IMPORTANCE AND MEANING OF COACHING AND EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN ITINERARIES FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

IMPORTANCIA Y SENTIDO DEL COACHING Y LA INTELIGENCIA EMOCIONAL EN ITINERARIOS PARA EL EMPLEO DE PERSONAS CON DISCAPACIDAD INTELECTUAL

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ABSTRACT

Coaching and emotional intelligence are presented as two powerful resources waiting to use in the itineraries for the employment of people with intellectual disabilities. The present article offers us, on one side an introduction to the definition of coaching, basic pillars, professional referents, and how their principles connect – in the context of itineraries for the hiring of people with mental impairment -, with planning focused on the individual and a methodological focus that companies in the social sector are using to deploy the development of life projects and personal empowerment for each and all of the people in this collective. Likewise, an analysis of the definition of emotional intelligence and the importance of this construct is carried out. That is taught in the training activities for hiring itineraries as a "jump-start" to train and capacitate self-learning, self-regulation, decision making, and the ability to establish mutually favourable relationships with others, in all types of environments, particularly in those related to work. With the need to contextualize the aforementioned, a presentation of the concept of intellectual disability and some of the laws that protect a large part of the rights of the group is carried out. And an explanation is given on what is and what defines a work itinerary for people with intellectual impairment, the steps to take, contents, and main objectives, taking as a referent a Social Entity from Madrid that dedicates itself to the well-being of people that are mentally impaired and their families.

KEYWORDS: Support, coaching, intellectual disability, emotional intelligence, itineraries for employment, planning

RESUMEN

Coaching e inteligencia emocional se presentan como dos potentes recursos a utilizar en los itinerarios para el empleo de personas con discapacidad intelectual. El artículo que nos ocupa ofrece, por un lado, una presentación de lo que es el *coaching*, pilares básicos y profesionales referentes, y cómo sus principios conectan -en el contexto de los itinerarios para el empleo de las personas con discapacidad intelectual-, con la planificación centrada en la persona, enfoque metodológico que las organizaciones del sector social vienen utilizando para la puesta en marcha del desarrollo del proyecto vital y empoderamiento personal de cada una de las personas de este colectivo. A su vez, se realiza un análisis del significado de inteligencia emocional y de la importancia de este constructo impartido en las

acciones formativas de los itinerarios para el empleo, como elemento trampolín que forma y capacita para el autoconocimiento, la autorregulación, la toma de decisiones y la capacidad de relacionarse favorablemente con los otros, en todo tipo de entornos y en particular en los laborales. Con la necesidad de contextualizar lo anteriormente expuesto se lleva a cabo una presentación del concepto discapacidad intelectual y algunas de las leyes que amparan gran parte de los derechos del colectivo. Se explica qué es y en qué consiste un itinerario laboral para el empleo de personas con discapacidad intelectual, sus fases, contenidos y objetivos principales, tomando como referente el de una entidad social que trabaja en pro de la calidad de vida de las personas con discapacidad intelectual y sus familias.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Apoyo*, coaching*, discapacidad intelectual, inteligencia emocional, itinerarios para el empleo, planificación.

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1. INTRODUCTION

All people need to feel happy, regardless of our skin color, condition, gender, or origin. We need, after having covered the basic needs, to feel fulfilled, know that we are part of the community in which we live, and consider ourselves useful. Being an active part of society and exercising the right to have a job and keep it over time, is for many individuals the maximum indicator of social inclusion and quality of life. "We must meditate on what provides happiness, because, when it´s present, we have everything, and when it´s absent, we do everything to achieve it." (Epicurus, 1998). When basic needs are satisfied, new desires arise in people, new more elaborate and complex needs, and so on. (Maslow, 1987)

1.1 Contextualizing intellectual disability

People with intellectual disabilities are not alien to this universal formula. Accessing a job and keeping it over time is for many of them an indicator of happiness, a reflection of the long-awaited social inclusion. For this reason, training in employment itineraries is the objective of a large number of entities or social organizations dedicated to facilitating the quality of life of this group.

According to the American Association for Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD, 2011), intellectual disability is characterized by significant limitations in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior manifested in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before the age of 18.

This definition approaches intellectual disability from an ecological perspective, focusing on the person-environment relationship, and on the improvement that the person can have based on the supports they receive (Shalock et al, 2007).

The group of people with intellectual disabilities increasingly demands their equal right to be a part of and contribute to the community, protected by the General Disability Law.

The General Disability Law (LGD by its acronym in Spanish), Royal Legislative Decree 1/2013 of November 29th, aims, among other things, to promote equal opportunities in employment access, and promote economic and tax incentives that, among other reasons, promote the hiring of people with disabilities in companies. The hiring of people with disabilities also provides undeniable social value to companies.

The aforementioned law proposes, in turn, that any company that hires people with disabilities may benefit from public aid for the adaptation of jobs and/or the elimination of architectural barriers. It is established for public and private companies, with a workforce of more than 50 workers, the obligation to hire a number of workers with disabilities not less than 2%.

According to *Plena Inclusión Madrid*, approximately 230,000 people live in Spain with some type of intellectual disability and around 50,000 are likely to be employed: 10,000 of them already work in Special Employment Centers; another 5,000 have entered ordinary employment, and the remaining 35,000 are unemployed. In the case of people with the greatest need for support, these unemployment figures and the inactivity rate skyrocket (Plena Inclusión, 2020).

An adequate adjustment of the worker's profile against the profile of the job will generate indisputable benefits for both the person and the company. For this reason, it is necessary to train in itineraries for the employment of people with intellectual disabilities, which provide this group with tools that allow a solid, coherent training adjusted to their reality and expectations regarding the needs of the work environment.

The model of the itinerary for employment in this article is inspired by the one carried out by the Training and Employment Area of the AFANIAS entity, which works for the quality of life of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

2. OBJECTIVES

The present work aims to define the concept of intellectual disability and contextualize it through the General Disability Law. It is intended to present what are the itineraries for the employment of people with intellectual disabilities, and to make a reflection and analysis of the principles of coaching, and how they connect with the methodological approach that organizations in the care sector carry out today for people with intellectual disabilities, person-centered planning, in particular in the scenario of job itineraries.

Finally, it is proposed to value the concept of emotional intelligence as a necessary and compulsory subject in the training actions of the itineraries for the employment of people with disabilities, in the phase called "Training in personal, social, and pre-employment skills".

3. METHODOLOGY

Through the description and explanation, as well as some theoretical and bibliographic references, it is reflected on the possibilities that coaching and emotional intelligence offer as enabling tools for change and personal empowerment.

4. ITINERARIES FOR EMPLOYMENT

Employing companies demand trained, mature, and competent professionals and formal education does not respond to the training needs of people with intellectual disabilities, therefore, once it is completed, around 21 years of age, it requires adapted and meaningful training that gives continuity to their personal and professional itinerary. (Fundación Iberoamericana Down 21.org, 2020)

According to the report "The challenge of integrating young people with disabilities" (2015), by the Adecco Foundation, 62% of young people between 18 and 30 years old with a disability are unemployed. The complexity of the socio-labor insertion of this group justifies the need to plan a set of training actions focused, among other things, on pre-labor skills and abilities.

Access to a job requires being adequately prepared and trained in personal and professional strategies, skills, and abilities. Therefore, offering guidance, training, and support to people who access employment itineraries is the obligation of the entities that work towards access to employment for people with intellectual disabilities. The purpose is to promote the acquisition and generalization of personal, social, and work skills that guarantee their inclusion in the community, the exercise of their citizenship, and access to employment, all in favor of their quality of life.

The itineraries for employment are divided into different stages or phases (Formación y Empleo Afanias, 2020).
   a) Reception and Assessment of Employability: Through a first interview and observation, aspects related to identification, family data, training, work experience, work data, expectations regarding training and employment, functional limitations, activities of daily living, basic social skills, etc., are collected, as well as the assessment of employability through questionnaires, for example, the *Lantegi Batuak*[1] profiling method. This information guarantees the diagnosis of employability.
   b) Person-centered orientation: Through one or more interviews, an orientation is carried out that will determine the pedagogical process to follow oriented to the change of the person, from the current situation to the desired one: through pre-employment training, or specific training in a specific profile; or if the

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[1] Lantegi Batuak is a non-profit organization that generates job opportunities adapted to people with, preferably intellectual disabilities.

person is ready for employment, participation in systematic job search sessions.

c) Training in Personal, Social and Pre-employment Skills: These are training actions that allow the acquisition and development of attitudes, skills, and intra- and interpersonal strategies through personal knowledge and the development of social skills to promote proper job placement; as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to choose, obtain, and keep a job and promote the job search initiative, intercommunication and group relationships, and the use of the necessary tools for job search.

- Personal and Social Skills: They are training actions aimed at developing emotional intelligence, in which the identification of feelings and emotional states of one's own and that of others, personal motivation, acceptance of limitations and adjustment of expectations, self-concept, empathy, self-control and tolerance towards frustration, emotional control and relaxation, decision making, prejudice, different communication styles, verbal and non-verbal communication, active listening, behavioral styles, and conflict resolution are worked on. All this in favor of adaptive and emotionally intelligent behavior, in any environment and applicable, above all, to work environments

- Pre-employment Skills: They are training actions aimed at developing work motivation, basic work habits, the value of work, knowledge of the hierarchical structure and existing relationships, time management, and job-search training: basic tools, sources of job information for searching, personal interview, and selection tests.

d) Specific Training for Employment: It makes it possible to train people in theoretical-practical skills in specific job profiles, adjusted to the motivations, abilities, and aptitudes of the person at that exact moment of their life itinerary, for example: Theoretical-practical training in office assistant professional profile, theoretical-practical training in event hostess professional profile, theoretical-practical training in office assistant professional profile, theoretical-practical training in cleaning professional profile, theoretical-practical training in the cashier- replenisher professional profile, theoretical-practical training in data digitizer professional profile, etc.

e) Active job search: These are systematic group or individual sessions to access job portals specialized in offers for people with a disability certificate: upon registration, a search is made for the positions most in line with the professional profile of each participant. Each participant sends their updated CV to the bidding company.

The process of the itineraries for employment is facilitated by a reference professional from the first to the last phase, the counselor, who appears as a professional leader and connector of some phases with others. It is the professional who guides the meetings and encourages the participation of all members, people, and professionals, through respectful dialogue and a positive, creative, and productive attitude.

4.1 *Coaching*

Etymologically, coaching has its origin in the city of Kocs, in the 15th century, when this city was a strategic stop and a must on the Vienna-Budapest route. The carriage that moved from one city to the other was called kocsi, in Spanish "car". Symbolically, in the coaching process, the person (client) is moved from an initial X state to the desired state.

It is a process of accompaniment to people, teams, or organizations, of a non-directive nature, which enables the exploration and management of the changes they wish to carry out to achieve the objectives that they propose themselves.

According to Gallwey (2013), it consists of "unlocking the potential of people, so that they can maximize their performance."

It is a process that generates transformation in people or clients through conversation and powerfully effective questions that promote awareness. Socratic maieutics is one of his first antecedents. The questions allow us to analyze where the person is and where they want to go, setting up an action plan, which follows four different stages:

a)   Establishment of the objective of the session. b) Checking the reality to study the situation. c) Assessment of options and alternative strategies or actions. d) Determine what will be done, when it will be done, and who will do it.

Coaching, as Whitmore (2017, p.19) indicates "focuses on the possibilities of the future, not on the mistakes of the past".

The questions that are carried out to the person are asked positively. The professional or coach focuses on what the client wants or can do. e.g.: what do you want to get out of this session? What would you like to achieve during this time?

These are questions that have an inherent meaning, related to where the person wants to go, e.g.: What do you want specifically? What exactly will you see, hear, or feel when you achieve it? What will actually be achieved? In what context? When do you want to achieve it? With whom? Where? How do you want to achieve it?

Bearing in mind that each person is unique and unrepeatable, with their mental map as a result of different and unique personal life experiences. "Just as everyone has a different set of fingerprints, each individual also has new experiences growing up and living, and no life story is identical to another." (Bandler and Grinder, p. 32)

They are measurable and comparable questions, which guide towards the knowledge of a result: how are you going to measure that you have achieved it? How will you know that you are on the right track? If the result is achieved, what does it look like? What shows you that there is a result? What if there isn't?

Questions with an approach adjusted to reality, To what extent do you control that objective? To what extent does it depend on you? What is the commitment? What resources do you have? What resources are you missing? How are you going to get them? What are the steps? What stages are you going to follow?

That are oriented towards a moment in time, located in temporality, e.g.: When do you want to achieve it? What is the start date? What are the short-term intermediate stages?

From an ecological perspective, what are the consequences for other people? What might you have to give up? What important things in your current life might you have to leave behind?

And they make the reward visible, e.g., what is it that matters to you in this objective? What do you get doing this? Who will you be when you get it?

According to *Whitmore, (2017, p.19) "the results offered by coaching are due, to a large extent, to the supportive relationship established between the coach and the client, and to the style and means of communication that are used".* According to the same author, it stands out the professional's ability to believe in the potential of the other, in the best of the other, and all their possibilities.

The vision that the professional adopts of the other and their potentialities is optimistic and focuses on the strengths of the person. The more authentic the professional appears in the relationship, the more useful it is (Rogers, 1987).

It is, therefore, as this author indicates, a process in which non-directivity stands out, through which the nature of the human being manifests itself freely, in confidence, and in a constructive way. The client must assume the responsibility to make decisions freely, not under the mandate of the professional. It creates its itinerary itself.

The importance of the person becoming aware, "realizing", is another fundamental aspect of coaching, the client has to become able to identify the changes that it wants to implement in its life, and for that self-knowledge is necessary, knowing what they say to themselves and how, knowing their beliefs, and what are the obstacles that prevent them from getting what they want (limiting beliefs).

The inner obstacle is invariably universal and unique and is described as the fear of failure, lack of self-confidence, security, or self-esteem become universal obstacles. It must be made clear to the client that there are professionals, people, who believe in them, support them, and accompany them to make their decisions (Whitmore, 2017).

Coaching enables the ability to know oneself, of self-knowledge, and thanks to this we can act more efficiently and relate better with ourselves and with others (Fraile, 2013). Only by becoming aware of what happens to us can we come to control it.

4.2 Person-centered planning

Person-centered planning is the methodology that prevails in care services for people with intellectual disabilities, where the focus is on the individuality of people, and on their ability and right to choose their future life plans, as well as in significant people to give them the support to carry them out. All this is based on the quality of life model of Shalock and Verdugo (2003).

According to *Plena Inclusión*, Person-Centered Planning continues to be the main approach in supporting people with various disabilities, by offering strategies based on their empowerment and value, as well as facilitators who accompany them in the construction of their life project, of happiness. The starting point of this approach is the recognition of the dignity of the person, beyond the life conditions of each one.

The strategies and means to carry out this methodology will depend exclusively on each case. The responsible entities adopt the commitment to provide people with intellectual disabilities with the tools and supports that enable life projects aimed at people's happiness.

The life project of each one will be determined by what each one understands by happiness, defined, in turn, by their beliefs, values, aspirations, and context. Happiness cannot be imposed from the outside or defined the same way for everyone, it is related to what the individual itself understands as a full life (Shalock and Verdugo, 2003).

Quoting Álex Rovira (2005, p.97), "happiness is that feeling that my life has a direction and a meaning, that it is guided by an inner compass". The goal of person-centered planning is to achieve a quality life in which your own decisions are what determine your life path.

According to Shalock and Verdugo (2003), quality of life is multidimensional and is influenced by personal factors, the environment, and its interactions, it presents the same components in all people, and they are both subjective and objective. It improves with self-determination, the availability of resources, life goals, and the feeling of belonging. Its dimensions and indicators are:
- Emotional well-being: satisfaction, self-concept, lack of stress.
- Interpersonal relationships: Interactions, relationships, supports.
- Material well-being: economic situation, employment, accommodation.
- Personal development: education, personal competence, performance.
- Physical well-being: care, state of health, daily activity, entertainment, and leisure.
- Self-determination: autonomy or self-control, goals, and values.
- Social inclusion: integration, participation in the community, social supports, community roles.
- Rights: legal and humane situation (dignity and respect).

According to *Plena Inclusión*, "we can define PCP as a continuous process of listening, focused on the interests of each person, their abilities, and their expectations and dreams, which generates concrete actions for personal and social change, counting on the commitment of the members of the support group and ensuring the protagonism and active participation of the person to establish and pursue personal goals". (Carratalá, Mata and Crespo, 2017, p.10)

4.3 Emotional intelligence

Intelligence has been studied over the years by a large number of authors, psychologists, philosophers, etc. Until now, the intellectual quotient was the one that determined the professional success of a person, and in theory academic performance, however, it was discovered that success in life was determined by other issues beyond an intellectual quotient. These abilities were difficult to measure and had much to do with the proper management of emotions. "Knowing others is wisdom, knowing yourself is enlightenment." (Lao Tse, S. V a. C)

We owe the origin of emotional intelligence to various authors throughout history, who in one way or another alluded to the term, with many different interpretive models. Howard Gardner will be the one who, known for his famous theory of multiple intelligences, establishes the germ of the emotional intelligence construct. According to him, a break with the psychometric concept of intelligence is necessary, and he proposes that it cease to be associated solely with the IQ, initiating a new line of research that reconsiders the advances made by cognitive sciences.

Gardner (1995) proposes seven different intelligences that collect how individuals process, acquire and retain information with the environment:
- Linguistic intelligence, considered one of the most important. The wide use of language is a fundamental part of the development of this type of intelligence.
- The logical-mathematical intelligence, intelligence used in solving mathematical problems, allows formulating and verifying hypotheses, calculating, using the scientific method, and deductive and inductive reasoning.
- Musical intelligence, musical ability that translates into the ability to sing and play instruments.
- Spatial intelligence, is what makes it possible to make a mental model in three dimensions of the world. Allows understanding of maps, orienting yourself, etc.
- kinesthetic-corporal intelligence, typical of dancers, gymnasts, athletes. In this intelligence, control and corporal expression stand out.
- Intrapersonal intelligence, allows us to understand ourselves, forming an accurate image of who we are, what are our characteristics, our strengths, and what are our weaknesses. It serves as a guide for behavior and conduct in the future.
- interpersonal intelligence, is the type of intelligence that allows us to understand others, their motivations, desires, moods. It is based on empathy, that is, on the ability to put yourself in the other´s place.

Bar-On (1998) coined the term emotional quotient and created the emotional quotient inventory (EQ-i), which is the first test of Emotional Intelligence tested in his doctoral thesis "*The development of a concept of psychological well-being*". The model is made up of various aspects: intrapersonal component, interpersonal component, general mood component, adaptability components, and stress management components. His thesis formed the basis of his subsequent formulations on emotional intelligence and its measurement through the emotional inventory of the EQ-I quotient, which is the first tested test of emotional intelligence.

Mayer, Salovey, and Carusso (2000) define emotional intelligence as the ability to assimilate, perceive, understand, and regulate emotions, the ability to process emotional information effectively.

Daniel Goleman (2006) popularizes the term by stating the idea that good, positive management of emotions is more decisive in life than IQ.

According to Barrientos (2019), emotional intelligence lies in the ability to positively control and manage one's own emotions and those of others, in any setting, where experiences and changes occur as part of the personal learning process.

Emotional intelligence helps us manage our impulses and understand how others feel.

According to this author, the main elements that make up emotional intelligence would be:

1. Self-awareness: it is important to know what our strengths as well as our weaknesses, and how emotions and feelings can condition our behavior.
2. Self-control or self-regulation: becoming aware of our emotional dynamics and being able to control our emotions or feelings is part of this ability to adapt to the environment.
3. Motivation: Having the ability to give a meaningful meaning to what we do and direct the objectives towards a goal, an advantageous and rewarding end.
4. Empathy: Having the ability to put ourselves in the place of the other, ability to detect the feelings of others. Detecting and correctly interpreting the emotions of others and their feelings help us to establish closer, more authentic, and lasting bonds. They are precisely the people with the greatest skills and abilities related to emotional intelligence.
5. Interpersonal relationships/ Social skills: The ability to relate to others appropriately –assertive communication– guarantees success in any setting and any type of relationship.

Goleman emphasizes that the emotionally intelligent person is effective in each one of the aforementioned areas, the emotionally intelligent person needs to show competence in all of them, as a whole.

Emotional intelligence is learned and can be enhanced.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Every individual seeks to own his life and his happiness. For a large number of people with intellectual disabilities of working age, happiness lies in having the possibility of accessing employment and maintaining it over time.

The itineraries for employment are training processes that give a real response to the needs of each person with an intellectual disability of working age, it is a set of training actions that, in their different phases, allow the assessment and subsequent

orientation to specific training of people based on their interests, motivations, strengths, etc.

Coaching and emotional intelligence are presented as two powerful and significant tools in the itineraries for employment.

Coaching because its guiding principles fully connect with those of the Person-Centered Planning approach (a methodology that has been used in most organizations and services that serve people with intellectual disabilities): both offer strategies that seek the empowerment of individuals, and the recognition of these as unique and exceptional beings, owners of their own life and destiny.

Both perspectives focus on people's abilities and their possibilities. They attribute power to their will, to freedom, and to the ability to choose, and consequently to the responsibility of making the decisions that they deem appropriate to carry out the desired change. Both disciplines or approaches bet on non-directivity and accompaniment to the person in their process of change. Both are presented as ecological methodologies, they take into account the community network, the environment, and the effect of the change in their relationships network.

Both approaches seek to give meaning to people's lives, and through emotional intelligence to develop self-esteem, security, and self-awareness to be able to set goals *a posteriori*.

Emotional intelligence, in turn, is presented as a powerful resource in the training actions of the itineraries for employment, since it allows to equip future workers with the necessary tools for self-knowledge, as well as the ability to develop optimal personal, social, and interpersonal skills, through enhancing self-knowledge, empathy, assertiveness, motivation, and self-control, among other things. Learning and practicing these mechanisms enable the empowerment and correct adaptation of the person to all types of environments, particularly those of employment.

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