Employment of persons with disabilities and ‘inclusive corporate culture’

A literature review
(Work in progress)

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The main topics of the presentation

1. **Employment** as an important element of social inclusion
2. **Driving forces** leading to changes in companies policies towards employment of persons with disabilities
3. **Barriers** limiting employment of persons with disabilities
4. Elements of ‘**inclusive corporate culture**’
5. Preliminary conclusion
European strategies for social inclusion

- **European report on social inclusion 2005**: social inclusion provides opportunities and resources for the socially excluded population to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being.

- **Europe 2020 strategy**: inclusion or inclusive growth is one of the three priorities aiming at empowering people through high levels of employment, investing in skills, fighting poverty, modernising labour markets and involving wider population into employment.

- **European Disability Strategy 2010-2020**: considers employment one of the most critical factor for social inclusion: more people with disabilities need to be in paid employment on the open labour market (work conditions and job quality).
Social inclusion

• **Inclusion or integration** is a process of bringing people with, and without, a disability together in shared physical settings so that meaningful social interactions can be fostered and maintained (Patterson, 2001)

• For persons with disabilities social inclusion occurs in **multiple contexts and covers all aspects of life** at infrastructural, interpersonal and personal levels (Hall, 2009) [Figure 1. Social inclusion](#)

• Social inclusion for people with disabilities consisted of **three elements**: involvement in activities, maintaining reciprocal relationships, and a sense of belonging (Hall, 2009)
Employment as an important element of social inclusion of persons with disabilities

• Positive action and a work of decent quality are the most effective means of escaping the ‘vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion’ (ILO website, Disability and work; Atkinson & Marlier, 2010)

• Being employed, disabled people can not only increase their financial income, but incorporate into the mainstream society by increasing their social participation and networks, civic skills, status and relationships, sense of efficiency, belonging and inclusion (Bates & Davis, 2004; Schur et al., 2005)

• Society can benefit from human, social and economic development, eradication of poverty and social exclusion (Bates & Davis, 2004; Atkinson & Marlier, 2010; Wehman, 2011)
Driving forces leading to the changes in societal and corporate attitudes

• **Change from the ‘medical model’ towards the ‘social model’ of disability:** not a personal impairment but social context and environment (Quinn, 2009)

• **Change from protected and segregated forms of employment to employment in the mainstream labour market:** persons with disabilities as “social minority” and ‘disability’ a matter of basic civil rights (Bickenbach *et al*., 1999, Shakespeare & Watson, 2001)

• **Accessibility and antidiscrimination legislation:** the new policy approach emphasizing social and economic integration of persons with disabilities (2000/78/EC; UN CRPD)

• **The corporate culture open towards diverse workforce and principles of inclusion:** has so far to a greater extent been observed in large corporations and MNEs (Schur *et al*., 2005, Newton *et al*., 2007, McMahon *et al*., 2008, Samant *et al*., 2009)
OECD Report 2010: «Sickness, Disability and Work» (p. 51)

Figure 2.1. Employment rates of people with disability are low and have been falling in many countries

Employment rates by disability status in the late-2000s (left axis) and trends in relative employment rates since the mid-1990s (people with disability over those without, right axis)
### Barriers limiting employment of persons with disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘personal’</th>
<th>‘organizational’</th>
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<tr>
<td>o Individual characteristics</td>
<td>o Discrimination at the workplace: negative attitudes, prejudices and stereotyped behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Inaccessible environment</td>
<td>o Improper work environment: risk-based employment not suitable for disabled employees (the nature of work of the enterprise)</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Inadequate policies</td>
<td>o Concerns about costs and productivity</td>
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<td>o Employment not designed for disabled people</td>
<td>o Low level of sustaining employment and retention for workers with disabilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>o Low quality jobs: unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled manual jobs, less earnings, especially for disabled women</td>
<td>o Unwelcome corporate culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>o Unwillingness to allow individuals with disabilities to prove their capabilities</td>
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‘A culture of inclusion’

• A culture that **enhances workforce integration and brings to life diversity potentials**: where people with multiple backgrounds can work effectively together and perform to their highest potential (Pless & Maak, 2004)

• A culture **where opinions, assumptions, values, stereotypes, rituals and stories are translated into policies and procedures** influencing the way qualified workers are hired and managed (Davis, 2005)

• A culture based on **clarified normative grounds, principles of recognition, mutual understanding, trust and honoring the differences** (Pless & Maak, 2004)

• A culture embracing the formal and informal policies and practices and encompassing three important elements: **universal design, HR policies and workplace accommodation** (BBI, 2011)
Inclusive corporate culture
(adopted from Schein, 1992; 2009)

I. ‘Artifacts’ or visible organizational structure
- Architecture
- Interpersonal behaviour
- Climate

II. ‘The espoused values’ that explicitly guide organizational policies
- Values, mission
- Stated strategies
- Goals
- Philosophies

III. Underlying tacit assumptions
- Unspoken values
- Norms
- Beliefs
- Perceptions

- Design of the work space and premises (material and non-material)
- Accessibility (communication, scheduling, job description and physical accommodation)
- Supportive climate
- CSR, Diversity, equality and ethics policies
- HR Policies (recruitment, accommodation, promotion and retention)
- Adjustment or accommodation throughout all HR processes
- Flexibility and focus on job skills
- Another type of diversity that gives a competitive advantage
- Sensitivity, flexibility, support, respect, positive attitudes
- Value of diversity
- Assistive co-workers
- Cooperation rather than competition
- «Part of social group» – feeling of belongingness
Important elements of ‘inclusive corporate culture’

1. Involving senior management (strong and ongoing commitment by top management), which sets a tone of inclusion (Schur et al., 2005, Chan et al., 2010)

2. Changing organization's norms and values and providing written value statements that address legislation and individuals with disabilities (Davis, 2005, Schur et al., 2005)

3. Changing organizational policies and practices: the design of jobs, staffing methods, evaluation procedures, and reward systems in organizations (Stone & Colella, 1996, Schur et al., 2005)

4. Proactive recruitment and retention policies (recruitment, selection processes, workplace accommodation, interpersonal relationships, supportive culture, training and performance) and making job site modification (job duties, work schedule, adaptive equipment) (Davis, 2005, Markel & Barclay, 2009, Schur et al., 2005, Wehman, 2003)

5. Changing attitudes, beliefs, emotional reactions and responses: providing social skills trainings and instructions (formal and informal social codes); teaching the social culture on the job site; establish support networks (Stone & Colella, 1996, Wehman, 2003)
Preliminary conclusions

• Many disabled people still remain excluded from paid employment (Hall & Wilton, 2011)

• Positive examples are needed: the more employers are willing to hire persons with disabilities, the more other employers will follow (Wehman, 2011), thus more experience of companies that are successfully employing persons with disabilities need to be shared with larger business community (Hernandez et al., 2008)

• There is a need for greater collaboration between policy-makers and employers to better promote the success of disabled people in the labour market, as well as eliminating negative attitudes and prejudices and promoting employer education about the issues that disabled people face are important (Shier et al., 2009)

• Inclusion does not only embrace one part of the corporate culture, e.g. recruitment or policies, it is about engaging all aspects of the corporate culture, and not only hiring but retaining and advancement of employees, and creating an accessible and convenient environment for all
References


Thank you!

• Questions
• Comments
• Suggestions are welcome!!!

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