to allow those in conflict try to resolve the problems together [3].

All of the above underline the part of mediation as a process of assuring the transition from the individual to the collective by starting from the mediation of feelings, attitudes and cognitive-behavioral conduct.

Therefore, the scope and area of influence of the social mediator are framed within this context and within the frame of the three main mediation processes relating to a) consensus; b) private character and mutual trust; c) the dominance of the interests and needs of the beneficiary. However, the specificity of the role of this professional is rendered by the variables of working with disability employment support systems.

The appearance of the social mediator in within communities is welcomed especially from the point of view of the rights to life, work, freedom, etc. leading in fact to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in society, proving that they are entitled to everything all other individuals.

With a view to all of the above, the social mediator will be the integrator of the needs expressed by both the prospective employee (beneficiary) and the prospective employer, since the parties involved in the process demand: a) knowledge of available jobs; b) direct knowledge of the job; c) identification of potential beneficiaries; d) psychopedagogical training of the employer and consequently the shaping of an attitude of acceptance as far

as disabled beneficiaries with working potential are concerned; e) maintaining relationships of trust, respect and understanding with the employer.

The social mediator needs to be willing to analyze the workplace, so that it proves appropriate to the disabled person. Hence, the mediator will establish: a) the circumstantial identity routine; b) the harmful factors; c) the work environment and relations; d) the ways of learning specific job activities; e) the vocational profile; f) the process of assuring person/workplace fit; g) the type of abilities needed for work; h) work safety training. As a result of these responsibilities, the mediator needs to undertake negotiations and discussions with the business manager, the team leader, but also with future co-workers targeting especially the impact of the new environment on the recipient (person with disabilities) in terms of adaptability.

Along with the aspects previously mentioned employment mediation is the point on which employment is based, therefore employment support for the disabled can be conducted where: a) companies already have some economic power; b) there is workplace safety; c) all legal requirements are met, bearing in mind that employment should build on inclusion; choosing the profession of the assisted person; creation of a context for career development, social responsibility expressed as cooperation and consensus between the the two parties.

The monitoring of the assisted person is made by a specialist in employment support systems and

begins from the second day of work, which leads to motivational guidance that will lead in time to personal autonomy. The mediator's ability to make a difference through the monitoring stage is highly dependent on the ability of a recipient to adapt. In this respect, monitoring can be done [3] a) personally; b) by telephone; c) involving others (employer, team leader, colleagues, administrative staff, specialists). All of the above contribute to job stability, safety and success in having and maintaining a job for a long period of time.

With a view to all this, the social mediator must: a) thoroughly prepare to meet employer's expectations and manage to convince the latter to accept people with disabilities; b) have persuasive power to remove stereotypes and preconceptions about people with disabilities; c) to get the attention of the other party; d) highlight the qualities of the people (s)he supports; e) have the information needed and of relevance to both the employer and employee; f) be honest with both the employer and the employee; g) prove his/her professionalism coupled with fairness, responsibility, perseverance, concern, involvement and humanity.

In order to record success for the benefit of both employer and employee it takes teamwork, defined in this case, by a multidisciplinary identity. Thus, the organization employing the disabled can become social unit that succeeds in motivating the former in using his/her competence and becoming useful, by creating in time a personal autonomy grafted on improving the life quality and linking to those to which it relates and beyond.

Also, it is necessary that in this social approach all aspects of the subject's family are taken into account since these can act as catalyst for the disabled determination, development and awareness that independent living skills are their real chance of being "in the city and not outside the city". In this context, the family must be: a) better informed about the chances of a viable insertion; b) involved and more consistent in providing a real support for professional integration of one of its members.

In conclusion, the social mediator's role in facilitating disability employment support is an opportunity to find and maintain a job on the open labor market, transforming the beneficiary, from a passive and dependent member into an independent person with a partial capacity to control life, and hence being able to contribute to a society whose citizens are not dependent on social services field and can gain autonomy, ensuring a substantial increase in their quality of life.

Under these auspices, we believe that the availability of people with disabilities to find a job through the social mediator is the guarantee of equal opportunity for all. Consequently, the work of integration is the most powerful way of personal development and harmonization, and eventually of shaping individual perception over the disabled as as human beings and not mere objects. That actually involves a more responsible and motivational behavior at society/community level which allows for identity delineation of both the social mediator and of the people (s)he supports.

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