

QUATSEE COURSE OF SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT

LESSON 1

1. 1. THE PERSON. The driving force of supported employment.

1

I am Isabel, I was born in Lisbon, I am already 26. My life has been a bit tricky since I came to this world because I showed up with cerebral palsy without telling anyone...

It is time to find a job and start being a woman like any other, I see many girls that work and have some savings in bank in order to do things in life, they have projects. I do not have neither savings nor projects because I can only aspire to go to ASPACE-where I am treated very well, I must say-but I can only aspire to get trained and get trained, so as to get trained again later in a new course or other activities, which are always necessary, of course.

And I really want to do things outside and I count for something ... I have the need to feel that I have finished a formative stage in my life and I start another, as an adult, with my working life, my income, but not pensions but from my work.

I notice about everything, see and hear perfectly well, get excited and I laugh when I make jokes, think a lot, I am an expert moving with my wheelchair, and I have some computer skills. Furthermore, I also like having fun with my friends, traveling, reading, etc...

I think I am useful for many jobs, but so far I could not get any of them...

2

I am Ernesto and I am 33. I live in Alcoy (Spain) and work in the city hall since 1998. My position is subordinate. I started doing half a year of practices and as I learned a lot and peers said that I was good, I got a casual employment contract for a year and then I was renewed some years. Then I was lucky enough to get an ongoing contract, in January 10th, 2001.

And I am still here, where I am considered a veteran ... I'm very happy with this job and the help given to me by Toni to learn everything, he taught me to work faster so I can do more things, you know. I'll tell you a secret: "I am now working on helping the new people".

Talking to Ernesto's parents, we are told that he has changed a lot. He is more responsible and we see him socially more integrated. That is good for him and everybody.

3

I am Giorgio, I am 55 and I have never worked. When I was 20 I went to the beach and I jumped from the rocks, so I got disabled. Since then I'm in a wheelchair and I am pensioner, my disability affects my hands and feet. Nobody ever told me I could work, and I have come across many professionals in my life who have done many tests and exams to me. I have a certificate of significant disability of 95%.

*Escalation
colleagues
person of reference*

These three people that told us their individual experience, as citizens who want to have the same opportunities as others, have found difficulties to get a job because of his disability and the mentality of the environment where they live. Some of them were able to get a job, but others have been left out or on their way to stay, if someone does not intervene...

This remedy could be yourself (when meeting people in similar circumstances) if you are convinced about the importance of performing this on-line course, and if you take seriously the assimilation of concepts and the study and application of the procedures we will follow.

*Person, evolution
centre of the
supported
employment*

You may find a disabled person in your environment who wants to join to this experience, and you may also work with this person to follow the steps which might lead him or her to get a supported employment in his or her community. This person will be your main reference throughout the course and you will live with special intensity some advances in the understanding of this technical support and personalized accompaniment.

If you do not find a real person of reference, you can follow this course, naturally, but you will not have immediate practical application, nor the liveliness of continuous human contrast, and you will be limited to virtual personal cases, which are always more distant.

For in supported employment the person is always the engine of all the proceedings and has

been this way since its inception and this has been demonstrated in each evolutionary step that this system of labour inclusion has given throughout history. Let's see some features of its evolution that corroborate this statement:

- 1) The very birth of supported employment was due to the consistency of parents who, having chosen for their children school integration, refused to go back to segregated environments and workshops, in adulthood, stating as a main argument the right to their children to be considered citizens as others, despite supported needs they had.
- 2) In the beginning (1975-1980) in North America two types of supported employment were considered: individual and in groups. Within a few years, in line with the assumed philosophy increasingly strong, supported employment focused solely on individualized support formula, extolling the values of attention of each person (one person at a time) and discarding the group formula, for being paternalistic, stigmatizing and less normalizing.
- 3) In time, the quality of supported employment was increasingly taking into account the voice and participation of the disabled worker in the process of labour inclusion,

giving him or her central role, and a change from "seek employment for PAX" to "seek employment with PAX". It was the 80s, which were booming the values of "self-determination" and "self-advocacy".

- 4) Later supported employment evolved toward the predominance of *natural support*, above the predominance of professional or technical support, that is, the role of the job coach would change significantly, as they had the value of natural supports in the workplace, for being more typical within the overall corporate culture and less intrusive, that is, more normalizing for the benefit of the person. It was the 90s decade.

- 5) Finally, supported employment approaches has evolved from "competitive employment" to "tailored employment" or "employment on demand", that is, employment tailored to the needs of the candidate and the employer, reaching agreements negotiated between them. From The Supported Competitive Employment to Customized Employment, which is in fact the supported employment of quality. It is our time from 2000 and further.

All these evolutionary stages, which have been improving and enriching the supported

employment, have only put more and more the person in the center, and this is the one that has generated the adaptations and transformations of this support and assistance system.

The person, central axis of supported employment

The person, therefore, is the central element of supported employment. All the principles, approaches, strategies and procedures to be discussed in this course will revolve around a main axis, the human person. This will be the driving force of the way that teachers and students will walk together through the network.

Person who needs support

He or she will not be an ordinary person, but a person who needs a proper support to get to participate in society, like other citizens, and, therefore, also needs support to find a job, to learn the tasks of the job, social and labor skills required and to maintain over time employment stability.

Person with different abilities or person with social maladjustment

The person to whom we refer may have limitations because of physical, mental, or sensory disability, but also these limitations might not be attributable to a disability, but rather to historical conditions and social consequences, which have exercised a negative influence on his or her development, taking this person to social maladjustment. Both groups of people with different abilities and people with social

maladjustment or in a disadvantaged situation are at high risk of exclusion from the open labour market, if there is not a mediator to compensate for the disadvantage. This personalized support system is called **supported employment**.

*Person centred
planing*

Whatever the reference is used for the corresponding collective, the person receiving support will always be the main character of supported employment: he or she will be involved from the beginning, to make his or her way towards social inclusion, he or she will lead the planning process, which will start from his or her interests, desires and capabilities, he or she will be heard and helped to make their own decisions, he or she will be the one who set goals, who will choose intervention strategies and even support staff, he or she will correct the course of the proceedings and will always evaluate the results and quality of the received services.

*High quality
supported
employment or not*

If this is happening, one can be assured that a supported employment program of high quality is acting, but if, on the contrary, in our everyday experience of people with support needs are always subjected to the decisions of professionals and they must adapt to the rules and criteria established by the service ("take it or leave it"), then we are participating in a low service quality.

to its beg

Since its inception, supported employment emerged focused on the person, to help precisely those with great difficulties to have real employment opportunities in open-market companies, demonstrating their work skills with necessary support (instructional and environmental). Loyal to the philosophy that inspired it, the system design focused on the needs

of the person, and this was its great success, because this way it became an effective tool of individual labour integration, as opposed to the traditional approach, which only offered sheltered workshops in group and day centers, ineffective in achieving labour integration in the open market.

1. 2. Perception of disabled people

Why do we sometimes use the term “people with different abilities”?

*Terminology thesis:
it is better to use
positive terms*

Because we refuse to use negative terms, when we are referring to people capable of performing many jobs and are contributing to society in many places with valuable contributions. Furthermore, in a course where we will discuss the employment of these people and their capabilities, we consider it a contradiction and injustice to refer to them by the term "disabled people". Yes, we know that in many countries the term "disability", as formerly used "handicap", is widespread and it has become customary to refer to these groups. But along this course we refuse to use negative terms, revealing a certain perception of the person, referring to arouse compassion and paternalistic attitudes that cause damage to their own groups, because this perception has influence in the further development of services and in professional practice. This terminology thesis can be seen schematically in Table 1.

We want to get the student's complicity

with our terminology thesis, to start the journey that we will do together, through different and interesting scenarios that will be presented. We agree that it is unnecessary to "tag" a few people who are citizens like all of us and belong to our own community. Therefore, if we do not like to be labeled for some characteristic neither will we do with anyone, but, on the contrary, we will be vigilant to what is essential: our interesting and enigmatic humanity.

Label: person

Furthermore, we believe that the most reluctant student will also agree with us and will be proclaimed supporter of our terminology thesis, when being in contact with these people that will appear on this course, and he or she will be subjugated or seduced by his or her tenacity, confidence, imagination, delivery, that is, for his or her human capacity to contribute to our society and to enrich our collective image of humanity.

Everybody is convinced

Therefore, from now on, we will only label cans, but never more human beings.

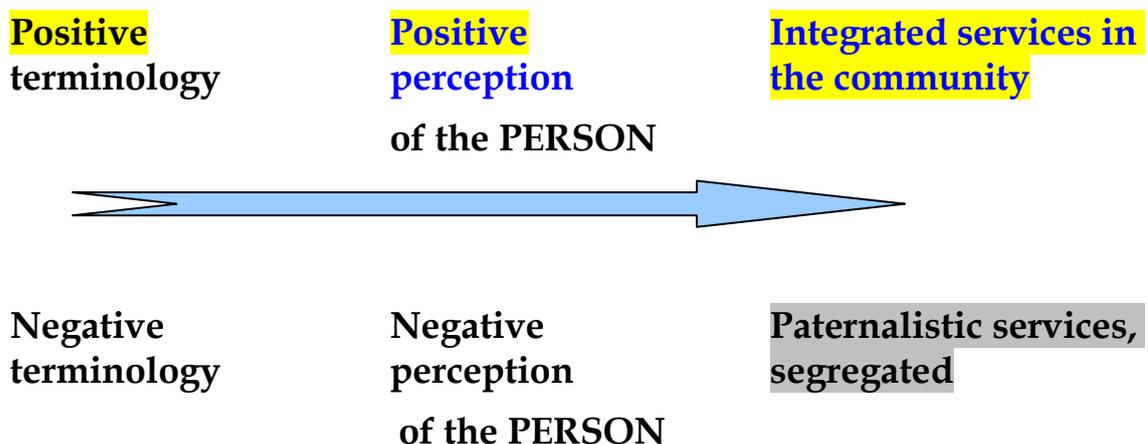


Table 1: Terminology thesis with opposed consequences

If the terms we use to refer to people are important, models of intervention in which we are situated when giving or designing services for people with diverse abilities are also important. Depending on our line of work, we will have different results, with very different implications for the people we serve (see Figure 1).

Abilities vs disabilities

Supported employment therefore sees the person in a positive way, as we have said, so it draws a plan based on their abilities and not in their disabilities, taking into account how that person can contribute to society, though in a partial way, and considering what supports and adaptations will be needed to ensure a successful and effective contribution.

A team of professionals at the service of a group of people who need support to integrate into the workplace must primarily get examined about how he or she perceives these people that he or she is going to accompany, if they are perceived as having the same rights as the rest of citizens to join the labour force regardless of their disabilities (first assumption), or if they are perceived as disabled first to offer a program or service precisely considering their disabilities (second assumption).

If professionals are in the second assumption, probably it will be reflected in a set of attitudes such as lack of time spent listening to people, to see their interests, to investigate their

possibilities, and most likely there will be a lack of respect in the way to make decisions that affect the lives of served people, etc. If we do not get the results of job integration, it will be because of the disability of participants.

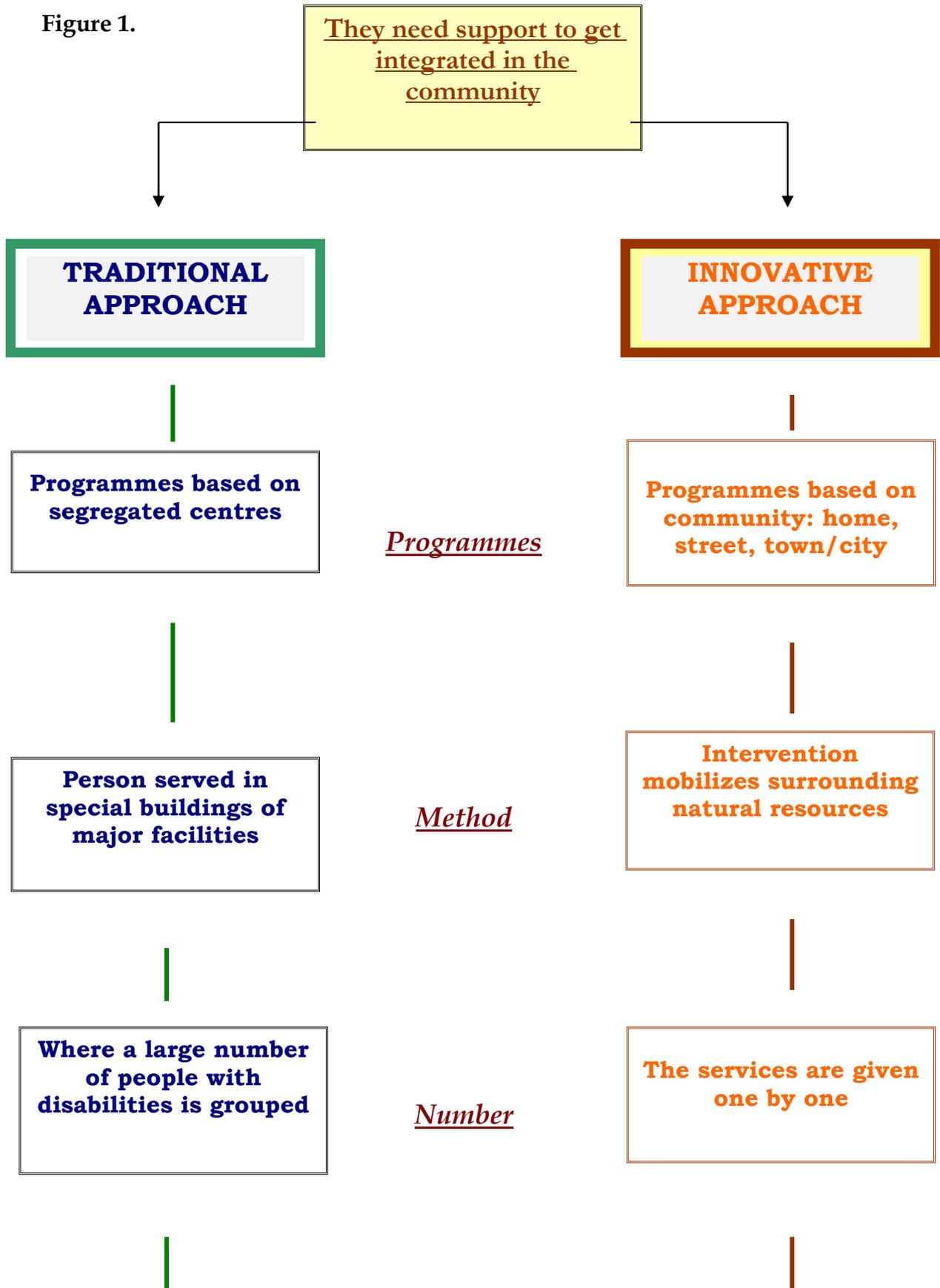
Syndrome of the programme

People supported by professionals with this perspective are victims of what we might call the syndrome of the programme, that is, the situation in which the most important in practice is the programme, not the person, and this must always be adapted to the conditions imposed by the programme or centre.

In this syndrome we can find many trapped people with diverse abilities that are perceived as disabled and are channeled by the system in training or care routes (see Figure 2).

Table 2 shows schematically the different perceptions of people with different capabilities between the traditional approach, already overcome, and the innovative approach of supported employment.

Figure 1.



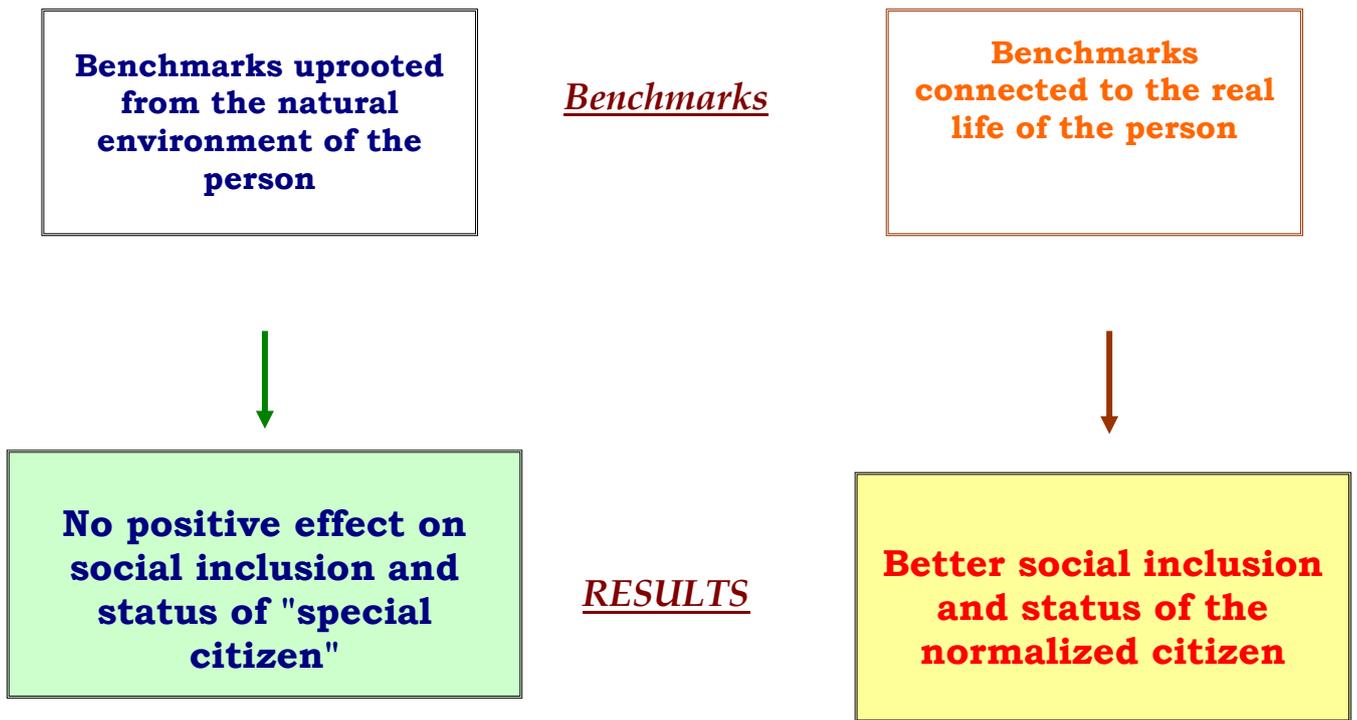


Figure 2. Person trapped in the route...

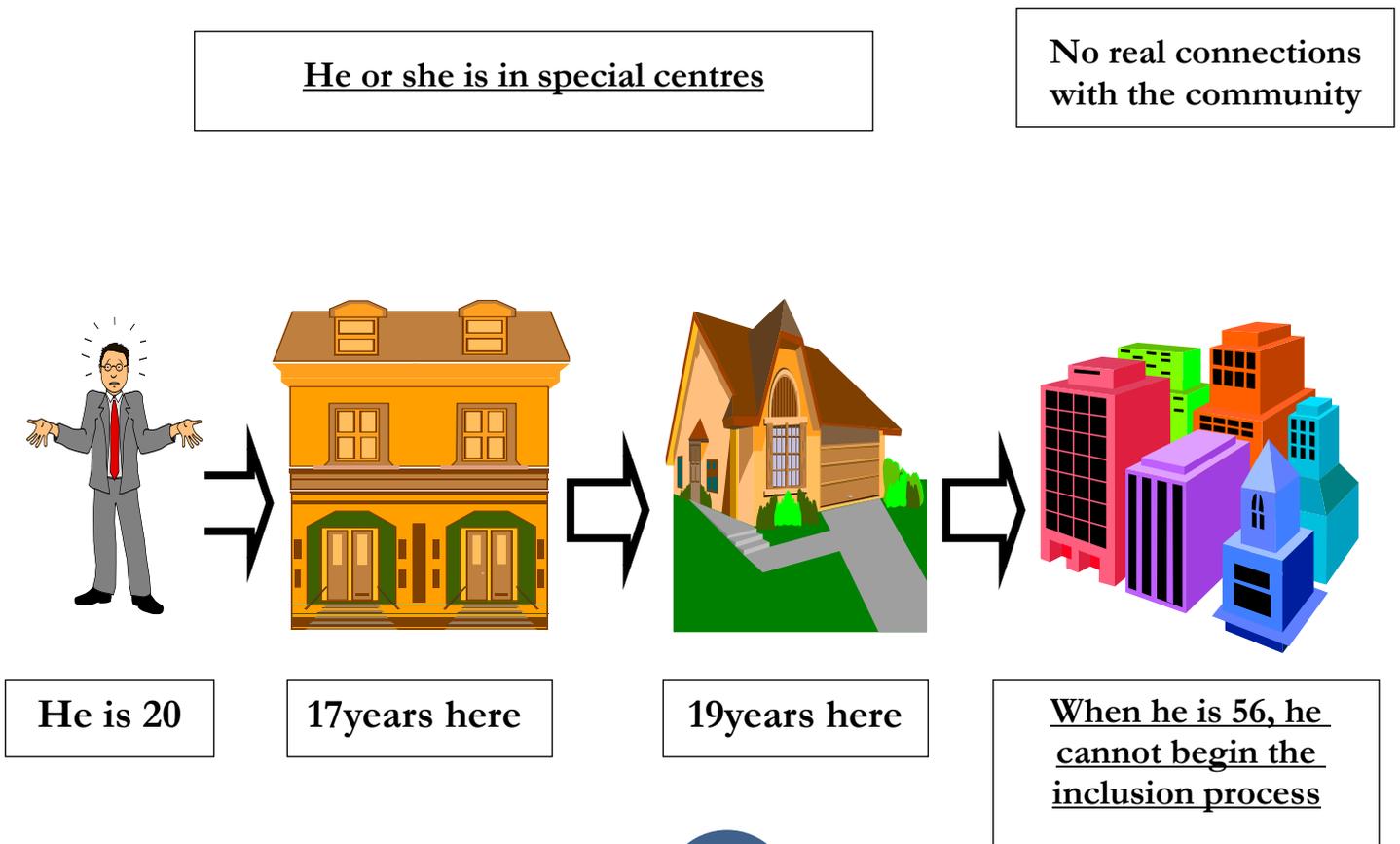


Table 2: DIFFERENT PERCEPTION OF THE PERSON WITH DIVERSE ABILITIES

TRADITIONAL APPROACH	SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT
1* Person to be protected in a special environment	♣ A citizen with full rights who wants to realize, participate and contribute
2* A person who occupies a place in an segregated centre	♣ Person that should take a job in any company of the open market
3* The important thing is to be happy, but doing nothing	♣ The important thing is to have opportunities and take advantage of them
4* The person must fit to the centre's services	♣ The services respond to the needs of the person
5* The treatment is hierarchical, directive, paternalistic	♣ The treatment is like an adult, as equals
6* Considered as an incapable person, others choose for him/her	♣ The person is informed, for taking his/her own decisions
7* Equality of opportunities is an utopia	♣ Equality of opportunities becomes a reality