

COMPETENCIES AND TASK AREAS OF DISABILITY MANAGEMENT PROFESSIONALS IN GERMANY

Descriptive Abstract

German Disability Management professionals took part in a survey on competencies and tasks in rehabilitation counselling. The results are discussed relating to training and certification.

Topic Track

Metrics

Measuring the Success of Disability Management Certification Programs

Authors: Prof. Dr. Niehaus, M., Dr. Marfels, B.

Contact Information: University of Cologne, Unit of Labour and Vocational Rehabilitation, Herbert - Lewin - Str. 2, 50931 Koeln, Germany, Phone: 0049-221 – 470 4954, Fax: 0049-221 – 470 7722, Mathilde.Niehaus@uni-koeln.de, Britta.Marfels@uni-koeln.de

Institution: University of Cologne, Unit of Labour and Vocational Rehabilitation

Extended Abstract

I Background

The competencies of rehabilitation experts become more and more important regarding the promotion of vocational and social participation of disabled persons, as extensive socio-political changes take place. In consequence, Disability Managers are emerging as a new professional group in Germany.

The German Statutory Accident Insurance (DGUV) provides continuing education to become a Certified Disability Management Professional (CDMP), based on the Canadian model. With this, international efforts are joined to standardize and establish quality management for continuing education programs for counsellors in vocational rehabilitation (Greve & Niehaus, 2007). While the tasks and competencies of rehabilitation experts have been the focus of research in the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand for a long time, there are no empirical results to be found in Germany so far. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify and describe the competencies, tasks and fields of action of Disability Managers in Germany. The results are meant to improve the training

and certification of Disability Management professionals. In addition, the results are to be discussed in the international context.

II Methods

Instruments

The questionnaire applied in this study, developed by Matthews, Buys, Randall, Biggs and Hazelwood (2009) combines items from two instruments: the Rehabilitation Skills Inventory-Amended 1 (RSI-I) and the International Survey of Disability Management Practices (ISDMP). The authors provided the questionnaire for the German study for the purpose of comparing the results on an international basis. It was translated into German, adapting the content to the German rehabilitation system. The vocational rehabilitation and Disability Management areas covered include inter alia vocational counselling, personal counselling, professional practice, case management, and disability prevention. The questionnaire consists of socio-demographic questions and 114 items relating to the diverse tasks and fields of action in Disability Management. These were rated in terms of importance and frequency.

Participants

The study was conducted as an online-survey in two periods of time: first from July to December 2008 and second from March to May 2010. In the first period, the questionnaire was completed by 108 persons and in the second by 109. That results in a total return of 217 questionnaires. The respondents mean age is 45 (SD 7.90) and barely half of them (47%) are female.

III Results

Uni- and multivariate analyses were carried out. The respondents are occupied in very diverse professional disciplines, such as administration, medicine, psychology, social work, and engineering. Out of these 217 respondents, the large majority (83%) has passed the examination to become a Certified Disability Management Professional.

62 percent of the respondents claim to explicitly work as a Disability Manager. In this function, personal counselling is a major constituent, while management tasks, in comparison, play a minor role in their everyday professional life. In order to identify the major tasks and skill areas of rehabilitation experts in Germany, factor analyses were car-

ried out. Every item of the questionnaire was rated in terms of importance and frequency. For this reason, separate factor analyses were conducted. The principal components analysis revealed varied activity fields of rehabilitation counselors. There are only slight differences between the frequency of tasks performed and the importance attributed to these tasks.

IV Discussion

Several studies show that the involvement of a Disability Management professional in the return-to-work process is an important key to the integration success (cf Niehaus, Magin, Marfels, Vater & Werkstetter, 2008; Franche, Cullen, Clarke, MacEachen, Frank, Sinclair & Reardon, 2006). For this, appropriate training is of utmost importance for the individual as well as the company. With this study, it is investigated for the first time which tasks professional rehabilitation counsellors in Germany fulfil and how they rate the importance of these tasks in everyday professional life. The results are to contribute to the discussion regarding the training and professionalization of Disability Managers.

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