Youth and diversity

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It is true to most people that they like to stand out from the average and like to be different. It is even more true to the youth. Diversity still doesn't become a stable value system in many countries, mainly in authoritarian societies.

Why is diversity often considered an annoying eccentricity, why can't diversity, diverse thinking and different needs be used as a resource? It is a pity that we waste this value and as young adults slowly fall in line according to the expectations of the family, the school, the workplace and the social environment. This is what has a culture in our country. Although we know that diversity is the key to efficiency, the key to survival: it is the same in natural ecosystems and human communities, in workplaces, in efficiently functioning teams.

The economic recession and social challenges offer the opportunity to prove that the diversity of ways of thinking and the inclusion of traditionally excluded resources can improve the situation. But inclusion of the previously excluded people, is not automatic; many conditions should be fulfilled. Think specifically about our target groups, youth and people with intellectual disabilities, as a resource. The usefulness of their involvement has been proven in several cases, for example, high school students can challenge scientists with their striking scientific ideas and inventions. Due to the influence of people with Down-syndrome in inclusive workplaces (based on the results of a survey of 1,800 workplaces), work morale improved, regularity, orderliness and compliance with rules increased, the workplace became more healthy.

What conditions must be met in order to include young people and people with intellectual disabilities, and other divers groups of people into social activities, such as havig opinion, having an impact on decisions and all citizens rights?

1. The first condition is that they should be present (not living in a segregated institute or in the virtual world).

2. To be prepared to participate, contribute, exercise influence.

3. There is a need for professionals who provide support so that the formerly / automatically excluded and the weakly functioning individuals and groups are encouraged and empowered in each culture (Nirje, 1999).

4. That professionals have commitment, goals, knowledge, and tools. Belong to an organization or movement and carry out quality and verifiable activities.

5. Social changes are necessary to force public and other services and communication meet all the different needs of people to be involved (universal planning, universal services, including IT services). For example, the language and tools of communication must be adapted to the needs of those representing diversity. For example, for people with an intellectual disability need easy-to-understand communication and a helpful attitude in servicest (Gruiz, 2021 a,b,c).

6. Society should understand and intend to accept and implement diversity and social inclusion. Organizations and professionals responsible for youth work and social work can do a lot so that the average person gets to know and experience the benefits of diversity.

Summarizing the conditions: a lovable world open to everyone is needed! Authoritarian societies are not like that: they are characterized by exclusion, denial of civil rights, and decisions over the heads of the groups they treat, even though this is prohibited by human rights conventions (CRPD, 2006). Youth and social support work have a lot in common – let's take a look at a few.

"Nothing about us, without us", this is a widespread demand among the disabled population, it could even be the motto of youth work. The basic principle is the same: no one can be excluded from expressing an opinion or having a say because of their age and/or disability, simply because of the will of the exercisers of power or for reasons of convenience.

The goals are also similar: being autonomous, participating, expressing one's own opinion, asserting it, participating in decision-making, participation in election by voting and electability.

The tools of the professionals are also similar: person-centered support, project-based development in partnership, encouragement, support so that people sidelined due to their age or disability can move from a state of helplessness to a state of being able to function and having an impact.

 Of course, this is not enough, because in the meantime, changes in the social environment, services and communication should be achieved in order to fulfill the conditions for inclusion.

And most importantly, the attitude must be changed, the prejudices stuck in the heads (Gruiz, 2009), the authoritarianism, the outdated social models.

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