



ELSEVIER

Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation 11 (1998) 179–180

JOURNAL OF
*Vocational
Rehabilitation*

Introduction

The field of vocational rehabilitation has received special attention in recent decades in Spain and Europe. The 1980s and 1990s have witnessed significant increases in programs and activities focused on employment promotion and on the enhancement of labor status of persons with disabilities. The European Union (EU) has played a key role in those steps forward since it established social policy guidelines which place priorities on those actions addressed at promoting employment of disabled persons. Programs with specific EU financial contributions (Helios, Horizon) have triggered more contributions from member states and from regional and local administrations. The exchange between the countries has continued to set forth and to consolidate innovative employment experiences with the development of new perspectives on employment integrated into the labor world.

Nowadays, job promotion and the enhancement of labor status of persons with disabilities are receiving central attention from many private and public agencies in every European country. Hence, we can predict a significant quantitative and qualitative growth of vocational rehabilitation activities in the years to come. Among the activities which are being consolidated we may outline supported employment which began to be timidly developed at the end of the 1980s and had been gaining growing importance with the current development of many initiatives in different regions in Spain.

As many other countries, research on employment is still quite recent and lacks of a tradition which would show us stable working lines. However, there are several groups of young professionals, mainly from the fields of psychology and

rehabilitation, which are researching employment in order to find scientific and convincing support to the improvements that are taking place. As a result, the present issue of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation* (JVR) gathers the contributions of researchers from all over Spain. Their main point in common is that the research has been developed as joint collaboration between university researchers and professionals in community employment programs. Such a joint collaboration between employment programs and researchers is one of the working guidelines which ensures the success of the programs and contributes to the firm steps towards the enhancement of quality of life of persons with disabilities.

The contributions to the present issue of the JVR show the variety of objectives which are being aimed at in the current applied research in Spain: development and application of a vocational guidance program for persons with physical and sensory disabilities; application of an evaluation system to improve the quality of a supported employment project; the experience of a multidisciplinary vocational rehabilitation program to promote employment; the prevalence of psychiatric disorders in persons with mental retardation working in a vocational setting; and the evolution of supported employment in Spain. There are many other professionals and researchers in Spain working on vocational rehabilitation and developing interesting activities which should be analyzed. However, I hope that the articles gathered in this issue would present an illustrative sample of that reality.

Finally, I would like to thank Professor Paul Wehman for his help in this issue and his tireless

work to rigorously propagate supported employment in Spain. Moreover, I would also like to thank the collaboration of those professionals who have contributed to the present issue with their minute and serious work.

Miguel Angel Verdugo
Guest Editor