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Social innovation in work inclusion for people with intellectual disability

InnArbeid-konferansen 22-23.mai 2019

Kristiansand

Hege Gjertsen, UiT Norges Arktiske Universitet



The presentation focuses on:

How social innovation can contribute to solving a comprehensive challenge – work inclusion for people with intellectual disability.

One example of innovative practice were a sheltered workshop is involved: A new organisation of the work measure Permanently Adopted Work in Public (VTAO).

Focus on conditions that can promote or hamper successful implementation of the innovation.

Background

People with intellectual disability are, despite political intentions of increased work inclusion, mainly excluded from ordinary work in Norway.

The political and research agenda emphasizes innovation in public sector. There is a need for more knowledge about conditions that promote or hamper success in innovation in the public sector.

Method

The presentation is based on some of the interviews from one of the work packages in a large, ongoing research project about work inclusion for people with intellectual disability.

A qualitative study of how sheltered workshops, by rethinking work inclusion and in collaboration with different actors, can succeed with work inclusion for people with intellectual disability.

Data

We have so far interviewed:

- 13 employees with intellectual disability
- 27 service providers at three sheltered workshops, four local and three regional labor and welfare-offices (NAV)

Wicked problems require social innovation

- Lack of work inclusion for people with intellectual disability is a wicked problem – a social challenge that:
 - is difficult, but important, to solve
 - has several owners and requires different actors to collaborate and collaborate in new ways
- Wicked problems require **social innovation** – new and creative solutions

Social innovation as an analytic framework

«Social innovation is new solutions (products, services, and methods of organization) that meet social needs (more efficiently than other alternatives), and that create new social collaborative relationships at the same time.»

(Kobro ed. 2018:17)

A break with old practices and common understandings, although it does not have to be something radically new.

Why social innovation as a perspective?

The perspective of social innovation underlines the need for collaboration not only within the public sector, but between public sectors as well as collaboration with actors in private and voluntary sectors.

Work inclusion for people with intellectual disability is a challenge that requires several actors to collaborate.

There is a need for identifying good work inclusion practices.

Labor marked measures

About 20-25% of adults with a known intellectual disability in Norway are employed. Almost all of them work at a permanent adopted measure at a *sheltered workplace*, organized by a sheltered workshop.

Very few work at an ordinary workplace.

Permanently adopted work in public (VTAO)

Since 2016 this work measure could be organized directly at an *ordinary workplace* in the work measure called Permanently adopted work in public (VTAO).

- A state-financed measure organized by NAV
- The employees receive disability benefits
- In line with the supported employment-thinking and the concept of «place then train»
- This work measure is rarely used for people with intellectual disability

The new organization of the VTAO-measure

- 3-4 years ago: The local NAV-office collaborated with a municipality to establish a 50% position located at a sheltered workshop.
- One person, working at the sheltered workshop, has now the responsibility for supporting both employers and employees (people with intellectual disability working in this measure at an ordinary workplace)

The new organisation of VTAO is a social innovation

- a new solution that directly meets a social need
- create a new social collaboration, where a sheltered workshop and the municipality now are included in the organisation of the work measure
- an incremental innovation – involving small, but important, adaptations
- a collaborative innovation - several actors had to collaborate to create a new way of organising the work measure

Results of the new organisation of VTAO

The new organization of the work measure is considered as a success:

10 persons with intellectual disability work at an ordinary workplace (after some years they are still in employment).

« Yes, we can see that VTAO has been a success. That is very good, after many years, at least 4 years. It has worked and that is the feedback from the employers too. It is the extensive support and the security of having us there when needed. »

Our findings shows: What can promote success?

Several conditions seems to be crucial to the success of the innovation:

Conditions related to the characteristics of the innovation

- Drivers for innovation: the innovation was initiated by NAV, but several actors have collaborated to implement the idea
- Levels of novelty: an incremental innovation - changes that implies small adaptations

Social conditions

Concern the relation between those involved in the implementing.

- The collaboration between NAV the municipality and the sheltered workshop works well
- A new actor is involved (the municipality)
- One key player in the organisation of the measure has been replaced

Cultural conditions

Related to the meanings and values those implementing the innovation put into the innovation, and how they consider and interpret it.

- The collaborators have common interests: increased work inclusion
- The sheltered workshop has much experience with work inclusion and people with intellectual disability
- Common understanding in the sheltered workshop: work inclusion is important and support is crucial

« You have to believe in this yourself, and offer close support to both the worker and the employer in the beginning. »

Structural conditons

- Human resources: The sheltered workshop has the human resources needed
- Economic resources: The municipality is funding a position at the sheltered workshop
«It is important that we keep the earmarked position.»

What can hamper success?

Legislations and regulations for work measures: influence how the work measures can be organised

Current practice at The Norwegian Labor and Welfare-office (NAV): people with intellectual disability are not a priority

Conclusion

Social innovation can increase work inclusion for people with intellectual disability.

Certain conditions are important for the success of social innovation in work inclusion:

- characteristics of the innovation
- social and cultural factors
- structural conditions