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Creating accessibility: the accommodation of employees with disabilities as workplace innovation

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PhD project 2016-2020

***RQ:** What forms of workplace innovation may creating accessibility for employees with disabilities require of organisations and managers?*

Theoretical perspectives from Disability studies, Capability Approach (Sen 1980, Robeyns 2017) and Workplace Innovation (Pot, Totterdill & Dhondt 2016)

Methodology: Qualitative, interpretive critical case study (Flyvberg 2011), with an ambition of developing theory

Paper based format. Status: Two papers down (Owren & Helmersen 2018, Owren 2019), two to go (Owren & Dyrkolbotn xxxx, Owren & Austrheim xxxx)

Total confusion

**Doing field work,
conducting interviews
2016–2017**

Generating to know
seven different people
with intellectual
disability, their jobs and
their organisational
contexts



**Reading organisation
and management
research related to all
types of disabilities
2018–**

Critiquing some rather
sweeping claims,
modelling four distinct
levels of workplace
accessibility

Some clarity



Two such sweeping claims

“In summary, the evidence shows no significant performance and productivity differences between PWDs [persons with disabilities] and people without disabilities. However, there still exists the perception among employers that these two groups differ, especially among employers who have not had experience with PWDs” (Lengnik-Hall, Gaunt & Kulkarni 2008, p. 263)

“... there are misconceptions among employers and society at large about the ability of persons with disabilities to work and their potential productivity” (Arenas et al 2017, p. 13)



At present, the field of organisational and management research on work and disability presents as immature

- Sweeping generalisations from researchers based on (what I argue to be) a too narrow sample and subset
- Lack of differentiation between different subsets of the extremely diverse category "persons with disabilities" (Beatty et al 2019)
- Meagre amounts of research on what "full and effective participation" in workplaces means in practice, and how it may be represented theoretically

Known from before

Successful work inclusion requires

- management support,
- external support where necessary (SE, CE, IPS and so forth),
- assistive technology,
- physical changes to the environment,
- flexible scheduling,
- creating good job matches,
- creating a level of "disability awareness" in the organisation.

Waxman 2017; Heera & Maini 2018; Miethlich & Šlahor 2018)

My contribution may be something like

With some disabilities it may *also* require changes in organisational routines and social practices, where

- a) some changes can be designed universally according to type of disability and implemented, but
- b) others may need to be developed on-site, in broader processes of organisational learning, dialogue, double-loop learning, negotiation.
- c) In some cases, the organisation may have to take responsibility for both understanding and fulfilling accommodation needs



Literature

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Literature 2

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