SHAPING INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

A MANAGEMENT AND HRM PRACTITIONER PERSPECTIVE

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Introduction

Eric Breit, Siri Yde Aksnes, Paul Boselie, and Jasmijn van Harten

1.1 Introduction

This book contributes to knowledge about how to promote successful workplace inclusion of people with disability (PWD). It provides evidence-informed insights based on rigorous research that are translated into hands-on suggestions, cases, and other materials that can be applied to practice. In this introduction, we explain why a book on workplace inclusion of PWD is of vital importance to managers and HRM professionals (Sect. 1.1), after which we present the central approach and aims of the book (Sect. 1.2). Finally, we display the structure of the book and provide an overview of its chapters (Sect. 1.3).

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A vast number of individuals are excluded from the labour market due to long-term health conditions or because they are in vulnerable life situations. In the OECD countries, about 18% of the population are registered with a disability—defined by OECD as people who (1) declared to suffer from any chronic illness or condition and (2) with moderate to severe activity limitation due to health problems—and about 40% were unemployed in 2019 (OECD, 2022). People with disabilities (PWD) are on average in the OECD countries more than twice as likely to be unemployed than persons without disabilities. In other words, evidence suggests that it has become even more difficult for PWD to find a job.

This trend of labour market exclusion persists among others due to deep-rooted societal prejudices, misconceptions, and stereotypes surrounding disability, which often leads to discriminatory attitudes and practices in work-life. These prejudices hinder equal opportunities, reinforcing the cycle of labour market exclusion. Furthermore, inaccessible workplaces, limited accommodations, and a lack of tailored support mechanisms further exacerbate the challenges faced by persons with disability, making it harder for them to enter and be sustained in the workforce.

Ensuring sustained labour market inclusion for persons with disability has been a pressing concern for governments for several decades. This governmental emphasis is perhaps most vividly formulated in the United Nation's (UN) sustainable development goal number 8, which aims to "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all", and in particular in the target 8.5: "By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including for young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value" (OECD, 2025).

Since the 1990s, governments have primarily focused on improving the employability of people with disabilities (PWDs) to promote their inclusion in the labour market. This approach, known as the *supply-side* approach, aims to enhance jobseekers' skills and abilities in order to make them more desirable to employers (Frøyland et al., 2019). However, this method often involves pressuring jobseekers to find employment and implementing sanctions and restrictions on benefits. Critics argue that this approach places the blame for unemployment on the individual, suggesting that finding a job is solely dependent on their skills and attitudes, while ignoring the actual availability of job opportunities (Peck & Theodore, 2000).

In recent years, there has been a shift in government policies towards a focus on employers. These policies, often known as the *demand-side* approach, aim to encourage or incentivize employers to hire PWDs on an

equal basis with individuals without disabilities, and to contribute to the work rehabilitation and competency development of PWDs. Rather than being passive recipients of government policies, employers are recognized as active stakeholders in this process. Scholarly literature refers to this focus on employers as "employer engagement," defined as “the active role of employers in addressing the societal challenge of promoting the labour market participation of vulnerable groups (Ingold & McGurk, 2023b; Van Berkel et al., 2017, p. 503).

To fulfil this active role, employers need to be motivated to hire PWD, either through external factors like government incentives or penalties or through internal factors such as their corporate social responsibility (CSR) or ethical values. This approach involves legal obligations and requirements to remove discrimination, provide equal opportunities, and potentially implement quotas for employing PWDs. Governments may also offer financial incentives to employers, such as wage subsidies, and encourages voluntary agreements to hire PWDs (Frøyland et al., 2019). It is important to note that there is considerable variation among countries in their demand-side policies, approaches, and design (Bredgaard et al., 2023) (see also Chapter 11).

The changing role of employers demands a significant shift in their practices related to employment and inclusion. Many employers, especially those in larger organizations, are likely familiar with concepts like diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), corporate social responsibility (CSR), and equal opportunity policies and practices. However, they face new challenges of expanding their focus beyond ‘traditional’ types of diversity—i.e. gender, ethnicity, multiculturalism, and age—to include disability as a central aspect of jobseekers and employees. A significant characteristic of PWD is that they often require additional attention and support from HRM professionals, line managers, and co-workers, such as task accommodations, on-the-job support, or mentoring.

In the book, we refer to employers at the micro level, and we use the term *Workplace inclusion* to highlight the workplace and shopfloor as the central arena where inclusion takes place. Through this perspective, the concept of workplace inclusion encompasses the interactions and dynamics among Human Resource Management (HRM) professionals, line managers, and co-workers. In addition, inclusion may also be supported by job coaches/specialists from external actors such as public employment services or other labour market intermediaries. Such support is central in ‘Supported employment’ programs directed at PWD, which involves placing participants in ordinary jobs and then training them under support by job specialists (Bond et al., 2008).

Key actors in workplace inclusion of PWD

- **HRM professionals:** These are individuals responsible for managing and overseeing various aspects of human resources within an organization, including recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and employee relations.
- **Line managers:** They are managers at different levels in the organization (e.g. supervisors, team leaders, executive managers) who directly oversee and guide employees in their day-to-day tasks and activities, ensuring that work is completed efficiently and effectively.
- **Co-workers (including labour unions):** Co-workers refer to individuals who work alongside or otherwise in the same workplace as PWD. Labour unions are organized groups representing the collective interests of workers, advocating for their rights and welfare in the workplace.

By focusing on workplace inclusion, we are aligned with the recent development in the literature seeing HRM and active labour market policy research as mutually informative—thus attempting to bridge the gap between scholars focusing on the 'external' dimensions of organizations (i.e. their relation to policies and service provides) and the 'internal' dimension (i.e. their hiring, post-hiring, and other organizational practices for inclusion) (Ingold & McGurk, 2023a; Van Berkel et al., 2017). Since then, or in parallel, research has focused increasingly on the role of human resource management (HRM) (Beatty et al., 2019; Kersten et al., 2023; Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022; Van Berkel & Breit, 2024) and on organizational practices for inclusion of PWDs (see e.g. Van Berkel & Breit, 2024 for a review).

Our focus in the book is thus on work inclusion in the context of the long-term employment relationship between PWD and employers—i.e. a focus beyond mere hiring of PWD to include what happens post hiring, as well as a focus on inclusion in the context of paid work and regulated, secure work conditions. The contrasting situation to such conditions is where organizations use apprenticeships with few or no opportunities for regular employment, which may involve exploitation of cheap labour and reproduction of precarious work and working conditions (Kalleberg, 2011).

In the book, our goal is to provide general insights on inclusion opportunities for managers and HR practitioners. Although we do not explicitly focus on the lived experiences of people with disabilities, we acknowledge its importance and have incorporated it throughout our research. The empirical material in the chapters is collected from Nordic (Norway and Denmark) and other Western contexts (Netherlands and Australia). These four countries may not be fully representative of less inclusive regions around the world. In

these countries, however, the topic of PWDs has attracted significant attention. We think that sharing these insights and empirical findings can be a source of inspiration for other countries and wider organizational contexts.

1.2 A Realistic Approach for Practitioners

The book aims to address the urgent need for a practitioner-oriented (executive) teaching resource on workplace inclusion of PWD. By'practitioners,' we mean here primarily line managers and HR professionals, but the book is also relevant for employment service professionals and policy makers given their position as core stakeholders for employers. By 'urgent need,' we mean the increasing demands placed on managers, HRM professionals, and other organizational members to develop new skills and knowledge to promote inclusion of PWD, as well as a prevailing focus on barriers in the existing literature: i.e., negative expectations of managers regarding the productivity and costs associated with PWD; their lack of knowledge about disabilities; and challenges they experience or expect in recruitment, selection, job creation, and day-to-day support for PWD (Nagtegaal et al., 2023; Van Berkel, 2021). In addition, there is also a common assumption that employers are inherently passive entities that require external motivation from the government to hire disadvantaged groups, which fails to recognize the internal motivations among leaders, co-workers or other members of organizations.

This book is thus pioneering in the sense that it places managers and HR professionals as practitioners (or students who will soon become practitioners) at the centre of attention regarding workplace inclusion. We do so by offering an alternative perspective to those above that we conceptualize as a *realistic approach*. The realistic approach of the book emphasizes a strong connection to realistic, or real-life, settings. This means blending theory and practice (for example translating theoretical models into concrete practices), the explicit use of real-life introduction cases, the incorporation of questions that will challenge the reader in thinking about applications, and the invitation to take an active role in shaping employment relationships for PWDs. This approach builds on notions of public engagement (linking academia and practice) and stakeholder involvement taking into account multiple actors inside and outside an organization.

The empirical research we draw on
In terms of providing scientific evidence, we draw on recent empirical research conducted by among others authors of the chapters. Several of the authors (and the editors) draw from the research project "Sustained employment of 'hard-to-place' citizens in small and medium sized enterprises: A mixed-method study in Norway and the Netherlands" (ENGAGE) funded by the Norwegian Research Council in the period 2020–2025. In addition, other chapter authors draw from other research projects that are ongoing or recently finalized or utilize recent publications by others. The common denominator is that state-of-the-art research insights are presented and applied to the daily work dilemmas of managers and HR professionals.

The realistic approach contrasts with a barrier approach by taking a positive view on the opportunities for managers to succeed with inclusion. A positive view means taking a 'growth oriented' or 'strengths based' approach to the PWD, which means to develop and capitalize on the strengths and resources of PWD rather than on focusing on their limitations (Dutton & Sonenshein, 2009). In the context of disability studies, this perspective connects with a 'value in disability' perspective (Lundberg & Solvang, 2022).

This positive view also corresponds with a resource-based view, which takes as its most basic assumption that employees are a potential source for achieving organizational ambitions and goals (Barney, 2001). Our interpretation of the resource-based view is broad in which HRM can contribute to shaping employment relationships for PWDs that contributes to the individual well-being of PWDs and employees in general, the societal well-being through public value creation and the strengthening of the organizational reputation (social legitimacy), and organizational effectiveness in an era of labour market shortages (Beer et al., 2015). There is a potential win–win-win situation on the table if managed and organized properly (Paauwe & Farndale, 2017).

The realistic approach is also critical. It is critical by considering the economic realities many organizations face when hiring PWDs, perhaps especially small and medium sized organizations with limited economic leeway. All hiring is a financial risk: this risk may be higher for PWD than other groups of employees, while other times it is only a matter of employers' perceptions of risk rooted in stereotypes. A realistic approach urges managers and HR professionals to critically consider these risks and reflect on ways to mitigate them.

We also use critical here in the sense of not assuming any easy-to-copy best practices. Copying best practices from one organizational context to another may result in simplified, naïve and superficial practices. As noted above, workplace inclusion entails relations between line managers, HRM professionals, and co-workers. We contend that there is no singular or exclusive relation between these actors. Rather, successful workplace inclusion will always be rooted in the local situation of these actors and relationships—and be influenced by the structural characteristics of the workplace (see Chapter 11). A central challenge in work inclusion is understanding these characteristics in one's own context and developing workable relations.

A final aspect of a realistic approach is to shift attention from a reactive view of organizations using external motivation and pressures ("you shall") towards an active view based on internal motivation, opportunities, and untapped resources ("you can"). A central question that will run throughout the book is thus What can you do about this? While we aim to spur the readers' increased theoretical and reflexive knowledge, we essentially provide a call to action. This entails community engaged learning through a (pro)active perspective—i.e. a basic assumption that all readers of this book will have some agency, strategic choice and room to manoeuvre within financial, regulatory or normative structures.

The book is therefore an open invitation for personal, professional, and organizational learning for those who participate in executive teaching using the textbook. That includes both the participants and the lecturers of training and teaching. Doing something regarding workplace inclusion will always be better than doing nothing. We put this into practice by applying a 'learning oriented' template to each chapter containing the following elements:

- Learning objectives. This can be, for example, the ability to identify or understand certain concepts or phenomena
- A practical case study including discussion questions
- Summary at the end of the chapter
- An individual and group task to put research findings into practice
- Further reading suggestions

1.3 Structure of the Book

The book contains 12 chapters, which together cover central themes required for line managers and HRM practitioners to practice workplace inclusion of PWDs in accordance with a realistic approach. The chapters are structured according to what we regard as six cornerstones of workplace inclusion: Strategic support and policies, leadership and interpersonal relations, work design and accommodations, co-worker collegiality, external support, and organizations' structural characteristics (see Fig. 1.1).

1.3.1 Strategic Support and Policies

The first two chapters entail a focus on the upper strategic level in organizations. Chapter 2 by Jo Ingold, Veronica Sabo, Qian Lee and Angela Knox, focuses on executive strategies such as strategic resourcing and examines how leaders can strategically promote employment opportunities for PWD

Fig. 1.1 Cornerstones of workplace inclusion of PWD

while achieving business goals. They draw on a case study of MoveSync, a multi-national, private sector transport company, which illustrates the strategic leeway and decision making to employ PWD. The chapter reviews existing literature on strategic resourcing and on the drivers of inclusion for businesses. Based on recent research from businesses in Australia, the chapter provides a number of useful strategies for disability inclusion that can be enacted throughout your organization, including inclusive recruitment, aligning HR with diversity initiatives, and developing an organizational culture of inclusion.

Paul Boselie, Jasmijn van Harten, and Laura van Os (Chapter 3) further elaborate on the strategic level by outlining what HRM involves in the context of workplace inclusion of PWDs. The chapter starts by providing an introductory case which illustrates how a large Dutch public organization prioritizes social support in their HR strategy for PWD inclusion. Drawing on recent research findings, the chapter presents options for inclusive HR practices in training and development, workplace accommodations, and social integration, in particular through the concepts of natural and external social support. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) the chapter shows how line managers, co-workers, and job coaches can promote workplace integration by providing social support.

1.3.2 Leadership and Mentorship Relations

The following two chapters focus on the role of leadership and mentorship relations to PWD. Chapter 4 by Siri Yde Aksnes and Eric Breit examines the role of inclusive leadership, which centres on the relationships between PWDs and their managers. Grounded in leadership theories of optimal distinctiveness, leader-member exchange, and positive work relations, they describe how inclusive leadership balances employees' needs for uniqueness and belonging while addressing organizational goals. Drawing on a recent empirical study, the chapter outlines three practical approaches to inclusive leadership—vacancy-oriented, ability-oriented, and growth-oriented—and discusses the strengths and limitations of these approaches in balancing PWDs needs for uniqueness and belonging and in inclusion work more broadly.

Heidi Enehaug and Øystein Spjelkavik explore in Chapter 5 how companies can enhance workplace inclusion competence using mentors for PWDs, thereby utilizing existing support mechanisms within the organization. The authors argue that the presence of dedicated mentors—which may be

managers or co-workers—is crucial in nurturing a supportive work environment and increasing work participation for PWD. The chapter draws on and presents results of an interview study with internal company representatives acting as mentors for candidates with disabilities, highlighting key criteria for successful mentorship (training and social skills development of PWDs, nurturing natural supports, relational trust and proximity to work performance), as well as challenges in the mentor role.

1.3.3 Work Design

The following two chapters, by Tanja Dall and Mikkel Bo Madsen (Chapter 6) and Thomas Bredgaard (Chapter 7), continue the elaboration towards the workfloor and daily operations by focusing on two key managerial tools for include PWDs, namely work accommodations and job design.

Dall and Madsen concentrate in Chapter 6 the role of workplace accommodations of PWD. The authors introduce three types of accommodations provided by managers—technical, practical-organizational, and social-relational—and discuss the benefits and challenges associated with each of these. Grounded in the social model of disability, Dall and Madsen elaborate on the challenges and complexities of providing accommodations in the context of everyday organizational life. They underscore the need for a collaborative approach involving leadership, colleagues, and external support. In this way, the chapter interconnects with several of the other chapters.

In Chapter 7, Bredgaard explores how flexible job design can support workplace inclusion by tailoring jobs to individuals' diverse abilities. He discusses challenges related to standard job norms and introduces the job characteristics model, emphasizing enriched job roles to enhance motivation and performance. Using the Danish Flexjob program as a case study, Bredgaard illustrates strategies for integrating individuals with disabilities into the workforce by adapting work hours, tasks, and intensity. Bredgaard provides an optimistic take demonstrating that it is possible to design flexible jobs for individuals with disabilities—either drawing on organizations' existing resources and capacities or obtaining external assistance and/or subsidies.

1.3.4 Co-Worker Collegiality

The next two chapters centre on the role of co-workers and co-workers' trade unions in workplace inclusion.

Kjetil Frøyland argues in Chapter 8 that work inclusion requires not only the engagement of employers—as in executive managers—but also the engagement and involvement of co-workers. He provides in the chapter practical and organizational insights on how to engage co-workers to contribute positively to workplace inclusion, including participatory hiring processes, team-based support, and structured outlets for addressing concerns. Frøyland underscores the role of natural support—actions from colleagues, managers, HR, or union representatives—and its activation through mentorship, team organization, or direct HR intervention. In addition, he explores the challenges associated with lack of employee engagement, such as resistance among co-workers.

Tone Lindheim focuses in Chapter 9 on the role of trade unions in workplace inclusion. She departs from the conundrum that while trade unions primarily represent employed individuals ("insiders") their focus on workplace conditions can also benefit marginalized groups (“outsiders”), such as ethnic minorities and PWDs. She draws on her own recent research which indicates that unionized workplaces are more likely to adopt progressive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies. She elaborates on various types of support provided to employees by union representatives (recruitment, employment conditions, and handling of conflicts) and relations between union representatives and the central trade union (e.g. training). She argues that managers can take a proactive approach to help create a more inclusive workplace by fostering a collaborative relationship with union representatives.

1.3.5 External Support

In this section, we focus on an important external dimension in workplace inclusion, namely the support by service providers such as public employment services and labour market intermediaries. This focus on external support is provided by Magne Bråthen (Chapter 10), who emphasizes the role of guidance, resources, and on-the-job assistance in helping managers overcome barriers to workplace inclusion, including concerns about accommodations, employee capabilities, and legal compliance. It uses the COM-B model (Capacity, Opportunity, Motivation, and Behavior) to outline how different types of support can help managers overcome different types of challenges

and further elaborates on various forms of collaboration between employers and service providers.

1.3.6 Organizational Characteristics

In Chapter 11, Julie Ulstein provides an important review of how context matters by focusing on how structural organizational characteristics influence sustainable employment for PWD. She examines sector-specific dynamics across public, private, and third sectors, as well as the impact of low-skill and high-skill industries. She contrasts small firm informality with large firm formality, highlighting their unique challenges and opportunities. She uses empirical evidence to link configurations of sector, industry, and size to sustainable employment, and provides examples of how various configurations can be tackled strategically by managers. She argues for the need for context-specific practices to promote successful workplace inclusion across diverse organizational settings.

The book ends with a conclusion chapter (Chapter 12) which brings together the insights gained from the previous chapters and emphasizes four key learning lessons from the book. The chapter also offers practical recommendations connected with each lesson to help readers implement workplace inclusion.

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2

Executive Strategies

Jo Ingold, Qian Yi Lee, Veronica Sabo, and Angela Knox

Abstract The focus of this chapter is on how leaders and executives can improve their strategic decision making around staff resourcing to foster work opportunities for people with disabilities and also support strategic business objectives. While you as a leader can champion disability inclusion, there are many other stakeholders and factors to consider. The chapter discusses the drivers of disability inclusion for businesses, the role of leaders in this endeavour and the possible strategies that organisations can adopt to employ more people with disabilities. Why would businesses employ more people with disability? What are the motivations at the executive level? How do these drivers relate to overall business goals? The chapter discusses key concepts and theories as applied to recent research with businesses in Australia. We present a number of evidence-based strategies for disability inclusion that can be enacted in your organisation.

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Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you will be able to:

1. Understand the role that executive leadership plays in staff resourcing to promote the equity, diversity and inclusion of people with disabilities.
2. Appreciate how disability inclusion aligns with organisational objectives.
3. Feel more confident about working productively with internal and external stakeholders, in order employ more people with disabilities.

Case Study: MoveSync

MoveSync is a multi-national, private sector transport company, headquartered in Europe and employing 40,000 people worldwide. Internally there is a willingness within MoveSync to support and reflect the communities they transport. Importantly, there is strong support at the senior level and MoveSync's CEO Alex Lee is known for asking difficult questions of the Directors across the business, in order to support diversity and inclusion. A few years ago, MoveSync announced its new Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy which garnered much attention in the media.

Recently, Alex commissioned a report on equity, diversity and inclusion. The results were disappointing. Alex believes that MoveSync needs to improve their workforce diversity and is particularly passionate about employing more people with disability, which the report identified as a gap. Like many other businesses, MoveSync has experienced difficulties in recruiting staff, particularly in the inner-city areas in which they operate. The first job roles to be filled are customer service roles and administrative functions for one of the cities in which they deliver services. Alex has made it clear that their existing recruitment approaches need to be reviewed and reflect industry best practices.

The Talent Resourcing team at MoveSync comprises of Talent Resourcing Director Sam Rivera and Talent Acquisition Specialist Taylor Quinn. Being a small talent team, outsourcing their talent needs has made sense for them. The team had previously sourced fixed term and permanent staff at various levels from recruitment agency Urban Glide. However, earlier this year Sam and Taylor attended a local event where they found out about the work of local employment service providers and the under-represented candidates with whom they work.

Alex has made it clear to Sam and Taylor that the focus of their workforce planning strategy should not only be on the hiring of people with disabilities but also on their retention.

Discussion Questions

After a major government project is completed, Alex has asked you to review the workforce structure and provide a recommendation, taking into account (a) forecast company revenue and (b) aspirations for increased disability inclusion.

The Board has proposed the three potential options (see Fig. 2.1) for restructuring the workforce and to provide more opportunities for people with disability, as well as to budget for inclusive recruitment and retention strategies.

1. Which option is in the best interest of MoveSync? Consider the need to budget, growth of talent pipelines and improving their Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy.
2. Which option is in the best interest of existing staff with disabilities and of potential new hires with disability, in order to maximise retention and reduce hiring costs?

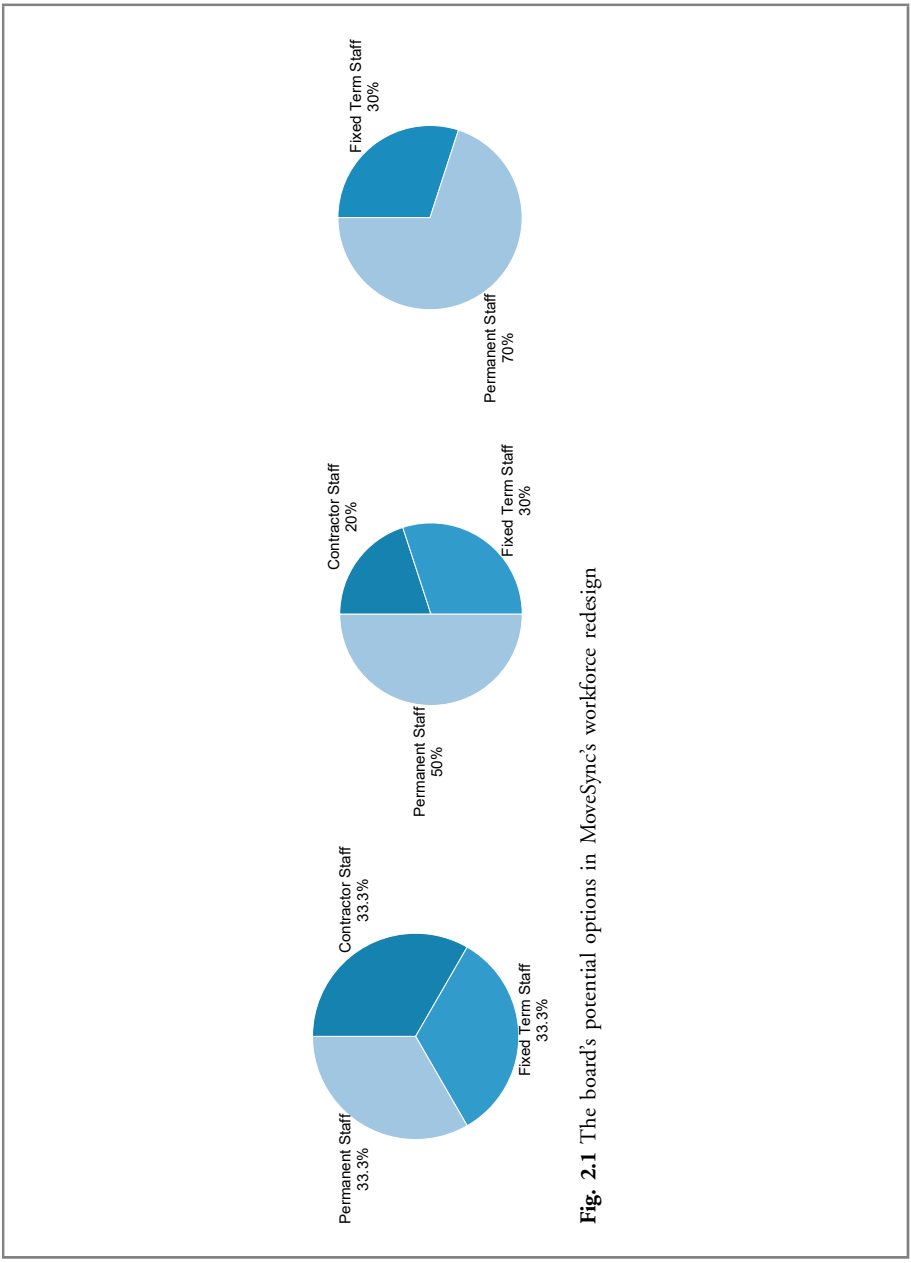

Fig. 2.1 The board's potential options in MoveSync's workforce redesign

2.1 Drivers of Disability Inclusion

For a range of reasons, businesses may wish to diversify their workforce by employing more people with disability. In shareholder-owned businesses, shareholders may drive particular practices such as diversity and inclusion. There is increasing pressure on organisations to act in more sustainable ways, in respect of economic, environmental and social impact. These are usually referred to in terms of the United Nations Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and ESG—environmental, economic and social sustainability and governance. Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (United Nations, 1987). Environmental sustainability concerns the preservation and protection of the natural environment to meet current needs without compromising the future availability of resources. For example, reducing cardon footprints and waste and promoting the circular economy. Social sustainability involves a focus on the well-being of people and communities. This involves businesses ensuring their supply chains do not involve modern slavery, supporting human rights and adopting practices that value and include people of diverse backgrounds. Economic sustainability means conducting economic activities to preserve and promote long-term economic well-being, balancing economic growth, resource efficiency, social equity and financial stability. Governance is central to achieving sustainability objectives across each pillar.

On the journey towards acting more sustainably, businesses respond to different signals and levers, including government policies, the labour market, the economic context and product markets. Governments offer a range of carrots, sticks and sermons (Bredgaard et al., 2023) to influence businesses to hire untapped talent. For example, anti-discrimination policies are sticks that set a threshold below which no organisation should fall in terms of equal treatment of candidates and employees throughout the employee life cycle. Such regulatory approaches have sanctions for non-compliance. Some governments (including the Netherlands) have introduced quotas for the number of employees with disability, with mixed results. In terms of carrots, as part of active labour market programs, governments typically offer wage subsidies to businesses if they employ individuals who face barriers or disadvantage, including people with disability. Such incentives have also had mixed results, but they are an attempt to share risk between government and business for such social inclusion initiatives (Ingold et al., 2023). With regard to sermons, governments attempt to sell the benefits of inclusion to businesses, including through benchmarking and awards for employment of groups

facing disadvantage as well as through the employer engagement actions of delivery partners such as employment service providers.

A more recent public policy initiative across a number of countries—including the UK, US and Australia—has been the innovation of social value procurement targets (Daguerre et al., 2024). Government contracts with businesses for required projects and services but there is an increasing interest in leveraging this buying power to bring about social benefits. For example, government commissions businesses for large infrastructure projects with 'set asides' or targets for employment of particular groups. An additional aspect of social value procurement is for government contractors to purchase their own goods and services from social impact suppliers such as disability-owned businesses. A further intended benefit of social value procurement is for closer engagement between for-profit organisations and social enterprises, with the intention being to learn from the latter regarding inclusive employment. Social purpose organisations, such as social enterprises, develop solutions to social inequity or environmental issues as a core part of their business. This can include the inclusive employment of under-represented groups, either more broadly or by focusing on a particular group, such as people with disability.

The setting of disability employment targets for organisations, either by government or by organisations themselves, can provide an initial impetus for employment of untapped talent. However, evidence shows that there needs to be a business imperative from within the organisation, in other words a strategic imperative that is considered to impact the bottom line.

Firstly, labour or skills shortage may mean that businesses have to seek out candidates outside the usual (often discriminating) recruitment channels and usual talent pools. Secondly, consumers or clients may influence businesses to better represent society or the communities they serve (as in the example of MoveSync). A business within a particular labour market or industry may want to try to obtain first mover advantage by being a leader in, for example, disability employment. Alternatively, a business may take action because they risk being uncompetitive in their industry if they do not. Thirdly, there are other business benefits such as retention, employee engagement and improved decision making within workplaces. A recent study of Sephora in the US identified increased retention, reduced sickness absence and reduced safety incidents for disabled employees compared with non-disabled (Moore et al., 2024).

In the UK, Simms (2017) identified that businesses may wish to engage in apprenticeships for two reasons that can be interpreted both as drivers for, and action to reflect, benefits gained. Firstly, human resources (HR) logics

such as the development of staff, future staffing and skills needs. Secondly, corporate social responsibility (CSR) logics. CSR logics relate to the organisation's wider role within society, being seen as a 'good citizen' and the risk of negative publicity from pursuing (or not pursing) a course of action. Based on their research with businesses in Australia, Ingold et al (2023) found that HR and CSR logics were important to business engagement in active labour market programmes/employment services and found that there was a third dimension—financial logics. Financial logics were either direct or indirect: direct in the form of wage subsidies from government, or indirect such as the benefits of engaging with providers as an alternative to paid-for advertising or labour hire agencies, including through additional services such as post-placement support.

2.2 Organisational Strategies for Employing People with Disabilities

Although many businesses state a desire to employ more people with disability, the persistent 'disability employment gap' (the difference between the employment rates for people with and without disability) suggests that these intentions are not being translated into behaviours. The endeavour of employing more staff with disability requires a strategic approach that starts from the business objectives and needs to recognise the context in which the business operates. The 'Harvard model' (see Chapter 3 by Boselie, van Harten and van Os) prompts leaders to consider the business context including government policy; situational factors such as the labour market; management philosophy; business strategy and conditions; and a range of stakeholders such as employees, line managers, HR, top and middle managers, shareholders and government (Beer et al., 2015).

In this section, we draw on our research with businesses about their perspectives on job quality in Australia (Ingold, Knox and Lee, 2024). The research involved over 50 employers from a diverse range of industries across Australia. Leaders took part in 'masterclasses' which were a hybrid of focus groups and a community of practice. The study unpacked not only the drivers for the employment of untapped cohorts (including candidates with disabilities) but also the impact of this on their HRM policy choices to ensure that candidates are retained, which then leads to benefits for the organisation and broader society. The research identified a range of activities that are required to successfully attract, hire, retain and progress hires from untapped talent

pools. Half of the sample of businesses had recruited people with disabilities. It was evident that organisations were motivated by business needs and this was dependent on a range of internal and external situational factors (see Table 2.1).

Let us take as a starting point that organisations in general aim to acquire the most appropriate talent needed to undertake the activities required to meet the business's goals. However, acquiring the most appropriate (or, as often claimed, the 'best') talent is limited by both the supply-side and demand-side. On the supply-side, there are external factors such as the labour market context and the talent pools available. On the demand-side, the acquisition of the best talent is limited by organisations' own HR policies, practices and biases.

In terms of a strategic approach to disability inclusion, the research demonstrated that there needs to be increased alignment within organisations between HR, diversity, equity and inclusion teams and other teams, and hiring managers. Michael Porter (2008) considered strategy to be a product of analysis. Within this broader frame, Human Resource Management (HRM) was considered to be a supporting activity to assist primary business activities, such as operations. This perspective assumes that HR plays a largely administrative role. By contrast, Henry Mintzberg's (2023) perspective of 'emergent strategy'—centring the importance of learning—has argued for the need to view organisations as communities of human beings. More recently, the strategy-as-practice perspective (Whittington, 1996) has been concerned with people—how managers 'do strategy' and managerial activity. This includes the inspirational parts, the routine, the ways in which strategy actually gets formulated and implemented by the people (p. 732). Importantly, the practice of strategy is not the same for everyone. Inclusion expert Toby Mildon argues that organisations need to create a strategy that everyone understands (Mildon, 2020: 32).

We cannot examine management and/or strategy without also considering how HRM impacts an organisation's decision-making processes. Strategic

Table 2.1 Drivers of employing from untapped talent pools

Internal drivers	External drivers
• Immediate need for staff • Corporate social responsibility or diversity, equity and inclusion targets • Future workforce planning • Representation of customer base	• Labour and skill shortages in the labour market • Meeting government targets (social procurement or quota requirements)

Human Resource Management (SHRM) acts as a bridge between an organisation's business strategy and its HR strategy. Central to debates about how HRM and SHRM intersect has been the extent to which organisations should focus on the link between HRM and organisational performance, productivity and efficiency, compared with other measures such as employee and societal well-being.

van Gestel and Nyberg (2007) examined the translation of public policies to reduce sickness absence within organisations. This can be achieved through the embedding of strategic issues, like financial targets, control, and performance into organisational practices. van Gestel and Nyberg highlighted that there are three important dimensions involved in translating new strategies throughout organisations. These are: individual preferences and strategic reframing of policies by HR managers and local grounding throughout the organisation. This occurs via a range of actors from the senior level to frontline managers. It is also where organisations can consider how they can best *reframe* their HR policies to ensure that people with disabilities are included. It is critical that organisations prepare to receive candidates ('organisational readiness') training for the workforce and building leadership capability (see Chapter 4 by Breit and Yde Aksnes) and is preferable to organisations over-relying on one champion who, when they leave, leads to a loss of capability.

Organisations in our research introduced, or modified, HRM policies and practices to facilitate inclusion. For example, ensuring that the organisation's recruitment and selection processes were inclusive in order to support the recruitment, selection, and retention of the target cohorts. By so doing, the organisations in the study experienced specific HR outcomes, such as improved retention and productivity, and a range of other benefits to the organisation. These included an improved workplace culture that supported the further inclusion of a diverse range of people and the community. This was achieved through for example offering sustainable career pathways within the organisation. Within recruitment and selection, a strategic approach involved empowering the HR function to challenge hiring managers' biases and try out alternative recruitment and selection methods.

Trialing a disability inclusion strategy in one area of an organisation can be an important way of assessing the organisation's readiness to employ people with disability. A number of organisations in our study did this. This approach also has the benefit of allowing organisations and their staff to upskill managers. One way of meeting quotas or targets is to ringfence particular roles for people with disability. This has the benefit of allowing one section or team to upskill, prepare and be a leader for the rest of the

organisation. However, it is important that employees with disability are not stigmatised by being restricted to particular roles.

In relation to attraction, employee value propositions and employer brand need to focus on inclusive employment. This means moving from a supply-side approach to a demand-side one. For example, moving from saying 'we welcome applications from people with disability' towards 'we love to employ people with disability' and articulating what makes your organisation attractive to people with disability. Within recruitment, this can mean having tailored job advertisements (see Chapter 7 by Bredgaard) and using different recruitment channels, including partnering with employment service providers and community organisations (see also Moore et al, 2024).

Partnering with intermediaries as labour market experts on specific cohorts (e.g. employment service providers, social enterprises and community organisations, particularly those led by people with disability) can help to inform executive strategies, educate the broader workforce and inform an organisation's workforce planning (see Chapter 10 by Brathen). 'Instrumental', of 'ad hoc' engagement with intermediaries tends to be linked with reactive, short-term vacancy-filling approaches. By contrast, relational engagement involves partnering more proactively for workforce planning and talent acquisition for the longer-term. The latter is closer to a strategic approach and ideally should involve all of the elements discussed in this section, with strategy informing the employee lifecycle from recruitment, selection and onboarding, through learning and development, retention and progression. Bringing all of these elements together can lead to social and economic benefits for the organisation and its employees, for customers and wider society.

2.3 Summary

This chapter has focused on how leaders and executives can improve their strategic decision making around staff resourcing, in order to foster work opportunities for people with disabilities while also supporting strategic business objectives. Central to this is whether organisations should focus solely on the link between HRM and organisational performance, productivity and efficiency, or on other measures such as employee and societal well-being. Drawing on our research with organisations in Australia, we presented a case study of a multi-national private sector transport company and discussed the drivers of disability inclusion including sticks, carrots and sermons, and HR and CSR logics. The chapter presented a range of organisational strategies

to assist disability inclusion from the strategic level based on our empirical data from businesses in Australia. Such strategies included consideration of the range of stakeholders, both internal and external, and situational factors from the so-called Harvard model, including internal drivers such as future-proofing your organisation and external drivers such as the context of skills and labour shortage. These strategic-level dimensions should feed into HRM policy choices such as the alignment of HR, DEI and other teams in the organisation. Through their implementation, these policy choices can have a direct impact on HRM outcomes, such as increased retention and decreased turnover and further long-term benefits, as well as organisational outcomes including culture change and the building of internal labour market capacity and capability to better meet business objectives.

Individual Task

Consider your own organisation. How can you and other stakeholders (internal and external) ensure that the organisation is working towards the inclusion of employees with disability?

Group Task

1. Consider which MoveSync stakeholders should be involved in the recruitment of people with disability. Discuss with your group how they would each positively contribute to an inclusive recruitment process for this cohort.
2. Share your organisation's strategic approach to inclusive recruitment and onboarding practices. Highlight any particular challenges you are facing.

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Further Reading Suggestions

Adams, L. (2021). *HR Disrupted: It's time for something different*, Northwich: Practical Inspiration Publishing—A common-sense approach to HRM focused around the EACH model (employees as adults, consumers and human beings)

Gold, M., & Smith, C. (2023) *Where's the human in Human Resource Management? Managing work in the 21st century*. Bristol University Press—Centres the people element that is often absent in HRM.

Guest, D. E. (2024). Strengthening links between HRM theories, HR practices and outcomes: A proposal to advance research on HRM and outcomes. *Human*

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3

Human Resource Management

Paul Boselie, Jasmijn van Harten, and Laura van Os

Abstract This chapter outlines what Human Resource Management (HRM) for workplace inclusion of PWD involves. Drawing on state-of-the-art research findings, we present options for inclusive HR practices in training and development, workplace accommodations, and social integration. We place particular emphasis on social integration by discussing the concepts of natural and external social support. To further understand the importance of social support for workplace inclusion of PWD, we apply insights from Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and show how various organizational actors, such as line managers, co-workers, and job coaches, can promote workplace integration by providing social support. The introductory case in this chapter illustrates how a large Dutch public organization prioritizes social support in their HR strategy for PWD inclusion.

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Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the concept of inclusive HRM for persons with disabilities (PWD), notably the different HR practices and social support options provided by different actors in the workplace.
- Identify and apply the different possible tasks and roles of organizational actors in workplace inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWD).
- Identify the human basic psychological needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence and how different social support providers could satisfy these needs of PWD.

Case Study: How a Dutch public service provider creates sustainable jobs for PWD

Almost 10 years ago, the Dutch government and employers have made an agreement that obliges employers to create jobs for persons with disabilities (PWD). In line with this so-called Job Agreement, a large Dutch public service organization that employs more than 20.000 people has the ambition to employ at least 1.350 PWD. Their HR strategy on inclusion focuses on providing individuals the opportunity to work according to their own capacities. A unique aspect of the organization's approach is the establishment of a unit that serves as a preparatory or breeding ground for sustainable employment. Upon joining the organization, PWD can familiarize themselves with different tasks, jobs and work teams across the organization, while receiving intensive supervision and support from a job coach. The public organization employs a team of approximately twenty-five job coaches, which is notable since many employers in the Netherlands hire external job coaches rather than integrating them in their own organizations. These embedded job coaches are crucial for the public organization as they assist PWD in developing the competencies needed to handle sensitive and confidential information. This makes them fit to thoroughly understand the work tasks and culture that PWD encounter while working. After an initial introduction period, PWD are guided towards sustainable employment at the public organization. During this next phase, job coaches continue their support and interact with the PWD's manager and co-workers, for instance to make sure that the work environment is well-adapted to the PWD's needs. On average, the 'breeding ground trajectories' last about a year before PWD are ready to take on permanent roles at the organization. Job coaches also work in close collaboration with the HRM professionals such as Diversity & Inclusion trainers. For instance, they connect trainers to managers and employees who want to

learn more about inclusive workplaces for PWD. Trainings are aimed towards offering practical knowledge and tools to successfully collaborate with, for instance, neurodivergent co-workers.

Discussion Questions

- Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a 'breeding ground approach' and the use of embedded job coaches? For example, to what extent does this approach increase or decrease stigmatization of PWD?
- What lessons can be learned from the Dutch case that focuses on a large public service provider for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)?

3.1 Introduction

Employers are increasingly willing to employ persons with disabilities (PWD) but experience a range of obstacles preventing them from hiring and retaining PWD, as demonstrated by Nagtegaal et al. (2023). These obstacles are not always easy to overcome because employers could perceive, for instance, inhibiting national rules and policies or insufficient support provided by Public Employment Agencies. However, many obstacles can also be dealt with through establishing effective Human Resource Management (HRM) within the organization. For instance, barriers such as managers' or co-workers' prejudicial beliefs on PWD not being productive or lacking knowledge about disabilities can be overcome by providing training programs.

HRM takes shape through the so-called HRM three-way relationship of employees, line managers (supervisors) and HRM professionals (Boselie & Van Der Heijden, 2024). Since the emergence of HRM in the 80s, the employee is no longer considered a cost, but a resource for success. It does require the right type of management and development of the human resources by the organization and individuals themselves. Boxall and Purcell (2022, p. 7) define HRM as "policies and practices for organizing work and employing people". More than three decades of empirical research have shown the positive impact of HRM on organizational and individual performance. In other words, HRM matters and the actors from the HRM three-way relationship each play an important role in designing, implementing and internalizing HRM. Important to note is that HRM also takes place in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that often do not have the resources for a dedicated HR department, HR strategy, or a written HR policy. The owner/managing director of an SME typically acts as the 'HR director' due to the size of the organization. HRM in SMEs tends to be

more informal and reliant on employee dynamics and proximal relationships. Related to workplace inclusion of PWD, mentors and co-workers could also play a role in the shaping of HRM for PWD in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by providing social support (see Chapters 5 and 8 on mentor and co-worker support). This support can help compensate for the absence of a formal HR department and represents a practice that is relatively easy to implement with limited resources.

The classic Harvard model on HRM by Beer et al. (2015) provides a multiple stakeholder approach that provides more insights in the concepts of 'success' and 'performance'. In the Harvard model, a distinction is made between three ultimate organizational goals that reflect different stakeholders and can be applied to different organization types in both public and private sectors:

- **Organizational effectiveness**, including for example productivity, quality, innovation, flexibility, efficiency and financial performance;
- **Employee well-being**, including for example job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, trust, stress, burnout risks, organizational citizenship behavior, intention to leave and absence due to illness;
- **Societal well-being**, including for example social legitimacy, accountability, public value creation, sustainability from a climate perspective (waste and pollution), diversity and creating employment for an inclusive society.

The model suggests that there are potential tensions between organizational effectiveness, employee well-being, and societal well-being. What is good for the organization (for example profitability or efficiency) is not always in the interest of employee well-being (for example causing job stress) and societal well-being (for example at the expense of pollution), and the other way around. The multi-dimensional performance in the Harvard model affects both the shaping of the employment relationship and the HR function with its HR professionals and HR practices.

This chapter shows what HRM for workplace inclusion of PWD entails. Based on state-of-the-art research findings, we sketch options for HR practices and interventions that are likely to stimulate workplace inclusion. We show that the responsibility for this does not rest solely with HRM professionals; other organizational actors also play a crucial role.

3.1.1 HRM and PWD

Attracting and retaining PWD directly affects the three ultimate goals of an organization presented in the Harvard model. Sustained employment of PWD in itself can be seen as societal well-being or public value creation by an organization that employs PWD. The case on the Dutch public service provider shows that the organization wants to attract and retain 1.350 PWD in line with the Dutch Job Agreement and as part of a strategic choice made by the organization that could be regarded as public value creation in itself (namely, to offer people the opportunity to work according to their own capacities). In order to attract and retain PWD, organizations should also take into account the other two ultimate goals of an organization; employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. Employee well-being is particularly relevant for PWD as this can be low because of their distance to the labor market and negative experiences with labor participation in the past. The concept of organizational effectiveness is also highly relevant because organizations and actors often have limited resources and time available. This requires optimization and cost-effective approaches, meaning creating the highest possible (service) quality at a certain cost level that is linked to the financial resources available. The financial resource availability is highly relevant in non-profit contexts (for example public sector organizations) and highly competitive environments (for example retail companies). This could impact executive motives for attracting and retaining PWD (see also Chapter 2).

The actors that shape the general HRM three-way relationship referred to above are included in this book's general model for workplace inclusion of PWD (see Chapter 1). The model implies that HRM for workplace inclusion involves more actors than HRM professionals, line managers, and PWD themselves: also, co-workers and external actors such as job coaches are important in for instance offering guidance and support to PWD. Although these actors are not responsible for the organizational HR policies, they play a role in implementing HRM. There is no silver bullet, but research provides evidence-based good principles and practices for designing and implementing inclusive HRM for PWD.

3.1.2 Inclusive HRM for PWD

Inclusive HRM refers to the shaping of employment relationships of all the workers with implicit attention for gender, inclusion, and diversity notions.

In contrast, exclusive HRM approaches can be found in talent management aimed at high performing workers or what is sometimes also called A-players. A guiding principle for designing inclusive HRM is to aim for a match or fit between the job and the PWD's interests and strengths. Review studies show that designing a job that matches work demands with physical and mental work abilities prevents PWD from work under- or overload and instead contributes to inclusion and work participation (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022; Wen et al., 2024). This means that inclusive HR practices are 'contextualized' HR practices. Contextualization refers to the appropriate fit or alignment with the job (tasks and responsibilities), the PWD (person fit) and the organization.

This also means that PWD benefit from 'classic' HR practices such as training and development opportunities. PWD are often less convinced of their own competencies and expertise. In addition, they are approached by managers suffering from prejudicial attitudes preventing them from development opportunities. For instance, recent research on neurodiversity in the workplace argues that employers should not be hiring autistic employees simply because it is the right thing to do (cf. corporate social responsibility motives) while regarding autism as a 'deficiency'. A shift in mindset to one of functional workplace diversity, including neurodiversity, could instead be advantageous. This means that each person is recognized for their unique functions rather than being abled or disabled. Indeed, the special talents and interests of autistic persons can lead them to outstanding achievements (Wen et al., 2024). This implies that every member of the workforce benefits from training and development opportunities. It also helps PWD to strengthen their self-efficacy and thereby their job retention.

Next to classic HR practices, workplace accommodations are found vital in supporting PWD in their jobs because PWD frequently face obstacles that prevent them from utilizing their full potential (see also Chapter 6 on workplace accommodations). When these obstructions are not recognized and accommodated, they mismatch with the PWD's needs and become disabling at work. The employer and the HRM department can provide accommodations to create a better fit between the organizational context and the individual PWD by modifying, for instance, workspaces, tools and working hours. For instance, recent research by Hennekam and Follmer (2024) shows that flexible work arrangements such as remote work or flexible scheduling accommodate neurodivergent workers as they allow them to manage both their neurocognitive conditions and their work responsibilities. Obstacles for

neurodivergent employees are for example directing attention, time management, and interpreting social cues and flexible work arrangements enable them to deal with these obstacles.

Finally, HR practices and workplace interventions aimed at social integration, workplace integration, or social inclusion are essential for PWD. Social integration refers to the amount and quality of social relationships in the workplace and includes aspects of acceptance, mutuality, and reciprocity. PWD are often confronted with major challenges in developing social relationships in the workplace as a result of, among others, experienced restrictions in receptive and expressive language or prejudice from co-workers and managers. HR practices aimed at PWD' social integration can include, among others, hiring job coaches, installing and training workplace mentors, and providing disability awareness inclusion training to co-workers and managers. Research shows how well such interventions and practices pays off, in terms of for instance increased hours of work and hourly earnings and enhanced quality of life (Shore et al, 2018; Wen et al., 2024).

Due to the significance of social integration and the role of organizational actors in providing social support to PWD, we will explore this topic further in the next section. This discussion is also pertinent to SMEs that lack the resources to implement sophisticated HR practices, such as training and development programs. Social integration is a more affordable HR practice to implement. Additionally, many countries offer subsidized schemes that provide financial assistance to businesses, enabling them to afford social support services, such as those provided by job coaches.

3.1.3 Social Support for PWD

Social support in the workplace refers to any assistance, relationship, feedback, or interaction that allows a person to secure and retain a job. In the literature, a distinction is often made between 'natural' support and additional or 'external' support. Natural support comes from actors such as line managers and co-workers that can be expected to occur naturally in the workplace as 'part of the job'. Chapters 4, 5, and 8 further explain variations of natural support. External support comes from paid professionals such as job coaches (also related to the concept of counsellors as mentioned in Chapter 5). Job coaches are often seen as specialists operating outside the organization whose prime task responsibility is to support PWD in obtaining and retaining work. Job coaches can support PWD in obtaining a job by navigating the job search process, identifying job opportunities, and training PWD to become job ready. In addition to offering support in *ob*taining a job,

job coaches can support PWD in *re*taining a job by continuously supporting them after job placement. This support can be both task-related as well as emotional. It concerns, for instance, assistance with determining appropriate accommodations and social skills training. Unlike natural support, job coaches specialize in providing targeted and personalized guidance to PWD, and as such, job coaches are a distinct resource in the context of PWD. These job coaches can be seen as professionals without a (formal) profession, although they incorporate all kinds of professional characteristics.

The added value of job coaches compared to natural support providers has been a topic of debate. Some argue that external actors inhibit social interactions between PWD and their co-workers and managers and that, therefore, natural support should be preferred over external support. However, the findings in the dissertation by Van Os (2025) show the benefit of combining different sources of social support coming from line managers, co-workers, and job coaches. The research suggests that these actors need to frequently interact with each other and understand and respect each other's roles to avoid hindering each other's value for PWD. This for instance means that the job coach should visit the PWD's workplace to understand the social dynamics at the workplace and have a meeting together with the PWD's supervisor to discuss what is need to further stimulate the integration of the PWD.

This type of intensive collaboration between social support providers can be ensured by embedding job coaches within the organization, as demonstrated in the introductory case of this chapter. That is, the Dutch public organization does not hire external job coaches but instead employs them as full organizational members. This HR strategy may be particularly feasible for large organizations with ample resources. For SMEs, that are unable to employ their own job coaches due to their limited resources, collaborating with an external job coach that is specialized in similar organizational contexts might be an appropriate solution to start with. For example, identifying job coaches that are specialized in IT companies or the service industry. Such a specialized job coach might be better placed to understand the context of the organization and to develop firm-specific knowledge and human capital, and therefore have the potential to provide tailor-made support.

To further understand why social support is important for the workplace inclusion of PWD, we apply insights from the Self-Determination Theory. Textbox 3.1 further explains this theory.

Textbox 3.1 Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT: Deci & Ryan, 2008) is a psychological framework that explains human motivation. It posits that people have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, relatedness, and competence, as is further explained in Table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1 Self-determination theory

	Need	Explanation	Indications
	Need for autonomy	To experience ownership of one's behavior and to act with a sense of volition	I can determine how I carry out my work and decide for myself how I do my job
	Need for relatedness	The human striving for close and intimate relationships and the desire to achieve a sense of communion and belongingness	I like the people I work with and I have a good connection with them
	Need for competence	An individual's socially acquired cognitive expectancies of being able to successfully enact specific actions that are required to reach a desired end state	I think I am good at my job and I feel like I can achieve something at work

The basic principle of SDT is that when work fulfills the three needs, people experience enhanced motivation, well-being, and personal growth. SDT therefore emphasizes the importance of creating work environments that enable these needs to foster intrinsic motivation and optimal functioning. One way of doing this is through social support. Research has demonstrated that social support can serve as a resource that fulfills PWD' needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competence. For instance, line managers can support the need for autonomy by providing choice rather than control, co-workers can support the need for relatedness by being empathic, and job coaches can support the need for competence by providing training and feedback on for instance social skills.

Basic need satisfaction is a general theory that applies not only to 'able-bodied' workers but is also particularly relevant in the context of disabilities. For example, a workplace that allows PWD to make their own decisions and fosters autonomy can be of great significance when they face a society that inhibits independent decision making on their own lives. The perception of appropriate autonomy varies among individuals. Research indicates that autonomy for PWD can also be achieved through requests made by others.

For instance, when line managers provide a meaningful rationale for tasks while acknowledging the employee's perspective and feelings, it can support PWD' choice and self-initiative, reducing pressure and coercion (Akkerman et al., 2018).

3.2 Summary

This chapter on the HRM of PWD shows the relevance of extending the more traditional HRM three-way relationship between employees, line managers, and HRM professionals with two other groups: co-workers and (embedded) job coaches. The interplay between the different actors in the shaping of employment relationships of PWD is a key for sustained employment of PWD. However, the actors could have different interests and this might affect workplace inclusion of PWD. These differences can be further understood from the Harvard model for HRM and its three ultimate outcomes, organizational effectiveness, employee well-being, and societal well-being).

This chapter outlined a range of HR practices and social support options that can stimulate workplace inclusion of PWD. An organization is much more than an economic and legal entity. An organization is above all a community of different people with each having their own interests, functions, set of tasks and responsibilities. The interplay between the different actors through social support is what makes the organization (community) meaningful and sustainable from a societal, employee and organizational point of view. The need for autonomy, the need for relatedness and the need for competence are the underlying ingredients for success in a broad sense.

The introduction case shows how an organization can organize PWD inclusion using a clear HR strategy and investing in social support. This makes you think of Pfeffer's seminal HRM textbook (1998) with the subtitle: Building profits by putting people first. And even if it is not about making profits (for example in the case of public sector organizations), 'putting people first' is what this chapter and the introductory case aims for: Putting both PWD and other relevant actors first.

Individual Task

- Develop various examples of the three basic psychological needs (autonomy, relatedness, and competence) for different individuals in your personal or work environment (see Textbox 1 for a further explanation of the three needs). It is important to not only write down your own personal needs but also ask people who differ from you in various ways what their three needs mean to them in their current jobs.
- Outline what you can do for satisfying basic psychological needs of PWD given your role, tasks and responsibilities in your current organization (or in the organization you wish to work for).
- What kind of facilities and support do you need to play your role in satisfying basic psychological needs of PWD, for example what kind of assistance do you need from HRM professionals, your direct supervisor or co-workers?

Group Task

Think of a role play in which you divide the different organizational actors and collectively work on workplace inclusion of PWD. These actors involve amongst others:

1. A worker with a disability;
2. A line manager;
3. One or more co-workers;
4. An HRM professional;
5. An (embedded) job coach.

Think of ways to get together and develop a coherent policy program in which you shape an optimal interplay of all the actors involved.

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4

Inclusive Leadership

Siri Yde Aksnes and Eric Breit

Abstract This chapter explores the concept of inclusive leadership and its critical role in promoting workplace inclusion for people with disabilities (PWD). Grounded in theories like optimal distinctiveness, leader-member exchange, and positive work relations, inclusive leadership balances employees' needs for uniqueness and belonging while addressing organizational goals. The chapter identifies three practical approaches to inclusive leadership—vacancy, ability, and growth-oriented—and discusses the strengths and limitations of these approaches in balancing PWD's needs for uniqueness and belonging and in inclusion work more broadly.

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Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter on structural characteristics, you should be able to:

- Get an overview of the concept of inclusive leadership and its connection to work inclusion
- Understand different approaches to inclusive leadership (and its main advantages and shortcomings)
- Improve your understanding of your own leadership approach(es) to improving inclusivity in your workplace

Case Study

A woman in her thirties, who uses a wheelchair, prepares herself for an upcoming job interview outside an office building. Past rejections due to her disability make her apprehensive. When the door opens, she is greeted by Margaret, the call center manager, who looks at her with a direct, yet pleasant gaze. During the following conversation, Margaret cuts right to the chase, focusing on company needs and the potential role she could play, not her disability. The woman senses that she fits perfectly into the position and that she is exactly who they are looking for. She perceives Margaret as efficient and no-nonsense in her style, but there's an underlying sense of care too—a natural willingness to make the necessary accommodations to ensure she can work there.

Across town, at an IT company, a young man who dropped out of school due to severe anxiety, but has a knack for IT, is being given a tour of the workplace. Charlie, the social entrepreneur who started the company, is explaining the business concept. He's looking for talented IT consultants who may have unconventional backgrounds and can offer exciting tasks in a supportive environment. The young man is thrilled to feel that his abilities are valued and is simultaneously anxious about whether he will be able to work full-time given his personal struggles. However, Charlie's infectious enthusiasm reassures him, and the prospect of being valued for his skills rather than being hired out of sympathy makes this opportunity significantly more appealing to the young man.

Meanwhile, a young woman with an intellectual disability and a lack of self-confidence, stands outside a grocery store, nervous for her first job interview. Having never worked before, she's unsure if it's even what she wants. When the door opens, she's met by Alex, the store manager. A robust man with an inviting smile, a twinkle in his eye, and a firm handshake, Alex immediately puts her at ease. As they sit and talk in his office, her nervousness

gradually fades. Rather than asking for her CV or inquiring about previous work experience, Alex asks about her interests and her perspective on what could be the best part of working in a store. His genuine interest in her thoughts and understanding of her uncertainty and lack of direction make her feel valued and heard.

Discussion Questions

- To what degree do you consider Margaret, Charlie, and Alex as being inclusive in their way of performing leadership?
- To what extent do you see elements of your own leadership in each of these three approaches?

4.1 Introduction

In work inclusion of people with disabilities (PWD), the role of managers and leadership is central. While managers may often be a diffuse term (like "employers"), we talk specifically here about managers in a leadership sense, involving the direct relationship between employees and their immediate supervisors. Managers are important not only because of their formal role and responsibilities in any employee relationship, but also for their ability to foster psychologically safe and productive relationships with individual employees as well as in the workplace as a broader unit. This is particularly important for PWD, who have a higher risk of feeling left out compared to other types of employees (Van Knippenberg & Van Ginkel, 2022).

In this chapter, we will examine workplace inclusion from a leadership perspective. A leadership perspective focuses on the individual, micro level and on the relationship between managers and employees. We focus specifically on the notion of inclusive leadership, which we explore in extant research as well as from our own research on inclusive managers in Norwegian companies. A key premise is that leadership only becomes fully meaningful when applied to one's own context and practice. We will therefore discuss inclusive leadership through the practical case above as well as through your own leadership experiences.

4.2 Inclusive Leadership

Inclusive leadership is a leadership approach emphasizing the vital role and behavior of managers in promoting diversity in organizations (Chrobot-Mason et al., 2014; Ferdman & Deane, 2014). It has gained increased popularity in leadership research the past decades, in parallel with broader social and political interest, as well as legal requirements, in creating more inclusive labor markets and organizations. Whereas diversity represents the goals, inclusion is the processes through which diversity is obtained. Hence, inclusion, and inclusive leadership, is processual and dynamic and takes place in the inter-personal relations between PWD, managers and other employees.

Research on inclusive leadership has been examined from two perspectives (Roberson & Perry, 2022). The first perspective involves studies on diversity and focuses on how managers can make their employees, regardless of their racial, sexual, or disability status, feel included. This perspective is largely influenced by optimal distinctiveness theory (ODT) (Brewer, 1991), which suggests that people have a basic need to be both alike and different from others. A central tenet of inclusive leadership is therefore to acknowledge this basic need of PWD (and other employees more broadly) and find the equilibrium between uniqueness and belongingness so that they are both treated as insiders and at the same time valued for their unique skills and contributions to the workplace.

An article by Shore et al. (2011) is a well-known example of this perspective. In the article, the authors describe outcomes for employees whose needs for balance between uniqueness and belonging are not met.

- Lack of both belonging and exclusion will likely lead to exclusion because employees will lack any connection to their manager or other members of the workplace.
- Employees who are treated as insiders when they conform to the expectations of the manager or workplace, but whose uniqueness is downplayed will be assimilated and thus the risk of being "lost in the crowd".
- Employees who are valued for their uniqueness, yet not treated as insiders, are likely to be differentiated and potentially devalued due to a lack of belonging.
- Employees who are treated as insiders and valued for their uniqueness are dealt with in an inclusive way, thus avoiding risks of them feeling excluded.

The second perspective on inclusive leadership is rooted in more traditional relational leadership theories and concepts. One of these is leader-member exchange theory (LMX) (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), which lays emphasis on the reciprocal relationships between managers and employees. Another is a theory on positive workplace relations, which among others emphasizes the role of so-called "high-quality work relationships", defined by Dutton and Ragins (2007: 9) as "a recurring connection between two people that takes place within the context of work […] and is experienced as mutually beneficial".

Whereas the ODT perspective is focused on the basic needs of employees, this second perspective has its theoretical roots in social exchanges and relationships. According to this perspective, it is of utmost importance for managers to build strong and positive relationships with their employees. When such relationships are built, employees tend to feel psychologically safe, empowered, and included (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Shore & Chung, 2022). Furthermore, when employees have such feelings, their job satisfaction, motivation and work performance are likely to increase. Hence, the essential aspect of this theoretical perspective is that workplace inclusion will result from managers who are able to develop positive relationships with PWDs as well as their employees more broadly.

In a recent review of literature on inclusive leadership, Korkmaz et al. (2022) combine the two perspectives on inclusive leadership—the needs-oriented and the relational –and summarize inclusive leadership behavior in four main dimensions:

- Fostering each employee's uniqueness: Supporting employees as individuals, promoting diversity, empowering employees, contributing to employees' learning and development.
- Strengthening belongingness within a team: Ensuring equity, building relationships, sharing decision-making responsibilities.
- Showing appreciation: Recognizing the efforts and contributions of employees, individually and in teams.
- Supporting organizational efforts: Being open to organizational change, communicating how inclusion is related to the organization's mission and vision, establishing a diverse workforce.

Korkmaz et al. (2022) state that although all four dimensions are equally important to perform inclusive leadership, there might be circumstances where some dimensions need priority. It is also worth remembering that Korkmaz' review was carried out across studies on inclusion of people *already*

employed and thus inside the labour market and considered age, gender, and ethnicity. We do not yet have such an overview image of conditions for successful inclusive leadership of PWD.

Reflection Exercise: To what degree do you perform any of these four dimensions of inclusive leadership? Try to come up with concrete examples. Which of the dimensions do you consider you are good at, and which can you improve on? What are the distinctions between these dimensions and those for leadership of PWD (if any)?

4.3 What Do Inclusive Managers Do in Practice? Three Approaches

One thing is to understand the concepts and components of inclusive leadership, which can seem ideal and idealistic. Another thing is to put it into practice in daily organizational life, across different situations. Ultimately, managers must balance between business objectives and the social concerns of the PWD and decide to what extent they are willing to adjust the workplace to accommodate the PWD's needs.

In our own research, we have examined what inclusive managers (in 21 small and medium-sized enterprises) do when seeking to include PWD in their organizations. Based on managers' stories, we identified three broad approaches to performing inclusive leadership in practice. Below, we describe these and show their connections to Korkmaz et al.'s dimensions.

4.3.1 Vacancy Approach

> *We need people. That might be the most important thing – we need people! What we've seen, especially in the last year, is that it's getting harder to find good labour, so when we can do this important job [include PWD] and at the same time acquire a completely loyal employee, then it's a double bonus. (General manager, wholesaler)*

This approach bears resemblance to traditional employment methods, targeting PWD who are relatively "easy-to-include". These individuals typically require limited follow-up and, for the most part, meet the demands of the job. Managers with a vacancy-oriented approach display a positive

attitude towards employing individuals from disadvantaged groups. They are prepared to make minor adjustments and dedicate time and resources to meet the needs of jobseekers, particularly at the onset of employment. They may for example allow the PWD to have shorter workdays, exempt them from some work tasks, or grant them longer breaks during the workday. However, the degree of accommodation is only slightly higher compared to what one might anticipate in a standard employment relationship. For managers, the commitment to inclusion has its boundaries; they are open to inclusion if the jobseeker demonstrates motivation and readiness for work. Consequently, a vacancy-oriented approach serves as a practical recruitment strategy for workplaces in need of labor but will be of limited suitability for people with greater support needs.

4.3.2 Ability Approach

> *We work according to business principles, while at the same time solving a societal problem. And the societal problem is that 90 percent of people with Asperger's don't work. […] That's a complete crisis. So that's essentially our societal mission. (General manager, technical drawing consultancy)*

The ability-oriented approach focuses on specific types of skills and on creating social businesses around these. This involves reframing what is normally perceived as disadvantages into advantages. Thus, PWD are not employed simply to provide labor (as in the vacancy approach) but to provide a specific expertise for the workplace and to create social value for both jobseekers and society. This involves a clear idea of what types of jobseekers these workplaces need and want- their perception of an ideal employee. Workplaces that adopt this approach include IT companies that engage individuals with Asperger's with programming skills.

Ability-oriented managers focus on creating work environments that accommodate the needs of the wider disadvantaged group. For example, in IT companies in our study, they offer schedule flexibility, a calm and quiet working environment, predictability in work tasks, and an open-door policy where the managers are always available for a chat. However, also here, inclusion has its boundaries, as there is a limited capacity for individual adaptations beyond this point. Rather than emphasizing individual uniqueness as such, it is rather the uniqueness of the broader target group that is emphasized.

The managers express an interest in the strengths and challenges associated with the target group they aim to include. They extend attention and care to their employees beyond the conventional expectations found in standard employment relationships. Success hinges on their ability to consider personal matters significantly, not merely focusing on professional aspects. However, managers must make the business work and is therefore reliant on recruiting jobseekers who closely align with their conception of the ideal employee.

4.3.3 Growth Approach

To succeed in work inclusion, one must be prepared that it is a big job. And one must mane accommodations for the individuals one wishes to bring in [...] It's about good planning, structure, lists, and patience. [...] Many are without work because they have a difficult history or carry baggage, which can lead to instability in terms of being loyal to working hours, for instance. It requires enormous amounts of patience. (General manager, cafeteria)

The growth-oriented approach is a bottom-up approach to inclusion, which means that it provides fair opportunities even to jobseekers with significant work limitations. Managers with a growth mindset express a genuine motivation to help individuals from disadvantaged groups. At the same time, they acknowledge the complexities in motivation for PWD, for example those with low self-efficacy or work experience. Instead of dismissing such jobseekers on their presumable low motivation, growth-oriented managers actively aim to ignite a spark in them, fostering their personal growth.

To achieve this, managers focus on the camaraderie in the workplace, fostering a sense of belonging for PWD. While a growth-oriented approach involves open communication, it also involves addressing issues head-on and setting clear expectations for what is required from PWD at work. In contrast to the other two approaches that require PWD to more or less fit into an existing vacancy, the growth orientation is targeted towards the PWD's desires and capabilities. For instance, instead of aiming to connect a PWD's CV to extant jobs or task descriptions, managers may be curious to hear about the PWD's thoughts and interests regarding work and make extensive efforts to adapt work tasks to the individual's abilities. This is not easy nor straightforward. Growth-oriented managers highlight the importance of patience and the willingness to "try and fail" during inclusion processes.

Growth-oriented managers perform a "holistic" type of caring, where managers take on a social worker role in relation to their employees. They

show interest in the jobseekers' overall well-being and everyday life. This could involve assisting them with practical and personal matters like finding housing, purchasing a car, or preparing for a language test. Hence, the managers go beyond the typical job-related support and help jobseekers with life outside of work too.

4.4 Strengths and Limitations of Inclusive Leadership

As you can see from this review, there are different ways of performing inclusive leadership and at different levels of ambition in terms of changing work and the workplace to accommodate PWD. More specifically, there are different strengths and limitations associated with different types of inclusive leadership.

The vacancy approach is a relatively simple way for many organizations to employ PWD, especially those who do not have extensive support needs. In terms of the basic components of inclusive leadership, the vacancy approach does not focus explicitly on the uniqueness of PWD, as they are required to fit into the "status quo" at the workplace. It also focuses marginally on the PWD's belonging; ultimately, it is up to the PWD to take responsibility for fitting in, and the managers do not see their own role in this process as critical. The leadership-follower relation is primarily targeted towards a social exchange, as in LMX: the PWD does work according to the job prescriptions, and the manager ensures that the PWD is included in the organization. Given these reservations, this type of leadership may involve what Dobusch (2014) refers to as "partial inclusion", meaning that a person's access to a workplace depends on whether the person fulfills organizational expectations.

The strength of the ability approach is that it focuses on the uniqueness of the PWD in terms of their skills. It also aims to ensure belonging, as it may involve targeting PWD with relatively similar disabilities or disadvantages and creating a sense of shared identity around these in the workplace. Furthermore, it is, like the vacancy approach, targeted primarily at social exchanges: managers ensure an inclusion targeted around the PWD's abilities. At the same time, it requires that the PWD have a disability or disadvantage that can be turned also into economic value for the business. If the PWD don't have such abilities—for example of having too high support needs or "low" motivation—they will likely not be included through this approach. To function properly, an ability approach thus entails relatively specific requirements

of 'ideal PWD', depending on what type of social business it is and on its sources of revenue or funding.

The strength of the growth approach is that it targets a broad group of PWD, also those with high support needs. For many PWD, this is likely the only approach that will enable their sustained employment. Yet, of course, this approach is also more ambitious than the two other approaches. It requires managers to 'find' the uniqueness of the PWD and nurture it, and it involves working with the social relations in the workplace to ensure that the PWD also feel welcome and belonging. It is more driven more by managers' altruistic motivation in work inclusion that the two other approaches. This stands in opposition with the ideas of reciprocity and mutual benefits found in the leader-member exchange theory and draws more on developing positive workplace relations without any reciprocity expectations of managers. Given the high level of ambition, the approach is also more likely to fail in the sense of PWDs 'dropping out'—and more likely to face resistance from other employees (see Chapter 8).

Finally, the approaches are also likely to differ in the extent to which they require changes in mindset, as well as in organizational and HRM practices. The vacancy-oriented leadership is the most straightforward way of performing inclusive leadership, as it bears the most resemblance to traditional leadership. This similarity can be advantageous as it may require few changes in organizational or HRM practices, including recruitment. Ability-oriented leadership requires more changes, as it involves a refined strategic view of disability and PWD—shifting from viewing it as a disabling to an enabling factor of organizational success. Finally, the growth approach is likely to require the most fundamental changes in the organization and HRM, as it is based on a mindset that starts with the individual and their needs, and then adapts the workplace accordingly.

4.5 Summary

In this chapter, we have examined workplace inclusion from the perspective of inclusive leadership. Whereas Chapters 2 And 3 address overarching organizational strategies for work inclusion of PWD, we have focused on the situated, day-to-day and *relational* aspects of workplace inclusion. We have discussed the basic components of inclusion at this level—i.e. adhering to PWD's needs of uniqueness and belonging and creating meaningful social relations. We have also highlighted three ways for managers to be inclusive—through a

vacancy, ability, and growth approach—and discussed the strengths and limitations with these approaches. A key message in the chapter is that there are different ways of performing inclusive leadership, involving different levels of ambition for managers and attuned to different leadership styles and contextual factors. Thus, performing inclusive leadership is possible for many—if not all leaders—even if it requires trial and error. As one of the managers, we talked to put it '*we have many success stories, but even more non-success stories*'. Work inclusion is not a streamlined process that can follow a standard recipe. Instead, it is a dynamic learning process where managers need to experiment, gain experience, and reflect on their efforts within their specific situations and organizations to enhance their inclusion competence. In addition, as Bråthen writes in Chapter 10, there are many opportunities for support and collaboration with employment services to aid companies in work inclusion.

Individual Task

- Which of the different types of inclusive leadership do you already perform? Which can you improve on?
- How can do you develop meaningful relations with PWD in your workplace? How do you know that you have met PWDs' need for uniqueness and belongingness?
- How can you expand the insights from this chapter to your own team and organizations?

Group Task

- Share your individual experiences with inclusive leadership in the group. What are key commonalities and differences in your experiences? What factors can explain these commonalities and/or differences?

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5

Mentorship

Heidi Enehaug and Øystein Spjelkavik

Abstract Mentoring may serve as an integral component in a company providing natural support to PWD who may exhibit characteristics such as low self-esteem, anxiety, limited social skills, and inadequate coping mechanisms. By having a dedicated mentor, these challenges can be addressed, fostering a more inclusive work environment. By providing PWD the necessary support and resources on continuous basis, workplaces can help them achieve their full potential as labor. Therefore, increased emphasis on this type of natural support in work inclusion efforts should be understood as part of the development of workplace inclusion competence (WIC). Typical mentor functions focus on PWD's individual development and mastery of work performance and work actively to include the PWD in the social community at the workplace. Time, financial support, and collaboration with external support system are vital framework conditions for workplace-based mentoring.

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Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the concept of mentoring in the context of workplace inclusion of PWD
- Identify the central elements involved in mentorship practices.

Case Study

The following excerpt is taken from a research study of mentorship practices:

As a mentor, I initially focused on assigning lighter, varied tasks for the PWD to prevent monotony and to facilitate an easier transition. By shadowing me, the PWD was able to learn through practical examples, and our collaboration allowed for open conversation and explanation of processes. Our strong rapport, built on shared life experiences and a sense of security, significantly contributed to a trustful collaboration.

To prevent negative reactions to the PWD's behavior and to broaden workplace support, I involved larger sections of the work environment in the mentoring process. In one instance, faced with a department occasionally characterized by stress, I implemented preventive measures that included providing comprehensive information about the PWD to the team, and encouraging reflection, dialogue, and mutual motivation. Inclusion of my colleagues in this process proved to be a key facilitation strategy.

Recognizing the potential challenges posed by the PWD's behavior, I frequently reminded the team about individual differences and accommodation for various needs. Despite the tough yet high-spirited environment, everyone in the department showed positivity and interest. I encouraged open and direct communication, allowing everyone to express their feelings freely.

However, there were times when things did not go as planned with the PWD and colleagues could grow tired. In such instances, I encouraged the team, reinforcing the importance of patience and understanding in our work environment.

Discussion Question

- How did the mentor's approach to involving larger sections of the work environment in the mentoring process contribute to the PWD's development?

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents examples of how companies enhance their own workplace inclusion competence by mobilizing "natural supports," that is, strengthening the inherent support possibilities already present in the company (Cimera, 2007; Corbiere et al., 2014). Our goal is to illustrate that a dedicated mentoring resource in the workplace is crucial in nurturing the intrinsically supportive nature of the work environment. This resource is pivotal in developing workplace inclusion competence (WIC), that is, fostering the workplace's readiness, ability, and opportunities to boost work participation for PWD who, for various reasons, face challenges in engaging with the traditional workforce. WIC is characterized as the workplace's commitment to understand and support individuals with extended needs. The goal is to address and harmonize the needs of both the individual and the organization (Enehaug, Spjelkavik, Falkum & Frøyland, 2021).

Research suggests that being part of a regular work environment can be more motivating than participating in isolated training arenas, and it avoids the challenges of transitioning from sheltered training arenas to the workplace (Corrigan & McCracken, 2005; Frøyland, Schafft & Spjelkavik, 2019). In addition to workplace-based training itself, being part of the social community at a workplace provides opportunities for networking and identity development, which can lead to a better understanding of the demands, expectations, norms, and rules of working life, better development of social skills, and increased personal network and self-esteem. However, using a regular workplace as an arena for the development of workability, social skills, and mastery control thus requires a different competence in the business than typical onboarding processes.

In this chapter, we address what is done at the workplace when the company accepts a PWD for workplace training. We will specifically examine the workplaces' development of its own inclusion competence, which is linked to the mobilization of "natural supports", i.e., reinforcement of the support that naturally exists in the company.

The chapter draws on the analysis of in-depth interviews with 31 internal company representatives who assumed the role of mentors for PWD in work training (Enehaug & Spjelkavik, 2024). The PWD were registered in their local Public Employment Service (PES) and were introduced to a company for work training purposes through a PES counsellor. The PWDs were facing challenges related to learning, work performance, communication, motivation, and self-awareness. Predominantly from small companies in the private sector, the mentors did not possess any formal training relating to their

mentor role and were not designated as permanent mentors. Among the 31 mentors, 25 were managers in various positions, and 6 were colleagues of the PWD. The companies received financial support from PES for offering work training and, in certain cases, an additional “mentor fee”.

5.2 Central Elements of Mentoring PWD

5.2.1 Division of Tasks Between Managers and Mentors

The roles of a mentor and a manager in the workplace, though both crucial, have distinct differences. A managerial role is traditionally more formal, focusing on making decisions, delegating and distributing tasks, and managing resources (Northouse, 2021). This position carries significant authority, power, and a clear hierarchical standing within the organization.

Contrastingly, the mentor’s role in these examples is centered around individual growth and development over time within the work environment. Unlike the managerial role, the emphasis is less on formal authority and more on personal proficiency and nurturing potential. In the context of work inclusion initiatives, the mentor’s role in shaping the psychosocial work environment is as vital as the manager’s formal role. This highlights the importance of maintaining a balance between formal managerial responsibilities and fostering an environment conducive to personal and professional growth through mentorship.

The mentor role resembles colleague or buddy support, which is commonly used to facilitate the integration process and assimilation of new employees. A buddy can aid new employees in feeling more integrated into the work environment, which is particularly important for "hard-to-place citizens" (Andersen et al., 2017) who might be insecure and face challenges in mastering their new work environment. While a buddy primarily offers initial support during onboarding (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011; Klein et al., 2015), the mentors in our examples provide more sustained support. They assist PWD in navigating challenges linked to training, work performance, and organizational socialization. This kind of devoted mentorship can be understood as both intensified and extended onboarding that diminishes the PWD’s stress and uncertainty, and potentially enhances social skills, productivity, job satisfaction, and job retention.

As in the buddy system, the mentor role in our examples is seldom a formal or professional position in HR, but instead a manager or employee who participates in the PWD’s psychosocial work environment. In the cases

described below, there was no specific training on how to be a mentor. Proximity to the PWD's psychosocial work environment and collaboration with a PES counsellor appears to be crucial for successful mentorship.

5.2.2 Training and Social Skills Development

Several mentors engaged in implementing some form of formal competence development for the PWD, often involving coordinated collaboration with external agencies such as training offices[1] and language tutors.

A common experience among mentors is that PWD require more guidance and longer timeframes than in traditional onboarding. This need extends beyond learning the work tasks to encompass understanding them. For instance, one mentor describes a structured support process with a PWD who was socially introverted and uncertain, with little work experience. Every week, they would construct a detailed plan for the PWD's work, thoroughly reviewing it together. This time-intensive process aimed to ensure that the PWD understood the purpose behind each skill they were learning, not just the technique itself. Despite initial resistance, the mentor reported significant progress, with the PWD's communication skills notably improved, amounting to a transformation into a *"completely new person."*

Adaptation at the individual level could involve allowing PWD to try out a variety of tasks or different departments to discover the best fit (see Chapter 6 for more on work accommodation) Mentors often ensure that PWD start with simpler tasks, gradually increasing the requirements. A mentor notes that it's important to push PWDs outside their comfort zone, enabling them to "*grow in the job.*"

Training involves more than acquiring skills and professional knowledge; it also includes effectively managing social situations and communication with colleagues and customers. For example, one mentor discussed planning specific days and times for the PWD to work on improving communication skills, focusing on one-on-one situations and group contexts where the PWD faced challenges. This illustrates how mentors actively promote mastery by emphasizing communication and individual planning.

When aiming at formal qualifications for PWD, several mentors emphasized the importance of linking theory and practice. For example, one mentor

[1] Training offices are a collaboration between companies and businesses on the intake and training of apprentices.

demonstrated how colleagues were involved in language training, implementing language use in work tasks and repeating it over and over to ensure proficiency.

In the breaks, we are very attentive to our language (…) Maybe we discuss 'what homework are you doing?', 'what are you currently learning in Norwegian class?' or 'what are the questions and sentences you have to memorize for next time?' (…) instead of just moving a chair without communicating about it, we 'talk-work' and explain what we do, and then repeat it over and over.

Another mentor in a hair salon created tasks and conducted repetitions to ensure the PWD met the theoretical requirements for the trade certificate test, reviewing the PWD's curriculum and making sure they understood it through questions, tasks, and dialogue. This underscores the extensive role of mentors in not only guiding PWD through work tasks but also fostering their overall growth and development within the workplace.

5.2.3 Nurturing Natural Supports

The mentors' role in developing a positive psychosocial work environment is essential for the well-being, motivation, and overall welfare of PWD. They utilize various strategies to prevent negative reactions and to mobilize participation in support of the PWD. As such, mentorship plays a critical role in promoting awareness and nurturing the growth of WIC. This implies that workplace actors, through experiences with various inclusion processes, in collaboration with an active and supportive PES counsellor and other agents in the support apparatus, can cater to both their own production needs and the PWD's requirements for follow-up, training, and psychosocial support. WIC enhances the prospects for PWDs to achieve individual learning and development in interaction with colleagues in regular workplaces. However, this presents challenges for companies because the PWD—from an employer's perspective—often does not appear as fully developed labor that can be recruited through regular employment agencies and onboarding.

Mentors endeavor to "read" the PWD to provide appropriate support, necessitating profound relational understanding and empathy. Mentorship encompasses providing support for job-related skills, personal development, and formal competence development. Social coping and daily routines are also addressed. The facilitation is highly individualized, focusing on both the PWD's interests and challenges to develop a sense of mastery.

Mentors often observe PWD exhibiting reluctance to participate in the social community at the workplace. One mentor expressed that fostering a sense of community at work is beneficial for mental health, especially for PWDs prone to withdrawing from colleagues. Another mentor indicated that although a PWD's work capability was unproblematic, the PWD still "*requires a bit of extra encouragement socially.*" The mentor elaborates that the PWD faces social challenges, such as preferring to eat lunch alone, not being very communicative, and responding to open-ended questions with simple 'yes' or 'no' answers. Consequently, social facilitation was crucial, as was ensuring the PWD received help when needed and that others would inquire about the PWD's needs when the mentor was not available for direct support.

Many mentors are keen to assist the PWD in integrating into the psychosocial work environment and making them feel valued. Some also noted that social support can often extend to matters outside the workplace, such as transportation and personal errands. Several mentors highlighted that they themselves are part of the work environment and can use social interaction as a motivational factor for the PWD. They strive to make the PWD feel comfortable in the social community at the workplace, including ensuring that the PWD is well received among colleagues. A mentor mentioned that "*on bad days, the social moments together with colleagues can help lift the PWD's mood.*" When mentors involve larger segments of the work environment in supporting the PWD, it is not only to prevent negative reactions to the PWD's behavior but also to strengthen workplace support. A mentor who observes and initiates actions concerning the PWD's social functioning can be vital to the PWD's sense of security and belonging. This, in turn, can influence the PWD's work task performance as feelings of security, coping, and control increase. Social support and effective communication in the workplace thus emerge as key components in the mentor role.

This approach is echoed by mentors in several companies, who argue that involving colleagues in supporting the PWD can positively influence *the overall work environment* and describe the PWD's development as having an "educational function" for the rest of the workplace as it teaches the value of patience. One mentor stated that an important task was to remind colleagues that "we are all different and some days we may need more space than others," while another mentor asserts that involving colleagues in supporting the PWD positively impacts the work environment through shared positive feelings; "*is enjoyable to witness a person's development.*" These examples demonstrate the critical role mentors play in fostering a supportive and inclusive work environment.

5.2.4 Relational Trust and Proximity to Work Performance

Cimera (2007) illustrates that mentorship performed as natural support in the workplace is most effective when the mentor is intimately connected to the company's core area, can enhance the PWD's relationships with the immediate leader and colleagues, and influences how the PWD's performance is evaluated by management. The mentors in our examples emphasize the importance of a close relationship with the PWD, asserting that such proximity is crucial for properly addressing the PWD's challenges. They also stress the need for an atmosphere with room for trial and error. The mentors strive to provide honest, constructive feedback and highlight the importance of making PWD feel valued, recognized, and heard. Simultaneously, they underline the significance of clear expectations and believe that well-being and security are prerequisites for achieving the PWD's desired development.

One mentor, an employee in a public institution, illustrated the division of roles, stating, "*Even though the top leader is actively involved, I am the one who steps up, liaises with PES and organizes evaluation meetings about how things are and how things should be moving forward.*" Another mentor, a department manager in a catering business, shared a slightly different perspective on the roles, "*I have a manager who is closely involved and follows up, demonstrating tasks, while I take care of conversations and guidance.*"

When a colleague serves as a mentor, the choice of mentor is often carefully considered by management to find someone who meshes well with the PWD and functions as a buddy. As one mentor explained, "*Actually, it was my boss who asked me (…). The PWD is from the same village as me, which was very practical. I didn't know much, just that they had moved there. Maybe that's why I was asked. I do a lot of evening shifts, and so does the PWD.*"

The mentors underscored the importance of relational support, understanding, and empathy as key elements in effective mentorships. They attempt to "read" the PWD to provide the right support. Sometimes it is necessary to challenge the PWD for development, while other times it may be more appropriate to give space or calm down. It is a balancing act that requires the mentor to be intimately familiar with the PWD's situation.

5.3 Challenges in the Mentor Role

Integrating a PWD into the workplace can present substantial challenges, potentially leading to friction and strain in the work environment (see Chapter 8), despite significant efforts from mentors to facilitate and support the PWD's development.

A mentor recounted an instance where they had to let a PWD go. The PWD played video games at night, struggled to show up in the morning, and was tired during the workday. The PWD's behavior provoked some colleagues, leading to frustration due to the PWD's inability to adjust their circadian rhythm.

Another mentor spoke of a PWD with significant social challenges, frequent absences, often arriving late, and could abruptly disappear from the workplace. This behavior made the management hesitant to employ the PWD. In such cases, some mentors in our study assisted the PWD in finding paths to education or alternative work participation elsewhere.

In a final example, a mentor described a distressing experience with a PWD who became aggressive when another PWD was hired. The PWD sent threatening text messages, followed and threatened other employees, necessitating police intervention.

These examples illustrate the complex dynamics and challenges that can arise in the work environment. Despite mentors' extensive efforts to facilitate and support the PWD's development, achieving a successful match between the work organization and the PWD can be difficult. The PWDs' development often relied on support from various other relational constellations, including colleagues in the work community, PES counsellor, and actors in the education and health sectors. This underscores the significance of collaboration between the mentor and internal and external actors in promoting learning and knowledge sharing. The dedicated mentor occasionally emerges as a sort of "spider" within this "relational constellation" (Higgins & Kram, 2001). These examples further suggest that mentors themselves need support and follow-up, both from their own management and from the external support system. Sustaining a demanding mentor-PWD relationship without adequate support can present formidable challenges.

5.4 Framework Conditions: Time, Money and Collaboration

Many mentors emphasize that accommodating PWD with extensive support needs requires a longer timeframe compared to conventional hires. This is not just about the duration a PWD needs to learn tasks, but also about organizational socialization.

A mentor's patience, repetition, and proximity in the inclusion process demands considerable time and commitment. This includes not only the duration of the training but also the day-to-day supervision of a PWD. Many mentors express surprise at how time-consuming the process can be. However, there seems to be a consensus that once a PWD is accepted into a business, they should receive the necessary attention and time.

Investing a significant amount of time and resources in a PWD, both financially and socially, can pose challenges. Some mentors discuss negative experiences, such as colleagues becoming frustrated due to the additional time required for training, which may result in more work for those not designated as mentors. Financial resources are a recurring theme among the mentors and are closely intertwined with time. Several mentors highlight that public financial support enables them to allocate time to assist the PWD over an extended period. Contrastingly, a mentor mentioned a PWD who needed a significant amount of time to become independent at work but was well-liked and comfortable. However, when the PES could not extend the wage subsidy, retaining the PWD became unfeasible.

However, some mentors express other concerns: being perceived as exploiting the system. Public financial grants to the company make it possible for the mentors to commit to helping the PWD, while a lack of public financial support limits the mentors' opportunities to develop the PWD to a level that is acceptable for the company. Insisting on ongoing or increased financial support can quickly raise suspicions of "*milking the system.*"

The mentors' collective experiences reveal the complex relationship between finance and commitment in workplace mentorship. Without financial support from PES, it becomes challenging for the mentors to maintain their engagement, and a lack of financial support over time will lead to the discontinuation of the mentorship, despite the PWD still requiring assistance. At the same time, the mentors are not solely concerned with financial support but attach great importance to the collaboration with the PES counsellor responsible for the PWD. A mentor explained:

I'm not alone (...) it's about having that support from PES, being called and writing emails and meeting, that's the security I have behind me, because PES has a responsibility after all. (...) The PES councilor has shown an interest in the PWD and in me - how we cope with this, how it is going. (...) The councilor has asked if we need extra equipment, if we need extra hours.

When a PES counsellor engages more closely with a workplace mentor, it appears to result in increased mutual commitment and better knowledge of PWD and workplace needs. This highlights the importance of collaborative relationships in fostering successful mentorship experiences (see Chapter 10).

5.5 Summary

The mentor's contribution to the development of WIC in these examples can be understood as reflection-based learning, with continuous adjustment of course, adaptation and accommodation for specific situations. Internal company actors change their problem understanding during the inclusion process. However, such inclusion processes take time, they are often non-linear, and characterized by uncertainty related to, for example, how long one can expect public support for mentor follow-up and wage costs.

Individual Task

Create a plan outlining how you would welcome a PWD in a department. Your plan should include steps on identifying suitable mentors and how to make sure that the match between the PWD and a mentor is sustainable over time.

Group Task

Conduct a mock debate about the following statement: "The success of mentorship relies more on a close relationship with the PWD rather than the mentor's formal rank within the company." Divide into two groups. One group will argue in favor of the statement, while the other will oppose it. After the debate, discuss as a class the key insights and perspectives that emerged.

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6

Workplace Accommodations

Tanja Dall and Mikkel Bo Madsen

Abstract Workplace accommodations are essential for enabling people with disabilities to actively participate in work and retain their jobs. Accommodations can be categorized into three basic types: technical aids, practical-organizational adjustments, and broader social adaptations in the workplace. They may involve modifications to the job, work environment, processes, or conditions to reduce physical and social barriers, ensuring equal opportunities in a competitive work environment. While specific accommodations can be very concrete and reflect a down-to-earth fix-the-problem attitude, research shows that working successfully with inclusion may also require more complex approaches. In the chapter we introduce the three basic types of accommodations, and outline workplace accommodations as social processes involving several stakeholders in (and outside) the organization.

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Learning Objectives

By reading and working with this chapter, you should acquire:

- Knowledge of what accommodations are in the context of PwD in the workplace,
- Knowledge of how to apply workplace accommodations, including the dilemmas this may entail,
- The ability to work strategically with accommodations to strengthen workplace inclusion for PwD.

Case Study

Noah recently started a part-time job as a service technician in the IT services department of a Danish media services company, DMP. Although Noah did not complete his education, he is a highly skilled IT service worker, often solving PC issues that others cannot. However, Noah has some challenges that may indicate a mental variation on the autism spectrum. He is sensitive to noise and uncomfortable with unplanned queries, especially from people he does not know well.

To accommodate Noah's noise sensitivity, it was agreed that he could wear closed-back headphones during most of his work hours. However, not everyone at DMP is aware that the headphones are crucial for Noah's ability to be present and active in the workplace. Some colleagues approach him and ask him to remove the headphones to communicate their IT problems, which stress Noah. Sometimes, he responds dismissively or turns away, leading to negative stories spreading among colleagues.

Noah's line manager, Emma, notices the issues and concludes that she needs to find and develop ways to further support positive interaction between Noah and his colleagues at DMP. The headphones alone do not solve the problem.

Discussion Questions

- What further adjustments can you think of, that can support Noah at the workplace and utilize his professional skills?
- How will your suggestions affect others at DMP? (Noah's colleagues in the IT services? Colleagues in the rest of the DMP?)

6.1 Introduction

Workplace accommodations are essential for enabling people with disabilities (PwD) to actively participate in work and retain their jobs. These accommodations involve modifications to the job, work environment, processes, or conditions to reduce physical and social barriers, ensuring equal opportunities in a competitive work environment (Boehm & Dwertmann, 2015).

In the case above, providing headphones as a technical accommodation can help Noah participate actively in a lively and noisy workplace. However, as we can glean from the case above, technical solutions alone may not be sufficient. While the headphones solve the immediate challenge of working in a noisy work environment, it may also create new challenges regarding Noah's collaboration with a wider group of colleagues.

Work accommodations are often individual solutions, but they can impact other individuals and the overall work and inclusion climate at the workplace. When accommodations and inclusion involve negotiating and transforming the taken-for-granted norms and arrangements within a workplace, they challenge so-called ableist structures (see textbox 6.1 on ableism). Thus working strategically with workplace accommodations may be part of strengthening the workplace's overall inclusion capacity, that is, the ability to include employees with disabilities in sustainable employment (Dall, Madsen, & Larsen, 2024; Madsen, Dall, & Larsen, 2024).

Textbox 6.1 Ableism

Ableism refers to discrimination and social prejudice against people with disabilities. It often manifests as an unconscious bias that favors able-bodied individuals ("the ideal worker") at the expense of those with disabilities, impairments, or variations in their physical and/or mental constitution. This chapter addresses certain aspects of ableism in workplace contexts.

Most workplaces are designed around the experiences of able-bodied employees. However, for people with disabilities, the structures, norms, and arrangements intended to support employee performance can become obstacles. For example, open-plan office layouts are typically designed to foster collaboration, enhance communication, and encourage spontaneous problem-solving. However, for individuals with sensory sensitivities, these layouts can be overwhelming and hinder their participation in work activities.

In such instances, work accommodations are essential to create an environment where people with disabilities can also contribute their skills and expertise.

PWDs often experience that workplaces are full of arrangements and expectations that hinder them from participating and producing value.

In this chapter, we explore three main categories of accommodations. It's important to note that different types of accommodations often need to be considered together. For instance, technical aids may need to be supplemented with social adjustments to be fully effective (Gulliksen et al., 2021). In the second half of the chapter, we discuss the processes and actors involved in making accommodations work, especially when it's not just about providing a specific tool or resource like headphones.

6.2 Work Accommodations

When an employee faces physical, cognitive, or social challenges in their job, developing and implementing aids and support to compensate for these challenges is crucial. This is the essence of accommodations.

Accommodations are vital for including people with disabilities in the workplace. Individuals with significant disabilities can perform well if technical, physical, social, organizational, and interpersonal challenges are addressed with appropriate aids, support, and adjustments (Corbière et al., 2014). In some cases, simple accommodations are enough to make employment possible, and the provision of accommodations must always be adapted to the specific situation.

Studies of accommodations often distinguish between three basic types:

- Technical aids,
- Practical-organizational adjustments,
- Broader social adaptations in the workplace.

These accommodations can enable a person to remain employed who might otherwise not have had the opportunity (Boehm & Dwertmann, 2015). The concept of workplace accommodations aligns with the social model of disability, which recognizes that disability cannot be reduced to individual impairments. Instead, it is influenced by social, cultural, and organizational contexts (Hvinden, 2019), and disability arises when an individual encounters an environment not designed for inclusive participation. For example, if doors are wide enough, a wheelchair may not be a hindrance. This perspective

Table 6.1 Examples of accommodations

Accommodation type	Purpose	Examples
Technical	To better align work with the functional abilities of employees	**Screen Readers:** Software that reads text aloud from a computer screen **Wide Doorways and Hallways:** Providing sufficient space for wheelchair navigation
Practical-organizational	To better align practical and organizational arrangements in workplace with the functional abilities of employees	**Flexible Working Hours** **Individually Adapted Job Content** **Quiet Spaces:** Designating quiet areas to reduce sensory overload **Structured Schedules:** Providing predictable routines and advance notice of changes
Social-relational	To better align the working climate with the functional abilities of employees and foster a sense of inclusion	**SocialSupport:** Offering mentorship programs and social skills training **Inclusive Social Gatherings:** Ensuring all employees can participate **Informing Colleagues:** Educating about special arrangements and principles of inclusion

aligns with the concept of accommodations, recognizing that by adjusting the workplace, many limitations can be minimized or circumvented.

A workplace that embraces the social model of disability is more likely to develop and implement effective accommodations. This is because it views disability as a dynamic interaction with the environment, rather than a static trait of the individual.

In the following sections, we present three types of accommodations and discuss their use in everyday organizational practice. Table 6.1 provides an overview of these categories.

6.2.1 Technical and Digital Accommodations

There is a long history of using compensatory technical aids to support individuals with disabilities in the workplace. Technical accommodations can include:

- **Mobility aids:** e.g. wheelchairs, prosthetics
- **Hearing aids:** e.g. devices to assist with hearing
- **Vision aids:** e.g. specialized tools for vision compensation

- **Assistive technology:** e.g. screen readers, speech-to-text software
- **Digital solutions:** e.g. tools to provide instruction or structure workload

These technical solutions compensate for bodily and/or cognitive impairments and are often tailored to the individual's specific needs, like Noah's headphones in the earlier example.

Recently, digital resources have become increasingly important in technical accommodations. These include mobile phones with specialized apps, accessibility features in widely used software, and solutions based on artificial intelligence (AI) and virtual reality (VR). For instance, smartphone apps can help individuals who have difficulty using keyboards by translating speech into text. VR-based systems can provide individuals with learning difficulties access to repeated instructions on how to perform various tasks (Gulliksen et al., 2021).

However, technical aids often need to be supplemented with social and practical adjustments to be fully effective. It's essential to consider how these aids function within the organizational context. In Noah's case, the simple technical accommodation of headphones was not sufficient on its own. Emma's considerations could lead to further accommodations, such as adjusting working hours or changing work procedures. These are examples of practical-organizational adjustments.

6.2.2 Practical-Organizational Accommodations

Practical-organizational accommodations can include:

- **Reduced working hours** and adjusted work schedules
- **Restructuring job content** and task distribution, including team adjustments
- **Altered management, instruction, and feedback** to meet the special needs of employees
- **More intensive or individually tailored training**
- **Special arrangements of the physical work environment**, such as ensuring access or supporting specific working positions

These accommodations are closely related to job design (see also Chapter 7 on Flexible Job Design). They focus on designing and organizing a job to make it possible—or more efficient—for a specific person to perform their role. It is crucial that adjustments are tailored to the individual employee and their specific functions. Additionally, these adjustments must be flexible to

accommodate potential fluctuations in work capacity or changes in the work itself over time.

Working with practical-organizational accommodations involves considering how to organize job tasks, plans, and their execution to maximize the potential of each individual. Sometimes, this requires developing solutions that are atypical for the workplace. Other times, the workplace may already have "natural supports" that are readily available and supportive of specific types of disabilities. For example, if speech-to-text software is already widely used in a department, it can be easily provided to someone with a cognitive disability who needs it.

6.2.3 Social Accommodations

Relationships and working communities are crucial for workplace inclusion, and accommodations can also target social and relational adjustments. These accommodations support interpersonal aspects of inclusion and are closely linked to collegial relationships. Social accommodations can include:

- **Supporting employees** in following the informal rules of social interaction in the workplace
- **Facilitating opportunities for social interaction** between different groups of employees, such as majority and minority groups
- **Forming a support network** of colleagues, managers, support workers (e.g. from public support systems or the organization's HR department), and other individuals who play a role in including and retaining the employee

Social-relational accommodations are often helpful for people with cognitive or mental disabilities who may need support understanding and following workplace norms. However, they can also serve as tools in a reciprocal process of communication and negotiation to find or develop mutually satisfactory arrangements. In this context, social-relational accommodations can support the effectiveness of technical or practical-organizational accommodations.

In Noah's case, Emma may consider ways to enhance social interaction and mutual learning between Noah and his colleagues at DMP by developing social or relational accommodations. These accommodations might aim to improve communication, mutual learning, and adaptation, enabling Noah to participate as effectively as possible. They also help others in the workplace understand why certain arrangements are made for Noah.

Thus, social or relational accommodations build on interactions between different groups of employees, including those with varying resources, challenges, and interests. Social accommodations are about fostering social inclusion in the workplace and will often involve co-workers in those efforts (see Chapter 8 on co-workers support), sometimes in the form of mentor support (see Chapter 5).

6.3 Work Accommodation Happens in Social Processes

While specific accommodations, perhaps especially practical-organizational and technical accommodations, can be very concrete and reflect a down-to-earth fix-the-problem attitude, research shows that working successfully with inclusion may also require more complex approaches. Identifying relevant accommodations and making them effective in a given organizational and social practice requires strategic action and the ability to balance different perspectives and needs among different groups of people.

Some studies even suggest that focusing too much on providing specific aids can limit work inclusion, as such a focus overlook the social and organizational dimensions of inclusion (Lindsay et al, 2019). Often, it will be necessary for colleagues and managers to be involved and understand the need for changed collaboration forms, altered task distributions, and perhaps special forms of flexibility in work execution to make an inclusion process work (Gulliksen et al., 2021).

If organizational effort is solely directed at getting the proper closed-back headphones for Noah in the above case, the chance of building a sustainable organizational set-up for including him in valuable workplace activities may be missed.

Returning to the case, we can imagine that Noah's line manager, Emma, will respond to the collegial issues by suggesting several ways to avoid conflict and support Noah's active participation at work:

- **Adjusting Working Hours:** Noah's working hours could be scheduled outside of the standard rush hours at DMP to reduce unplanned contacts with colleagues.
- **Formalizing Task Assignment:** The IT services department could adopt a more formalized process for taking in and assigning new tasks using standard forms filled out by service applicants. This would help prevent unplanned queries for new tasks.

- **Focusing on Technical Tasks:** Noah could concentrate solely on technical and software-related tasks, while Emma and two other colleagues handle all communication and contact tasks.
- **Creating a Support Network:** Emma could also consider arranging a supportive workplace mentor or a collegial network to help Noah become acquainted with a broader group of colleagues. This would also help colleagues at DMP understand Noah better, fostering mutual understanding.

From Emma's list of suggestions to accommodate Noah's challenges, the first three are relatively specific and address specific issues but may overlook that an inclusive social process must take place, if Noah is to be included on a more sustainable basis at DMP. In contrast, the fourth suggestion (considering workplace mentor and support group) involves social processes in the workplace and builds on mutual learning and adaptation. This approach to inclusion may be as important, if not more important, than trying out yet another fix-it solution.

Studies on inclusion using aids and accommodations indicate that the active ingredients in inclusion processes largely are or builds on social processes, including social learning processes about understanding individuals' limitations in organizational contexts (e.g. Kulkarni et al., 2018). To make accommodations work, you need to work them into basic organizational processes and arrangements and manage the dilemmas that often arise as you do so.

Furthermore, follow-up and ongoing negotiation and adjustment of individual agreements and accommodations is necessary to ensure that they continue to support inclusion. This is especially relevant when the work capacity of an employee varies over time, or when the tasks and organization of the workplace change. If the market situation, policy changes or other external contexts prompts changes in an organization, the negotiated solutions and accommodations making inclusion and retention of specific employees possible, may need to be renegotiated and revised as well.

6.4 Work Accommodations Involves Multiple Actors

Work accommodations are social processes that often involve more than just the person with a disability (PwD).

Colleagues: The closest colleagues play a crucial role in making work accommodations effective. Daily interactions significantly influence employees' experiences of acceptance and belonging (the subjective aspect of inclusion). Often, accommodations for an individual can only work if colleagues also adjust their working methods. In addition, colleagues may also resist changes being made to working conditions or processes if it is perceived to affect them or to be 'unfair' (see Chapter 8). In Noah's case, the accommodations discussed affect his colleagues: some may find the arrangement with headphones unusual and perceive Noah as different. Emma's suggestions to further accommodate Noah's active participation at DMP impact the work conditions and environment for colleagues in the IT department and broader organizational arrangements. If implemented, these suggestions will affect Noah's colleagues and 'customers,' potentially altering routines that some find valuable for their work performance.

Leadership: Leadership is vital in working with accommodations and inclusion. Studies show that inclusive leadership involves balancing the (sometimes divergent) needs of employees with special requirements, the broader employee group, and the company's performance. Leadership practices must be flexible and adapt to local and dynamic circumstances, allowing for specific accommodations.

Human Resource Departments: In workplaces with HR departments, these can play a significant role in developing organizational procedures and supporting other actors in working with accommodations (see Chapter 3). This includes ensuring that organizational policies and processes are inclusive, clear, transparent, and accessible to those who need them. Policies can address practices regarding recurrent absences due to disability or illness and proactively identify vulnerabilities in structures or functions managed by disadvantaged employees. For example, for PwD managing time-sensitive or specialized functions, proactive accommodation procedures might include plans for how these functions will be managed during recurrent or long-term absences.

External support: Many workplaces engage external support to bring in expertise on specific challenges related to inclusion and accommodations (e.g. understanding diagnoses or optimizing workplace ergonomics) as well as broader experience in fostering inclusive work environments. This support may also involve consultancy on material and financial resources available to workplaces implementing accommodations. The sources of external support vary across different welfare state contexts and may include public welfare offices, private consultants, or NGOs representing individuals with specific types of disabilities. See Chapter 10 for more on the support of external actors.

6.5 Summary

Accommodations are aids, support, and solutions that enable people with disabilities to be present at and perform effectively in workplaces. Successful accommodations help counter ableism and foster an inclusive work environment, benefiting many, if not all, employees.

In this chapter, we have discussed technical, practical-organizational, and social-relational accommodations. While accommodations are often seen as simple solutions to individual challenges, they typically require ongoing adjustments and the involvement of colleagues, organizational arrangements, and social norms to ensure job performance and tenure. Therefore, inclusion and the successful use of accommodations are processes involving multiple stakeholders.

Working with accommodations is thus not 'just' a matter of identifying relevant accommodations and putting those in place. If accommodations are to have the intended effect, more strategic work is needed to ensure that accommodations are indeed used across the organization, and that it is done in ways that consider the organizational and social contexts within which they are to function. In addition, the work on accommodations should be seen as part of the overall strategies to make the workplace more inclusive.

An inclusive workplace proactively and flexibly accommodates diverse needs. It treats accommodations as part of a broader strategy to ensure equal access, rather than isolated measures to "fix" barriers for specific individuals. By focusing on adapting the work environment, norms, and policies, rather than expecting individuals to conform to rigid standards, it fosters a culture where the contributions of all employees are valued.

Extensive use of accommodations embodies the social model of disability, creating conditions for employees with disabilities to thrive based on their unique interactions with their environments. This approach not only benefits individuals with disabilities but also enhances organizational diversity and inclusivity as a whole.

Individual Task

- Think of a current—or previous—workplace and imagine that Noah, from the case above, is a skilled employee in that context.
- Given Noah's cognitive challenges, what challenges may he experience in 'your' workplace and how could work accommodations be put in place to support his performance?

Group Task

Work together to create a workplace policy that reflects principles of inclusion and proactive accommodation (in groups of 4–6 persons).

1. Imagine you are an HR team tasked with creating an inclusion policy for a company.
2. Develop a draft policy that includes:
   a. A definition of inclusion and accommodations.
   b. Examples of technical, practical-organizational, and social-relational accommodations.
   c. Guidelines for involving stakeholders (e.g. leaders, colleagues, consultants).
   d. Proactive strategies to foster a culture of inclusivity.
3. Present your policy draft to the class, simulating a workplace meeting.
4. As a class, discuss and provide feedback on the feasibility and impact of each group's policy.

Adjust the task as needed to fit your context.

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Further Reading Suggestions

Examples of work accommodations in practice

The European Union website on 'Reasonable accommodation' list some examples of what such accommodations can be: https://europa.eu/youreurope/business/human-resources/equal-treatment-qualifications/reasonable-accommodation/index_en.htm (last visited on 29-11-2024)

See also The European Union. (2019). How to put reasonable accommodation into practice. Guide of promising practices. Available at https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=738&langId=en&pubId=8341&furtherPubs=yes (last visited on 29-11-2024)

Many interest groups provide examples of work accommodations that may support persons with specific impairments. Try conducting a web search for 'work accommodations for autism' - or ADHD / Crohn's disease / blind employees / mental health conditions / or any other type of disability you may be interested in or have experience with.

Research on work accommodations and work inclusion

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7

Inclusive Job Design

Thomas Bredgaard

Abstract In the modern labor market, we often unconsciously adhere to 'ableist' notions of what constitutes an 'ideal worker,' a 'normal job,' and 'ordinary work.' These ingrained norms create a divide between what is considered normal and abnormal, able and disabled, ideal and deficient. Such ableist perspectives can inadvertently exclude people with disabilities from the labor market. This chapter explores the concept and theory of inclusive job design as a transformative approach to inclusivity. Job design champions the idea of tailoring jobs to fit individuals, rather than forcing individuals to conform to rigid job descriptions. By embracing this approach, we can open doors to a more diverse and inclusive workforce, where everyone has the opportunity to contribute their unique talents and abilities.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Grasp the importance of inclusive job design: Understand why designing jobs and work environments to accommodate diverse capacities and abilities is crucial for fostering an inclusive workplace.

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- Explore inclusive workplaces: Reflect on how reimagining job and work design can unlock the potential for more inclusive and supportive workplaces, benefiting everyone.

Case Study: To Hire or Not to Hire Karen?

Peter, the personnel manager at Danish Biscuits, a company with 80 employees, faces a new challenge. Danish Biscuits, known for its delicious butter cookies enjoyed both in Denmark and internationally, operates its main production facility in the small town of Grindsted, home to 10,000 residents in southern Jutland.

Recently, Peter received a call from the local job center with a proposal: hiring a new employee under the flexjob program. This program is designed for individuals with reduced work capacity, where employers only pay for the 'effective' work hours. Peter, having no prior experience with flexjobs, is curious but cautious.

The job center employee suggests hiring Karen for 10 hours a week as a secretary. Karen, a former production line worker at Danish Biscuits, had to leave her job two years ago after a severe back injury. Peter remembers Karen fondly as a diligent worker and a great colleague. After a year of recovery, Karen was unfortunately let go due to her prolonged absence.

Now, the job center suggests that Karen could assist in the reception area. Although she has no prior experience in this role, she would be provided with a height-adjustable table and allowed extra breaks throughout the day. The job center estimates Karen's work efficiency at 75% of a typical employee, meaning Peter would only need to pay for 7.5 hours of work per week, despite Karen being employed for 10 hours.

Peter acknowledges the need for extra help in the reception but worries about the potential reluctance of his current reception staff to invest time in training and supervising Karen.

Discussion Questions

- Consider the pros and cons of hiring Karen
- Consider how to address the concerns of the colleagues in the reception

7.1 Overcoming Reluctance in Hiring Jobseekers with Disabilities

Managers often hesitate to hire jobseekers with disabilities due to various perceptions: they might be seen as less productive, difficult to dismiss, or requiring too many special accommodations (Nagtegaal et al., 2023). While some of these concerns may hold true in certain cases, they largely stem from stereotypes and a lack of accurate information about individuals with disabilities.

Research on 'ableism' in the labor market reveals that managers often hold subtle norms and standards about 'ideal workers' and 'normal jobs' that inadvertently discriminate against people with disabilities (Campbell, 2009). Jobseekers with disabilities frequently do not align with these conventional assumptions of 'ideal workers,' leading to their exclusion during the recruitment process. Even when they secure employment, they are often compared to 'ordinary employees' and may feel compelled to overcompensate—by working longer hours or concealing their disabilities—to meet the elusive standard of the 'ideal worker.' Additionally, employees with disabilities are more likely to be found in lower-quality jobs compared to their non-disabled counterparts. This mismatch between labor supply and demand is a direct consequence of ableist ideas about jobs and employees (Bredgaard et al., 2024).

One effective strategy to combat ableism is through thoughtful job and work design. The job design literature has been pivotal in exploring how jobs and work can be tailored to fit individuals, thereby enhancing internal motivation and productivity (Hackman & Oldham, 1980). By customizing jobs to suit individual employees, we can better accommodate the functional limitations of workers with disabilities, fostering a more inclusive and productive workplace.

7.2 Job Design Theory and the Job Characteristics Model

The concept of job design has evolved significantly since its inception. Initially, it was a method to boost industrial productivity, championed by Frederick Taylor in the early twentieth century. Taylor's scientific management movement emphasized the design of entire work systems with standardization and job simplification, imposed from the top-down to maximize

efficiency. However, this rigid approach often stifled job motivation and engagement.

In response, management and organization scholars sought alternative methods. Among the pioneers were Hackman and Oldham (1976, 1980), who proposed a pivotal idea: instead of simplifying jobs, they should be enriched to enhance internal motivation and job performance. They developed the Job Characteristics Model, which identifies five core job characteristics that drive high motivation and productivity:

1. **Skill Variety**: The degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities and skills.
2. **Task Identity**: The extent to which a job involves completing a whole, identifiable piece of work.
3. **Task Significance**: The impact a job has on the lives or work of other people.
4. **Autonomy**: The level of independence and discretion in scheduling work and determining procedures.
5. **Feedback**: The amount of direct and clear information about job performance.

By focusing on these characteristics, jobs can be designed to be more engaging and fulfilling, leading to higher motivation and productivity among employees (see Fig. 7.1).

The Job Characteristics Model has a rich history, initially tested and validated through a study involving employees across various roles in seven American business organizations. Since its inception, it has become one of the most debated and extensively tested models in organizational science (for

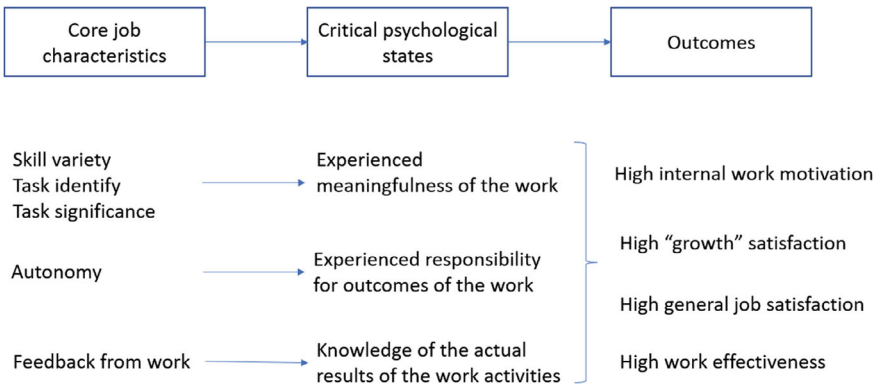

Fig. 7.1 The Job characteristics model

a review, see Oldham & Fried, 2016). This model serves as a powerful tool for analyzing existing jobs to identify opportunities for redesign, aiming to boost employee motivation and productivity. It also helps evaluate the impact of job changes on employees.

However, the job design theory has faced criticism for being overly managerial and top-down, often overlooking the crucial role of employees in shaping their own work experiences (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). To address this, it is essential to recognize how employees can customize their work to align with their needs, values, skills, and abilities. Involving employees in the design process can lead to more meaningful and satisfying job experiences.

This concept, known as job crafting, involves changes initiated by employees from the bottom-up to make their jobs more engaging and fulfilling (Demerouti, 2014). By empowering employees to take an active role in shaping their work, organizations can foster a more motivated and productive workforce.

7.3 Supported Employment and Job Design

Designing jobs to accommodate the functional limitations of employees with disabilities is a well-established concept in the field of disability and employment. This approach is prominently featured in the literature on supported employment, individual placement and support, and customized employment (see also Chapter 5).

Supported Employment (SE) emerged in the USA and Canada during the 1970s and 1980s, aiming to help individuals with developmental disabilities secure competitive employment rather than being confined to sheltered workshops (Wehman, 2012). A key component of SE is job design and adaptation, ensuring that jobs are suitable for people with disabilities.

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is a variant of SE that also incorporates job design principles to help people with disabilities find competitive employment. Numerous studies have shown that IPS is effective in promoting employment for individuals with psychiatric diagnoses (Bond et al., 2023), and it has also been applied to other types of disabilities. The IPS approach emphasizes 'place then train' rather than 'train then place,' offering rapid job assistance, integration of rehabilitation and mental health services, job development, job coaching, and individualized follow-up services (Marshall et al., 2014).

Customized Employment (CE), challenges the notion of fitting individuals with disabilities into existing stereotypical jobs. Instead, it focuses on creating job matches by identifying and customizing specific job duties to fit individual capacities and abilities through negotiations with employers (Griffin et al., 2008).

Each of these SE approaches utilizes job design to analyze work duties and identify tasks that can be assigned to employees with disabilities. In the following section, we will explore a specific case of successful job design.

7.4 The Danish Flexjob Program: A Model of Inclusive Job Design

To illustrate how jobs can be tailored to accommodate the functional capacities and limitations of employees with disabilities, let us explore a concrete example: the Danish flexjob program. This program shares core values and principles with Supported Employment (SE) and Individual Placement and Support (IPS).

1. **Presumption of Employment**: Everyone, regardless of their level or type of disability, has the capacity and right to a job.
2. **Objective of Competitive Employment**: Jobs should exist in the local labor market within regular workplaces.
3. **Principle of Commensurate Wages and Benefits**: People with disabilities should earn wages and benefits equal to those of coworkers performing the same or similar jobs.
4. **Focus on Capacity and Capabilities**: Emphasize the abilities, strengths, and interests of people with disabilities rather than their limitations.
5. **Commitment to Long-Term Support**: Provide ongoing support services to help employees with disabilities achieve sustainable employment (Wehman, 2012).

The flexjob program is a Danish employment scheme designed to integrate individuals with significant work limitations into the labor market by adapting their work hours and job functions. Currently, four percent of the Danish workforce, amounting to 100,000 people, are employed in flexjobs. This makes it the largest active employment program in Denmark and the most crucial for integrating people with disabilities into the workforce.

Introduced in 1998, the flexjob program aimed to prevent in disability pensions by offering flexible employment opportunities to individuals with

Table 7.1 Regulation and design of flexjobs

Target group	Individuals with *permanent and major reductions in their work ability* who cannot obtain or retain competitive employment on 'normal' conditions in the labor market
Criteria for access	When all other *relevant active measures* have been exhausted or the individual has been employed following the *social chapters* of the collective agreement for at least 12 months. The municipal jobcenters are responsible for assessing eligibility and administering the flexjob program
Determination of wages	The employer only pays for 'effective' work hours. The work efficiency of the individual in the job is evaluated by comparing to the work efficiency of a (fictive) 'normal' worker in an identical job
Income	The flexjob employee is paid for 'effective' work hours by the employer and receives a wage subsidy from the municipality for the remaining work hours. The subsidy is reduced with increasing wages
Duration	Temporary (reassessment of eligibility every fifth year)

major and permanent reductions in work ability, such as those with work injuries or disabilities.

The flexjob program exemplifies job design in action (see Table 7.1). It targets individuals with reduced work capacity who cannot secure or retain jobs under 'ordinary' competitive terms. This means that jobs must be tailored to accommodate the functional impairments of each individual through negotiations between the employer and the public employment service. Employers pay only for the effective work hours, with the public employment service compensating for the remaining hours.

Employees in flexjobs perform 'ordinary' work. In contrast to other employment programs, flexjobs are of longer duration (up to 5 years with the possibility of extension for people under 40 years and for making it permanent for people over 40 years). This means that employees in flexjobs are formally included in the workplaces and treated like other employees.

7.5 Results from Testing the Job Design Model

We tested the job design model using the Danish flexjob program as a case study (Bredgaard & Krogh, forthcoming). Our survey compared the job design experiences of employees in flexjobs with those in 'ordinary' jobs. The results revealed that employees in flexjobs often experience lower levels of skill variety, task identity, task significance, and autonomy. They also face fewer opportunities for promotion, professional development, and learning. These

findings highlight the need to enhance growth opportunities within flexjobs to ensure equality in job opportunities compared to ordinary employees.

Despite these challenges, employees in flexjobs report the same high levels of meaningfulness and responsibility as their counterparts in ordinary jobs. Their job satisfaction and motivation are equally high. This could be attributed to the profound sense of purpose they derive from simply having a job, especially after being out of the labor market for several years. For many, the opportunity to work in a flexjob is a significant and valued achievement (Bredgaard & Krogh, forthcoming).

In practice, employees in flexjobs often occupy 'support jobs,' performing tasks that are not central to the core functions of the workplace and require fewer skills and qualifications (Bredgaard & Holt, forthcoming). This distinction between recruitment and workplace inclusion is further illustrated in the following case study from the beginning of the chapter.

Case Study: To Be Recruited and To Be Included!

Peter decided to hire Karen for a flexjob in the reception, working 10 hours a week. Karen was thrilled to have a job and to return to her former workplace. However, the new role was challenging. Karen had no prior experience working in a reception, and while her colleagues did their best to train and supervise her, they were often very busy.

Over time, Karen noticed that she was frequently assigned the simplest and most mundane tasks, such as sending invoices. Working only two days a week, she also missed out on the workplace's social activities, like parties and anniversaries, and did not participate in vocational training. Although Karen was happy to have a job, she longed for more variety in her tasks and more significant assignments. Her job motivation began to wane, and she shared her concerns with Peter during a personal meeting.

Discussion Question

- Consider how you would address the concerns that Karen raised

Karen's case highlights the crucial difference between recruitment and inclusion. While recruitment can be driven by mandates and legislation, such as anti-discrimination laws and quota schemes, true workplace inclusion is rooted in voluntary actions and inclusive work practices (Shore et al., 2018).

This case demonstrates that designing inclusive jobs for individuals with disabilities is not only possible but also essential. Some workplaces have the resources and capabilities to create these roles independently, while others

may require external assistance and potentially economic subsidies from rehabilitation and employment service providers (see Chapter 10).

7.6 Summary

Inclusive jobs can be tailored to accommodate an increasingly diverse workforce, including people with disabilities, by challenging and reflecting upon implicit notions of 'ideal workers' and 'normal jobs.' There is a wealth of literature on job design, job carving, and supported employment that offers valuable insights and inspiration.

Concrete examples, such as the Danish flexjob program, demonstrate how jobs can be effectively designed by adjusting work hours, work intensity, and wages for employees with significant reductions in their work ability. These adjustments not only make the workplace more inclusive but also ensure that everyone has the opportunity to contribute meaningfully.

Group Task: Lessons from the Danish Flexjob Program

Discuss how the Danish flexjob program could serve as a model for promoting the recruitment and workplace inclusion of people with disabilities in your context. Consider the following questions:

- **Feasibility**: Could the flexjob approach be effectively implemented in your organization or country? What adjustments might be necessary to fit your specific context?
- **Institutional and Legislative Contexts**: Are there existing laws or workplace policies in your country that would support or hinder the adoption of a flexjob program? How do these compare to the Danish framework?
- **Potential Barriers and Solutions**: Identify any potential obstacles to implementing a similar program and brainstorm possible solutions. What resources or support would be needed to overcome these challenges?

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8

Co-Worker Support and Resistance

Kjetil Frøyland

Abstract This chapter draws from the argument that work inclusion requires not only employer engagement (the active role of the employer), but also co-worker involvement in the inclusion efforts. The chapter provides practical and organizational insights on engaging co-workers to contribute positively to workplace inclusion, and explores the challenges associated with lack of employee engagement, such as resistance among co-workers.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the benefits and challenges of natural support and employee engagement.
- Understand different approaches from leaders, management, HR and unions to prevent and deal with employee's resistance
- Identify and apply approaches to involve co-workers constructively in workplace inclusion.

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Case Study
A 19-year-old apprentice has joined a team at a tech company. Despite facing certain social and learning challenges, the young man embarks on a typical apprenticeship journey. Recruited from a local high school, the company has committed to providing him with additional support through a mentor selected from his team. His task is to work cohesively with a team of eight employees and, eventually, earn his trade certificate.

However, over time, the HR department notices an increasing frequency of absences. Team members express dissatisfaction, and their initial enthusiasm to support the apprentice seems to be waning. The young man's performance is subpar, his absences become more commonplace, and the mentorship requires significant effort from his colleagues. The task of assisting him with his work and social responsibilities is proving challenging. Discontent and negativity appear to be spreading among his colleagues, replacing their initial interest, helpfulness and positivity. The team is considering terminating the apprenticeship. A situation that began with optimism and support has evolved into resistance and unwillingness.

Discussion Questions

- What do you think could be the reasons for the young man's decreasing presence and performance?
- How would you approach investigating the underlying issues associated with this situation?
- How could resistance be transformed into support in a case like this?

8.1 What Does the Research Literature Tell Us?

In this chapter we highlight the significance of co-workers' involvement in work inclusion efforts. We argue that the middle managers' and co-workers' reactions to employment of disadvantaged citizens could be of vital importance for the outcome of the inclusion process. The background is our empirical experiences when examining workplace dynamics of employer engagement. While senior managers (owners) of many companies typically were engaged, we experienced a noticeable lack of engagement among some middle managers and co-workers. The middle managers' and co-workers' reactions to employment of PwDs occurred in different faces/expressions, for instance as frustration related to lack of work speed or competence in the PwD higher workload for the co-workers, or difficulties related to team performance.

We coin these reactions broadly as resistance. The concept of resistance has a central and longstanding role in studies of workplaces, management and organizational change. Resistance is a multidimensional construct that comprises cognitive, affective and behavioral components. It can be active or passive, overt or covert, or individual or collective (Mikel-Hong et al., 2023). Resistance can be dysfunctional, but it can also be constructive. In fact, resistance can result from engagement in an issue (Ford et al., 2008). Some scholars view resistance as employee sensemaking—or lack of such—resulting from broken agreements, lack of trust, or poor communication by management. Scholars seem to agree that resistance exists in a dialectical relationship between managers and their subordinates (Frøyland et al., 2025). Resistance can also emerge in relations to other workers—for example older workers or sexual minorities. Some studies speak of "lack of workplace support" or "unwillingness" among the colleges to assist. For instance, examining return to work for persons with traumatic brain injury, Spjelkavik et al. (2022) found that over time, the social relations are wore down by the challenges related to traumatic brain injury, leading to decrease in supportive management and support from co-workers.

Several literature reviews have highlighted the HRM challenges for organizations related to employment of vulnerable groups, as well as conditions for successful employment. Relevant for the facilitation of willingness to support inclusion processes and to reduce workplace resistance are findings of studies on the role of HR managers in developing workplace support to co-workers through local HRM-practices. A recent review found support for the facilitation of disability inclusiveness training for PWDs' colleagues and supervisors "aiming to ameliorate PWDs' workplace inclusion and treatment" (Schloemer-Jarvis et al., 2022, p. 82). A different review argue for the development of a supportive cultures in the companies through practices such as inclusion in social opportunities, support in socialization, management support, co-worker support and disability awareness training (Kersten et al., 2023). Examples of practices are co-worker help, buddy systems, peer modeling, diversity champions and employee resource groups. Furthermore, Enehaug et al. (2022) suggested that a participatory oriented management approach might be preferable in work inclusion efforts since both the physical work organization, management orientation and psychosocial work environment may affect autonomy, social support, stress and opportunities.

Concepts such as «natural supports» and «inclusive citizenship behaviors» are referred to in other studies. Natural support—a concept drawn from the literature on work inclusion (Frøyland & Kvåle, 2014)—often refers to potential support provided by co-workers and managers already working in

the company and that can be activated if called upon in an appropriate way. For example, Enehaug and Spjelkavik (2022) posit that designating a co-worker as a dedicated mentor can stimulate broader engagement and natural support in work inclusion initiatives within the workplace (see also Chapter 5).

Seen from an organizational perspective inclusive actions and support can be understood as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB). OCB is described as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization"(Podsakoff et al., 2009). Examples are “civic virtue”, indicating that employees take an active interest in the life of their organization, and “conscientiousness” (compliance) understood as behavior indicating that employees accept and adhere to the rules, regulations and procedures of the organization. As such, the mechanisms of OCB can contribute to the implementation of policies of inclusion initiated by the management. Of particular relevance for work inclusion of PWDs are qualities among co-workers that represent supportive dimensions. Examples referred to by Podsakoff et al. are altruism, courtesy, peacekeeping, cheerleading and sportsmanship, the latter referring to the willingness on the part of employees to tolerate less than ideal circumstances without complaining and making problems seem bigger than they actually are. Natural support and OCB, thus, may both be seen as concepts that go beyond merely «employer» engagement and HRM by engaging also co-workers and middle managers in the inclusion efforts. These concepts represent attempts to establish within work organizations an inclusive climate such as described by for instance Ashikali et al. (2020).

8.2 Practical and Organizational Experiences

In this chapter we present examples from four types of workplaces in Norway: two grocery stores, a bakery, a public nursing home, and a large technology company (Frøyland et al., 2025). See Table 8.1 for details about the companies.

The grocery stores were small-scale operations with 10–15 employees that demonstrated a high level of collaboration and rotation among various tasks. Both customer-facing and behind-the-scenes roles were shared among employees, including leaders, fostering an environment conducive to on-site training and internal career progression without the need for formal education. The bakery, employing around 200 individuals, had for many

Table 8.1 Overview about the companies

Company	Employees	Inclusion history	Aim of inclusion	Vital source of resistance	Major approaches to meet resistance
Grocery store(s)	10–15 at relevant units	Many PwDs recruited from PES and other services	Include PwDs + regular recruitment	Slow workers	Including managers Close follow up on work tasks
Bakery	230 in total - 30 at relevant unit	Recruited PwDs the last 20 years	Include PwDs + regular recruitment	Too many, too slow, extra burden on others	Attentive and listening managers Frustration outlet
Nursing home	180 in total - 20 at relevant unit	Long tradition of recruiting capable candidates from PES	Regular recruitment	Poor recruitments, low competence level	Support and facilitation in working teams
Technology company	480 - but small units and teams	Trad of recruiting qualified workers, lately also from PES	Train unskilled unemployed to develop qualified workforce	Task adjustments, extra burden on co-workers	In-house mentors Attentive union representatives

years included persons facing various challenges in its baking unit of 30 employees. In this smaller unit, there was ample opportunity for interaction and dialogue. The manager played a pivotal role in integrating PWDs into the workforce, gradually delegating the responsibility to department co-workers. The bakery embraced a diverse range of tasks, some requiring formal competencies while others were more straightforward.

The public nursing home, employing approximately 140 regular and 50 transient staff across multiple departments, offered standardized roles with defined jobs and routines. The technology company, a large and expanding firm, required formal education for employment. To meet recruitment needs beyond the local labor pool, the company partnered with local employment services to target unemployed individuals, offering assistance from house-internal mentors in completing upper secondary education and apprenticeships.

8.2.1 Reducing Potential Resistance Through Active Facilitation of Inclusive Work Environments

Managers in most of these companies took on active roles in order to facilitate an inclusive work environment (climate) and reduce potential resistance among co-workers (see Chapter 4). A quality—in particular in the smaller companies—was that the managers were experienced as including, sharing and friendly persons that were building an inclusive work environment by allowing people «to be themselves» at work:

> *the thing about [manager*] is that he is so inclusive, he contributes everything in the store, he doesn't just sit in the office and look at the numbers, he gives of himself and he works in the store. He follows up on each individual and includes himself in what we do with our employees. (PWD)*

The managers could carry out much of the initial training and follow up of the PWDs, working "shoulder by shoulder" with them the first days and then gradually leaving the follow up to co-workers. Some managers also involved co-workers in the recruitment process:

> *When that person starts to become ready enough that they can help with fruit or fresh produce …. just so that what I see is correct, then I involve the others a little both in the feedback and also in the hiring, then.... because it is important for those who have so much responsibility to take part in it... I often get honest feedback from them … (Manager)*

In these companies, it was experienced as important to bring on board the co-workers in the inclusion efforts. One manager said that he could not have included so many persons without support and active contributions from the employees, addressing the role of the collective in workplace inclusion:

> *This isn't a solo game, it isn't. You have to….it's the whole gang. But someone has to take the lead and get them motivated and say the right things so that everyone is on board, I think. Because many people have been out of work for so long that I think they …. don't have motivation, they don't want to go to work. And then you have to sort of light a spark in them, so that they see a point and they want to go to work. And they have to meet people they trust, eventually. And with whom they enjoy working together. (Manager)*

The co-workers seemed to contribute to shaping such an inclusive work environment and a supportive climate in different ways. In two of the companies,

quite many employees had been recruited from vulnerable groups and therefore had quite similar backgrounds as the PWDs. This seemed to contribute to a kind of acceptance among the co-workers for challenges that might occur:

> *I've been there myself, and I probably know how they feel, don't I. Then I want to make sure that they feel included and are well received, then... but I don't know if it might help, that everyone sort of has a story, then, that it helps that we understand each other without talking about it…(PWD)*

As such, co-workers with similar experience and background as the PWDs might help create an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance that probably can contribute to psychological safety and recognition at the workplace. Examples such as this seem to suggest that taking advantage of the experiences of co-workers with similar background may be a good idea to facilitate a climate for inclusion.

In some companies, resistance towards the inclusion seemed to occur among co-workers due to increased workload caused by the support needs of the PWDs. In order to deal with such resistance some of the leaders in these workplaces were in frequent dialogue with their employees about frustrations and challenges that might occur. Motivation of the employees through «talking it out» seemed important to bring the employees in as partners on inclusion.

> *When they come to me and say that "now, now it's a lot" … then I have to try to explain my view, what I think. That this is good for us, and it is good for them, and we need people to work here. And if we then manage to integrate these with special needs, then we will get very loyal workers....it's so important to get them involved in this process and the mindset you have even then. If you don't do that, you will never succeed. (Manager)*

In some of the companies a need to limit the total amount of PwDs recruited was mentioned as important in order not to create too much of a burden on the already employed. While the manager—in particular in the smaller cases—seemed to play an important role in the «onboarding» processes of PwDs in order to avoid challenges and resistance, a vital means for inclusion in the larger companies were adjustments of workload and tasks within the working teams as a unit. Here the manager seemed to be more distant. Within the team—the collective—tasks could be shared and changed according to the capacity of its members on that particular day.

A different approach to dealing with daily need for adaptations and support was the use of internal mentors for training of new employees (see also Chapter 3 (HRM for workplace inclusion) and Chapter 5 (Mentor support)). In such cases, the PwD worked together with their mentors. In taking the responsibility for much of the ongoing follow up and support, the involvement of mentors as trainers and facilitators was a vital component to avoid resistance and facilitate inclusion among other co-workers.

8.2.2 Dealing with Resistance and Unwillingness to Include

One way of dealing with attitudes among the already employed towards PwDs recruited from the PES was to make clear for the co-workers that the company had difficulties to recruit enough workers. Recruiting from the PES and then supporting the candidates to qualify formally therefore was a possible solution to the challenge. An important issue was thus to break with existing stereotypes that persons from PES were less able workforce. This was partly reached through experience that persons from PES could be able to work:

> *Even though they come from the PES, they can still be competent people, they may just have fallen «between chairs». So, the two we got that time were completely competent people. So, when they warmed up a bit, they delivered. (Middle manager)*

A different strategy observed in one of the companies was simply to overlook the resistance in co-workers and middle managers meaning not to give the resistance too much attention:

> *There is always someone who will complain about something. That's how it is. But things sort themselves out over time..(..)…At times, there may be quite a few people with special needs entering the company. And then you occasionally get a bit of whining and complaining. And then the art is to overlook it. And then things work out, and then you just have a dialogue with them, so you sort of talk it out eventually. (Manager)*

The strategy of "overlooking the resistance" was combined with opportunities to share and discuss with manager and the HR department the challenges and frustrations that occurred.

One of the companies had a small administrative department (HR) that seemed to moderate and deal with the frustrations among employees related

to the recruitment of PWDs. It was rather common, a HR manager said, that «regular» employees came to her office to share their frustrations related to some of the "included" persons: «It is easier for the employees to come to me, than to come to the managers who own the company. That is the experience I am left with in a way.»

While union representatives rarely play key roles in inclusion of vulnerable unemployed citizens, a different kind of role was observed in one of these companies. Here the union representative had a high commitment to inclusion of vulnerable populations. He took on the role to help different teams and parts of the organization to understand their potential to function as including units and contribute to support local PwDs to qualify for job. Preventing and dealing with resistance to inclusion was a vital part of his focus:

> *It started a bit badly, and they were actually on their way up to cancel it. Then I had a cup of coffee with them and explained what his challenges were and what I expected them to do. Then I explained to them what the alternative was if it didn't work out for him, because then he would have to leave this company here and most likely not get another job in this life. Then they realized the seriousness and settled down that it would be successful for all parties. (...) (Union representative)*

According to the union representative, the experience was that once a team—a collective—decided to support a local candidate to apprenticeship, their follow up and supportive attitudes and actions were important for the candidate:

> *If you are going to include someone who has some kind of challenge and you then include those around, so that they, in a way, own a bit of the problem themselves, then my experience is that then people are willing to go to great lengths to succeed. (Union representative)*

Being honest and open about the challenges and possible consequences seemed in this case to be one of the strategies of the union representative to turn resistance into support (see Chapter 9). This is also a nice example of mutual gains of the PWD, the organization and trade union representatives in terms of balancing employee well-being, societal well-being and organizational effectiveness.

8.3 Summary

The experiences described above indicate that while the employer in a work organization may be highly engaged in inclusion of vulnerable groups and may be the prime mover behind the inclusion policy, the contributions of the middle managers and co-workers are of grave importance. They are the ones that on the daily basis are assigned the task of inclusion and follow up at the workplace (Frøyland et al., 2025). A major lesson learned is that work inclusion initiatives are not "solo work", a supportive culture matters (Kersten et al., 2023). Our observations suggest that the actions and attitudes of co-workers is vital for the establishment of an inclusive climate at the workplace.

To bring on board the co-workers in the inclusion work, several of the managers in our cases adopted a participatory oriented approach (Enehaug et al., 2022), for example by involving co-workers in the hiring process or engaging the working team as supportive collective. Our examples also indicate that it may be helpful to create opportunities for outlet of frustrations from co-workers within the company. This may be facilitated by HR, through an active leader-employee dialogue or simply by willingness of the manager to pay attention to the concerns of the co-workers. Several supportive actions from co-workers seems to have much in common with OCB-qualities referred to in the introduction. We view such actions as a kind of natural support (Frøyland & Kvåle, 2014). Our examples show that the natural support sometimes is activated through actions of HR representatives, union representatives or managers, or other times through the way the work is organized in teams or through mentorship (Enehaug & Spjelkavik, 2022).

The examples indicate that companies try to facilitate co-worker engagement and a climate for inclusion through different strategies in which both managers, working teams, mentors, HR and union representatives take part (learn also about the role of external agencies in Chapter 10). While some strategies were directed towards the PWDs, such as providing close individual follow up or efforts to define the potential of the included PWDs, others were directed towards the broader work environment, such as staying in close dialogue to explain the reasons for including and to motivate them to participate in fostering inclusive working climates and environments.

Individual Task

Consider the various roles, positions and individuals within a workplace you're familiar with, such as colleagues, HR representatives, union representatives, middle or senior managers:

- What roles can each of these individuals play in the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) within this workplace?
- Who might be potential advocates for inclusion? Who might oppose it?
- Who can actively contribute to natural support?
- If you were tasked with facilitating an inclusion process in this company, who would you collaborate with? How would you approach them?

Group Task

The chapter illustrates how initial support among colleagues for the inclusion of PwDs in the workplace can transform into resistance as job-related difficulties and challenges increase over time. However, it also demonstrates that it is possible to convert such resistance into crucial support.

- Discuss the potential benefits and challenges associated with facilitating ongoing natural support among colleagues in a workplace.
- How can such support be facilitated, and how can it be sustained within the workplace over time?
- How can managers address accusations or experiences of unfairness among co-workers?

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Further Reading Suggestions

Read more about how to understand the workplace as an arena of inclusion of PwDs in Frøyland, Kjetil ; Nordberg, Tanja Haraldsdottir (2024). Wadel's concept of 'incorporation': A means of improving sustainable work inclusion?. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, *2025*. https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.147

9

Trade Unions and Union Representatives

Tone Lindheim

Abstract Trade unions (TUs) play a vital role in the labor market, serving as civil society advocates for workers' rights and employment conditions. While TUs primarily represent employed individuals ("insiders") rather than those seeking employment, their focus on workplace conditions can also benefit marginalized groups ("outsiders"), such as ethnic minorities and people with disabilities (PWDs), who often face disadvantages at work. Research indicates that unionized workplaces are more likely to adopt progressive Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies. At the workplace level, union representatives (URs) provide support to employees in various ways, particularly in three key areas: recruitment, employment conditions, and handling of conflicts. The level of engagement by URs depends significantly on their connection with the central TU structure and the training they receive for their role. This highlights the interconnected nature of TUs' influence at the national level and the actions of URs in day-to-day operations. As a manager, you can take a proactive approach by fostering a collaborative relationship with URs. Doing so can help create a more inclusive workplace.

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Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the roles and responsibilities of union representatives in the workplace, including their involvement in recruitment processes, employment conditions, and handling conflicts.
- Be able to identify scenarios and processes where union representatives can actively contribute to fostering diversity and inclusion in the workplace.
- Be able to develop strategies for constructive collaboration with union representatives as a manager.

Case Study

Andrew, a healthcare worker originally from Ghana, has been the union representative (UR) at Willowbrook Nursing Home in Oslo, Norway, for the past eight years. Encouraged by a former colleague to take on the role, Andrew balances his union responsibilities with his regular job as a healthcare worker. Being a UR is not a full-time position, and Andrew is able to manage his union tasks during his work hours.

To Andrew, being a UR means being available to support employees, offering knowledge about their rights and workplace conditions. He views his role as critical in fostering collaboration between management and employees. In recruitment, Andrew is actively involved in interviews, even for candidates who are not union members. His presence ensures that management considers union perspectives, and he places particular importance on selecting managers who understand the value of cooperating with unions. Andrew describes his role as being a "buffer" between employees and management, working to legitimize decisions on both sides when appropriate.

One of Andrew's most notable achievements as a UR has been his advocacy for care assistants, many of whom are immigrants or refugees with limited formal education. These care assistants face significant challenges in securing stable work and advancing their careers. To qualify as authorized healthcare workers in Norway, they must accumulate 8000 hours of work experience, equivalent to five years of full-time employment, and pass theoretical and practical exams. This requirement is daunting, especially for those without permanent positions, as they often have to combine shifts across different nursing homes to reach the required hours while also striving to maintain a steady income.

Having personally navigated this difficult path to healthcare worker authorization, Andrew deeply understood the barriers faced by the care assistants. Recognizing the mutual benefits of stable employment, he approached Willowbrook's management with a proposal. He argued that offering permanent positions to care assistants would not only provide them with a more secure income but would also enable them to focus on gaining the experience and qualifications necessary to become authorized healthcare workers. For Willowbrook, this would mean a more stable, dedicated, and skilled workforce, ultimately improving the quality of care for residents.

Through persistent advocacy and negotiation, Andrew successfully convinced Willowbrook's director to implement this change. Over the past two years, four care assistants, all immigrants, have completed the required hours and exams, earning their authorization as healthcare workers. This has led to higher salaries, greater job security, and increased confidence for the care assistants. For Willowbrook, the benefits have been equally significant, with the nursing home gaining a group of formally qualified and highly motivated employees who bring both expertise and loyalty to their roles.

Andrew's work highlights the essential role of a union representative in driving change that benefits both employees and employers. By bridging the gap between management and workers, Andrew has demonstrated how unions can support diversity and inclusion in the workplace while creating tangible outcomes for marginalized groups, such as ethnic minorities. His story serves as an example, also for PWDs, of how union representatives can make a lasting impact on individuals' lives and the broader workplace environment.

Discussion Questions

- How does Andrew, in his role as a union representative, contribute to promoting inclusive workplaces for ethnic minority workers?
- In what ways can trade unions effectively support and address the specific needs of immigrants and ethnic minorities?
- What lessons can be learned for other vulnerable employee groups, such as PWDs?

9.1 Introduction

Trade unions (TUs) are a key element of work life and civil society in many countries. As a central social partner, they play a significant role in the labor market, particularly in collective bargaining with employers to establish fair

employment conditions. TUs advocate for employees' rights and foster solidarity among workers. At the workplace level, TUs operate through local URs, who assist and advocate for members in negotiations with employers. A key counterpart for URs is typically the organization's HR department.

Beer and colleagues (2015) have emphasized the need for businesses to expand their focus beyond economic outcomes to include societal well-being. Supporting an inclusive labor market aligns with this broader vision. In their multistakeholder model of human resource management (HRM) , TUs are seen as both stakeholders and situational factors that influence HRM practices to foster inclusivity (see Chapter 3 by Boselie, Van Harten & Van Os in this textbook).

This chapter delves into the role of TUs in advancing inclusive workplaces. While research on the relationship between TUs and persons with disabilities (PWDs) is limited, the chapter uses immigrants and ethnic minorities as an example of vulnerable groups in the labor market. It starts by outlining the characteristics of TUs, then explores their functions at both the national level and the shop floor. Drawing on existing literature and a recent empirical study, the chapter examines how TUs and URs contribute to workplace diversity and inclusion. The empirical study involved interviews with URs, managers, and employees from minority backgrounds working in health and welfare sectors, including nursing homes, child welfare, and kindergartens. The lessons learned are valuable for other vulnerable employee groups such as PWDs.

9.2 Trade Unions and Union Representatives

TUs are membership-based organizations that represent and organize employees, often rallying around collective interests like better wages, improved working conditions, and job security. Some TUs focus on specific professions, such as nurses or teachers, while others are broader in scope. However, this collective focus can sometimes hinder advocacy for the unique needs of minority groups, including PWDs and ethnic minorities. Lindbeck and Snower (2001) describe TUs as representing "insiders"—workers established in the labor market—versus "outsiders," who struggle to gain entry. Historically, TUs resisted the inclusion of women in the workforce but later championed gender equality. Similarly, TUs are now increasingly addressing diversity and inclusion, offering training programs to raise awareness and engagement on these issues.

The role of TUs differs at the national and shop floor levels. At the national level, TUs advocate for policy changes, while at the shop floor, URs address practical, day-to-day issues. URs' effectiveness can depend on their training, which varies widely, influencing their ability to address workplace challenges and foster inclusion.

Union density—the percentage of workers who are union members—varies across countries and sectors, with a general decline observed globally (see Table 9.1). Scandinavian countries, however, maintain high unionization rates, with Norway at 50%, according to Kristine Nergaard (2024). Union membership is particularly high in the public sector (80%), compared to the private sector (38%). This trend likely affects minority groups differently: PWDs, often employed in the public sector, are more unionized, while immigrants, overrepresented in the private sector, have lower unionization rates.

Scandinavian TUs emphasize consensus-based approaches to collaboration with employers, contrasting with more adversarial models found in other parts of Europe and the United States. This cooperative strategy fosters smoother relations between employers and unions. As illustrated in the

Table 9.1 Trade union density in selected countries

Country	Union density 2018 (%)
Australia	13,7
Belgium	51,9
Denmark	66,5
Finland	60,3
France	8,8
Germany	16,5
Iceland	91,8
Italy	34,4
Netherlands	16,4
Norway	49,2
Spain	13,6
Sweden	65,6
UK	23,4
USA	10,1

Source OECD Data Explorer

Table showing trade union density as a percentage of the workforce in selected countries in 2018. Iceland has the highest union density at 91.8%, followed by Denmark (66.5%) and Sweden (65.6%). France has the lowest density at 8.8%, with the USA (10.1%) and Spain (13.6%) also having low percentages. Countries like Norway (49.2%) and Belgium (51.9%) show moderate levels of union density. The data highlights significant variation in union membership across countries.

case study, Andrew exemplifies this by serving as a mediator who provides legitimacy to both management and employees, depending on the situation.

9.3 Trade Unions in the National Labor Market Context

What role can TUs play in promoting inclusive workplaces within the national labor market context? Research indicates that regulated labor markets provide better opportunities and protections for marginalized groups, and TUs are central to this regulatory framework (Kalleberg, 2018; Kretsos & Livanos, 2016). Through their role in the Working Environment Act and collective agreements, TUs ensure accountability, acting as civil society watchdogs for employer policies. While many employers favor internal policies or self-regulation over external regulations, TUs pressure organizations to implement and uphold policies on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Research by Gill Kirton and Anne-Marie Greene (2021) suggests that unionized workplaces are more likely to have progressive DEI policies compared to non-unionized ones.

TUs' centralized structure allows them to mobilize resources and collaborate with other minority-focused stakeholders to address specific concerns. For instance, a UK-based TU organized a campaign on neurodiversity and inclusion (Richards & Sang, 2016), shifting these issues from an individual to a collective level.

Additionally, TUs provide training and development programs. These often target URs, focusing on collective bargaining, but also issues like racism and discrimination. For members with minority backgrounds, TUs offer tailored resources such as language courses for immigrants, as provided by Norway's nurses' union. They also engage managers, offering webinars on diversity management and inclusion.

Symbolically and publicly, TUs express solidarity with minority groups through online platforms, advertisements, and participation in events like Pride festivals. Members often view this solidarity as a key reason for joining, feeling supported by their union's commitment to inclusion and equity. This way TUs can operate as moderators of shop floor processes (for example in recruitment and selection), experts (through their training and development) and ambassadors of societal and employee well-being.

9.4 Union Representatives at the Workplace

Many workplaces in Norway have a local union representative (UR). While exact figures are unavailable, a Google search estimates there are approximately 100,000 URs across various trade unions, highlighting how common this role is. In a study of URs from ethnic minority backgrounds, Inger Marie Hagen and Ragnhild Steen Jensen (2019) found that most URs took on the role at the request of a colleague, similar to Andrew's experience in the case study. Others stepped into the role because no one else was willing. Some individuals actively pursued the position out of a desire to represent their colleagues, viewing it as a civic duty and a way to contribute meaningfully to the workplace.

What responsibilities do URs typically undertake at the local level? In the aforementioned study, three primary areas of engagement emerged: involvement in recruitment processes, advocacy for employees' employment conditions, and supporting members in handling conflicts with colleagues or supervisors. These activities demonstrate the pivotal role URs play in ensuring fair and inclusive practices at the workplace.

9.4.1 Recruitment

Interviews revealed that URs are typically involved in the recruitment processes at their workplaces. They provide input on job advertisements before positions are posted and participate in selecting candidates for interviews. A key diversity concern in recruitment is ensuring that minority groups are represented among the candidates. Both managers and URs sought candidates who would "add on" to the team rather than just "fit in," with the aim of avoiding a homogeneous staff. This approach reflects an acknowledgment and appreciation of diversity within the workforce. However, the search for an "add on" may not always include groups that face barriers to entering the labor market, such as ethnic minorities or people with disabilities (PWDs).

In public sector organizations, applicants were asked to indicate whether they were from ethnic minorities, had a disability, or had "gaps in their CV." The focus on ethnic minority representation varied significantly across institutions. For example, child welfare institutions made a deliberate effort to recruit employees from ethnic minority backgrounds to offer better services to a diverse group of service users, while ethnic minorities were already the majority in nursing homes, where representation was less of a concern.

All URs interviewed shared the same perspective as their managers regarding the recruitment needs at their workplace, meaning their involvement in the recruitment process was typically aligned with management's interest rather than advocating for alternative concerns. However, URs emphasized that their role was to ensure the process was fair and transparent. Based on the study, it can be said that URs act as a "disciplining" presence in recruitment, potentially safeguarding the interests of minority groups.

The extent of UR involvement in recruitment processes varied between the public and private sectors. In the public sector, UR participation was mandatory. URs viewed their involvement in interviews as an opportunity to introduce themselves to new employees and to make the presence of the union known at the workplace. However, in private sector organizations, some URs faced resistance from employers. For example, a UR in a private child welfare institution described how the employer was reluctant to include him in recruitment processes. The manager told him he could attend the interviews if he wanted, but the UR was never formally invited and struggled to find out when and where the interviews would take place.

URs from profession-based unions, like nursing or teaching, only participated in recruitment processes for candidates within their specific profession. On the other hand, URs from broader trade unions, such as Andrew in the case study, were involved in all recruitment processes. They argued that regardless of the role being filled, the new employee would interact with union members and have an impact on them.

9.4.2 Employment Conditions

A common concern among employees in the health and welfare sector was securing permanent, full-time employment. Several URs played an active role in addressing this issue. In the kindergartens and nursing homes included in this empirical study, employees often contacted the UR for help calculating their total employment time and accumulated work hours to request permanent positions or more hours per month. This situation created a conflict of interest between the URs and managers. While managers valued the flexibility provided by part-time contracts, the URs advocated for the employees' desire for secure, stable employment with full-time hours. These issues were addressed in regular meetings (work councils) between management, URs, and health and security representatives.

Another significant concern for employees, particularly immigrants, was obtaining formal qualifications, which would lead to more stable and secure employment contracts. Many of the immigrants working in the health and

welfare sector had little or no formal qualifications. They were seeking authorization as healthcare workers or child and youth workers. However, most had entered Norway as adults with family responsibilities, making it impossible for them to return to school full-time. As a result, they needed to accumulate a certain number of work hours to qualify for their professional titles. For these employees, this process was often long and challenging.

Some URs, like Andrew in the case study, were actively engaged in supporting these employees through this process. They helped by providing guidance and advocating for policies that would allow workers to gain the required experience. Other URs, however, took a less proactive stance, arguing that employees should take personal responsibility for their qualifications, acknowledging that this might require sacrifices on their part to achieve their goals.

9.4.3 Handling Conflicts

A third area of engagement for URs involved handling interpersonal conflicts in the workplace. URs addressed conflicts at both ends of the spectrum. On one hand, some employees turned to the UR as a sounding board or dialogue partner when they faced difficult situations with colleagues or supervisors. In these cases, URs were seen as neutral and independent figures, trusted to provide support. Talking to the UR was not considered gossiping. For immigrant employees who were less familiar with the Norwegian labor context, this support was particularly valuable. URs were viewed as reliable sources of guidance, offering a sense of security and understanding.

On the other end of the spectrum, when conflicts had escalated and the employee was called to a meeting with their supervisor, the UR would accompany the member as a supporter. While URs did not act as active mediators, their presence in these meetings helped level the power dynamics. Employees often felt more confident knowing they had someone familiar with workplace rules and regulations to support them. In this way, URs helped ensure that employees' voices were heard and that their rights were respected during formal meetings, particularly in situations where the imbalance of power could otherwise leave employees feeling vulnerable.

9.5 Reflecting on the Role of Union Representatives

When considering the various areas of engagement for URs, most issues tend to align with what is commonly referred to as the "narrow agenda" of TUs—that is, advocating for the collective interests of members, rather than addressing the special interests of minority or marginalized groups. However, statistics indicate that immigrants and other minority groups are overrepresented in unemployment and underemployment statistics (Statistics Norway, 2018). Therefore, actively engaging in recruitment processes and employment conditions is a key way for TUs to promote more inclusive workplaces for these minority groups and contribute to societal well-being.

The study of URs in Norway's health and welfare sector revealed significant variation in how closely URs were connected to the central structure of the TU, as well as their participation in training programs. URs who had more training and stronger ties to the TU headquarters tended to be more proactive in their roles, whereas those with less training or fewer connections to the central TU were often less engaged in such initiatives. This highlights the interdependence between local URs and TUs at the national level. In a study by Lejeune (2023) on TUs pursuing disability rights, it was found that TU officers at the central level were more proactive in pursuing disability rights, often through legal action. In contrast, URs on the shop floor adopted a more pragmatic approach, reluctant to formalize complaints or escalate conflicts, as doing so could harm the working relationship necessary for other collective bargaining efforts, such as negotiating salaries.

9.6 How Can Managers Collaborate with Union Representatives?

The managers interviewed in this empirical study displayed a wide range of attitudes toward TUs and local union representatives (URs). While some viewed URs as colleagues and constructive partners, others adopted a more antagonistic stance, considering URs to be obstacles or sources of hassle. As a manager, what steps can you take to foster a constructive relationship with the URs? (See Chapter 4 for further discussion of the role of managers.)

First, it is important for you as a manager to familiarize yourself with how the role of TUs and URs is regulated in relevant laws and agreements

for your workplace context. Understanding the legal and contractual frameworks governing TUs and URs is foundational to fostering a positive working relationship.

Second, make an effort to get to know the UR personally and show respect for their role within the organization. Building mutual trust is key to a productive relationship, and this begins with acknowledging the UR's responsibility to represent the interests of the workers. Recognizing and respecting the sometimes conflicting interests between management and the union is essential for creating a foundation for collaboration. There are many mutual gains and cooperation is a way to make the most out of it.

Third, ensure that the UR is involved at an early stage of relevant processes and has access to the necessary documents and information to participate as an equal party in decision-making. Including the UR from the outset can prevent misunderstandings and help avoid potential conflicts down the line. This may also involve promoting a close collaboration between the HR department and the UR, ensuring transparency and open communication. (See Chapter 3 on the role of the HR department for further insights.)

Fourth, be prepared to receive and consider the UR's critical input. Even if you don't agree with their perspective, being open to hearing their concerns and feedback can strengthen your position as a manager. By welcoming the UR's perspective, you demonstrate your commitment to fairness and inclusivity, which can enhance your legitimacy and reputation as an employer.

Lastly, encourage the UR to attend training programs offered by the TU. These trainings not only equip the UR with the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill their role but also deepen their engagement with the TU. Well-trained URs are more likely to be constructive partners, and supporting their professional development can help establish a more productive and collaborative relationship with them.

9.7 Summary

The chapter has explored the role of TUs and URs in promoting diversity and inclusion, with a focus on immigrants and ethnic minorities as marginalized groups. URs serve as key actors in the workplace, with involvement in several critical areas such as recruitment processes, advocating for fair employment conditions, and supporting employees in interpersonal conflicts. Their participation can ensure that diversity considerations are embedded in recruitment and hiring practices, and their advocacy for stable, permanent positions may

help marginalized workers gain job security and career advancement opportunities. In this way, URs function as a disciplining force that balances employer interests with the protection of workers' rights.

TUs contribute to fostering inclusive labor markets for ethnic minorities and PWDs by influencing workplace policies, offering training to both URs and employees, and mobilizing resources to support marginalized groups. TUs are central to shaping progressive workplace practices and ensuring that employers are held accountable for their inclusion efforts. However, the degree of UR engagement in diversity and inclusion initiatives varies, often depending on the level of training and their connection to the central TU structure.

While TUs and URs traditionally focus on collective employee interests, their active involvement in areas such as recruitment and employment conditions can indirectly advance inclusion for minority groups. The chapter emphasizes the importance of balancing the advocacy for marginalized groups with the need to maintain cooperative relationships between employers and employees. This balance is essential for advancing diversity and inclusion in the workplace while preserving broader negotiation objectives and fostering constructive employer-employee relations.

Individual Task

Imagine you are a union representative participating in a recruitment process at a workplace. Write a brief response (200–300 words) addressing the following prompts:

- You are reviewing a job advertisement before it is published. What specific suggestions would you make to ensure that the ad appeals to a diverse pool of candidates, including PWDs?
- How would you approach your role in the interview and selection process to ensure fair treatment of all candidates?
- How could you balance advocating for diversity while maintaining a cooperative relationship with management?

Group Task

Comparative analysis of trade unions' approach to equality, diversity, and inclusion

Choose two trade unions, ideally from different trade union confederations, for comparison. Analyze each union's website to understand how they address issues related to equality, diversity, and inclusion. Pay attention to:

- Policies and initiatives on diversity and inclusion.
- Resources available to union members.
- Training or support related to minorities and marginalized groups.

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Further Reading Suggestions

Kirton, G., & Guillaume, C. (2024). Towards 'racialising' the union agenda on the front lines of healthcare professions. *Work, Employment and Society, 38*(2), 358–376. https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170221135260

This article explores the tension between trade unions' progressive national agendas and their translation into activism at the local workplace. Based on an empirical study of the nurses' union in the UK, it discusses how the union struggles to reconcile its role as a professional association with its responsibilities as a trade union advocating for its members' concerns as employees.

Hagen, I. M. & Jensen, R. S. (2019). Trade union representatives from ethnic minorities. Representation revisited. *Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research, 25*(4), 437–450. https://doi.org/10.1177/1024258918800214

This article discusses the concept of representation in relation to union representatives and ethnic minority groups. A central question explored is the tension between collective interests and the specific needs of minority groups.

10

External Support and Collaboration

Magne Bråthen

Abstract In this chapter, we explore how external support and collaboration with service providers such as Public Employment Services, nonprofit organizations (NGOs), and social enterprises can enable employers to address concerns they may face when hiring persons with disabilities (PWD). We give examples of economic and social support designed to meet employers' financial and non-financial concerns and discuss how employers, empowered by such support, can work together with external service providers through varying degrees of partnership.

Learning Objectives

After studying this chapter, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the role of external service providers in promoting inclusive hiring practices
- Analyse employer concerns and understand how targeted support can address these possible barriers effectively

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- Evaluate how different forms of employer-service provider collaboration build employers' inclusion competency and promote sustainable employment for PWD

Case Study

Anne, the manager of Fjordside Grill, a popular restaurant in the coastal town of Bergen, is facing an important decision. With a team of 15 employees, the restaurant is well known for its fresh seafood and welcoming atmosphere. Recently, Anne was approached by the local NAV office, Norway's public employment service, with a suggestion to hire Markus, a candidate with mental health challenges.

Markus, who has been out of work for over a year, is a skilled kitchen assistant. He has previous experience in high-pressure environments but left his last job due to burnout. The case worker at NAV assures Anne that Markus' schedule could be adjusted to part-time hours and that NAV can provide a job coach that would support both Markus and the team during his integration period. Furthermore, NAV offers financial incentives to cover initial training costs.

Anne appreciates the offer, as the kitchen team has been short-staffed for months. However, she wonders how Markus' condition might affect the existing team dynamic and whether they can adequately accommodate his needs without disrupting operations.

Discussion Question

- What forms of support—financial and non-financial—may address Anne's concerns about whether Markus can successfully integrate into the team, encouraging her to give him a chance?

10.1 Enabling Employers

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) refer to government programs and initiatives designed to increase employment opportunities and reduce unemployment. Social policy discussions about ALMPs have mainly focused on what is referred to as supply-side measures, that is initiatives aimed at stimulating unemployed individuals to take up paid work. This includes demand-based measures such as economic incentives and sanctions, or enabling measures such as increasing individuals' employability through for instance job counseling and training (Eichhorst et al., 2008).

However, research on labour market inclusion and policy discussions have increasingly emphasized the active role of employers in hiring and retaining persons with disability (PWD) (Ingold & McGurk, 2023). The ALMP measures that target employers can also be divided into demand-based and enabling approaches. In this context, a demanding approach typically includes social regulations, such as legal provisions designed to shape employers' decisions when it comes to recruiting and retaining PWD (Frøyland et al., 2018). An enabling approach consists of measures and support by external service providers that targets employer concerns such as uncertainties about employee capabilities, legal compliance, workplace accommodations, and the resources required for effective integration.

In this chapter, we explore how ALMP measures managed by external service providers can enable managers and HRM professionals to address these practical concerns. We give examples of different kinds of employer support and discuss how employers and external service providers can work together through varying degrees of partnership.

10.2 The Institutional Context for External Service Provision

The services offered to PWD outside the labour market and to employers vary across countries depending on the organization of the welfare state. The same applies to which institutions provide these services. Understanding the unique structure of one's country's welfare system can help identify both what kind of support is available and how to access it. We therefore start by looking at service provision in different institutional context.

Political ideologies and different approaches to both social policies and ALMPs have led to different institutional structures. In social-democratic

welfare-state regime, such as Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, public employment services (PES) play a crucial role in promoting workplace inclusion for PWDs. Their main task is to help employers find suitable candidates and ensure that job opportunities are accessible to a larger share of the workforce. These Nordic countries emphasize strong government intervention and centralized systems when it comes to support both employers and job seekers (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Hertzberg & Lagercrantz, 2011).

In southern European welfare-state-regimes (Ferrera, 1996), which includes countries like Italy, Spain, and Greece, the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and advocacy groups is more pronounced. By acting as intermediaries between jobseekers with disabilities and employers, NGOs often provide specialized support, such as training for employers, assistance with reasonable accommodations, and even direct employment through sheltered workshops or social enterprises. These organizations often fill the gaps left by less centralized and less well-funded public employment services, and programs are typically more localized (Eurofond, 2021).

Public employment agencies are central providers of support services in conservative welfare-state regimes states like Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. What sets Central Europe apart is the structured and collaborative effort between businesses, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations. Quasi-public organizations, that is companies in the private sector that are supported by the government, can provide grants, technical assistance, and training to both employers and employees with disabilities (Eurofond, 2021).

Liberal welfare states, exemplified by the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States, employ a blend of public services, private-sector initiatives, and nonprofit support to facilitate the inclusion of people with disabilities in the workforce. In the UK and Ireland, programs such as Access to Work provide government funding for workplace accommodations, assistive technologies, and personal support, complemented by resources and guidance from advocacy groups and private consultancies. Similarly, corporate diversity and inclusion (D&I) initiatives, often in partnership with NGOs, play a crucial role in fostering disability-inclusive workplaces (OECD, 2014). In the United States, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) establishes a legal foundation for workplace accommodations and anti-discrimination measures (Owen et al., 2015). Public services, such as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies, collaborate with federal programs like the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) to support both employers and employees. Additionally, nonprofits such as Disability:IN and the National Organization on Disability (NOD) work closely with private companies to promote

market-driven approaches to workplace inclusion. Across these nations, the interplay of legal mandates, public–private partnerships, and nonprofit advocacy ensures a comprehensive approach to supporting employers in hiring people with disabilities.

To identify the right institutions for support when employing PWD, employers should start by researching the welfare structure and key stakeholders in their country. This involves reaching out to public employment services (PES) in regions with centralized systems like the Nordic countries or identifying active NGOs and advocacy groups in Southern European countries. Employers in Central Europe can look for public employment agencies or quasi-public organizations offering grants and training, while those in Liberal regimes like the UK, Ireland, or the US should explore government programs such as Access to Work or Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, as well as private consultancies and nonprofits. Networking with local employer organizations, chambers of commerce, or industry groups focused on diversity can also provide valuable insights and connections.

Reflection Exercise: Considering the support structures in your country, which institutions—public, private, or nonprofit—are most involved in supporting the employment of PWD, and how do they influence employers' inclusion efforts?

10.3 Economic and Social Support

When it comes to the measures and what kind of support that are available to enable employers in the hiring and retaining of PWD, each country may offer a unique combination of services. Although different, the services either address employers' financial need through economic support or non-financial needs through social support.

Economic support plays a role in easing the financial burden associated with employment and may include wage subsidies that offset a portion of employee salaries, making it more cost-effective for employers to hire individuals, grants that cover expenses related to workplace modifications, tax credits to employers who employ PWD, or financial support for providing training programs to upskill employees with disabilities.

Non-financial support to employers, or social support, includes services aimed at enhancing job readiness and workplace adaptation. This can

include recruitment assistance, guidance in understanding and complying to disability-related employment laws, help to match qualified candidates with suitable job opportunities, training programs designed to develop or enhance job-related skills, or job coaching and mentoring that provide ongoing guidance and support to both employees and employers.

10.4 Addressing Employers' Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation to Hire Persons with Disabilities

For managers and HRM professionals any recruitment process is characterized by a degree of uncertainty. If the candidate has a physical disability or mental health problems, it may trigger additional concerns that can influence employers' hiring. Before seeking economic or social support, employers should first evaluate the specific challenges they face and determine the type of assistance that would best address these issues.

Research has highlighted a range of common concerns influencing employers' decisions, or behaviour (B), when it comes to hiring PWD. These concerns are often shaped by the interplay between their perceived capability (C), opportunity (O), and motivation (M) to recruit, support, and retain PWD (Nagtegaal et al., 2023). This COM-B framework, rooted in behavioural science, can serve as a valuable tool for managers and HRM professionals. It helps differentiate between concerns arising from misconceptions or lack of knowledge, those related to logistical or financial limitations and identifies how external support can effectively address these barriers.

In the following, we use the three categories to give examples of empirical findings of why employers may be reluctant to hire PWD and illustrate how social and economic support can address employers' concerns.

10.4.1 Enabling Employers Capability

Uncertainty about capability reflects a lack of resources or knowledge of employing PWD. Employers may also be unfamiliar with the specific needs of disabled workers and how to manage them (Kaye et al., 2011), and who they may contact to receive support to help with the follow up of PWD or assistance to follow legal requirements (Fraser et al., 2010).

To address these capability concerns, external service providers may offer social support in various forms, helping employers navigate the legal, practical, and social dimensions of employment. One example is job-matching

services, often provided by PES, which connect employers with qualified candidates who have disabilities while ensuring a fair and inclusive recruitment process. Advisory services may be offered that give guidance on how to craft inclusive job advertisements and evaluating applications without bias, enabling employers to attract diverse talent. Additionally, awareness training for employers and their staff can help build understanding of specific needs, manage accommodations effectively, and foster an inclusive workplace culture.

10.4.2 Enabling Employers Opportunity

This category highlights the employer's belief that their infrastructure or resources may not be sufficient to support employees with physical, sensory, or cognitive impairments (Amir et al., 2009). It can also involve doubts about the existence of relevant job openings and suitable tasks or the possibility of obtaining financial incentives that reduce the financial risks of employment. Concerns about opportunity also include beliefs that hiring PWD may cause reactions from colleagues or customers/clients (Kaye et al., 2011).

Both social and economic support can effectively address accommodation and accessibility challenges. Grants can be available to assist employers in adapting workplaces. This funding can cover costs for installing ramps, modifying workstations, or purchasing assistive technologies that enable PWD to perform their job functions effectively. Additionally, supported employment programs, often coordinated by public employment services, provide job coaches who work closely with both employers and employees. These job coaches help implement necessary accommodations and offer ongoing support to ensure the employee integrates smoothly into their role. They also assist employers in managing adjustments over time. Both PES and institutions like Disability Advocacy Organizations can help employers understand how to create accessible work environments. Coaching can provide tailored guidance on layout adjustments, communication aids, and other modifications necessary to make accommodations more manageable.

10.4.3 Enabling Employers Motivation

Motivation may be linked to an employer's hesitation to invest time, resources, and energy into the perceived challenges associated with hiring PWD. Fears of extra workload, uncertainty about performance or expected extra cost of accommodations, can diminish the motivation to employ PWD (Bonaccio et al., 2019).

Through external service providers various forms of economic support can be made available to the employers to make inclusive hiring more financially feasible. Wage subsidy programs are one such solution, covering a portion of the salaries for new employees with disabilities. These subsidies typically last for a set period, helping employers offset the initial costs of training or potential productivity differences during the initial phase. By providing a "financial cushion", wage subsidies can encourage employers to take the first step in hiring individuals who may require additional support. Compensation schemes may also be available, that offer financial relief to employers if an employee's productivity is initially lower due to their disability can also be available. These measures give employees the time they need to adapt to their new roles and allows companies to focus on the long-term potential of their hires rather than the short-term challenges of accommodation. Also, some countries offer tax incentives, helping to reduce the overall tax burden on companies that employ PWD and making it more financially rewarding for businesses to invest in a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Reflection Exercise: Using the COM-B framework, think about the concerns you as an employer may have regarding capability, opportunity, and motivation when hiring PWD. How could targeted interventions address these concerns effectively?

10.5 From Support to Collaboration

So far, we have examined how external service providers can offer practical support to address employers' concerns when hiring and employing PWD. However, creating an inclusive workplace is primarly the responsibility of employers themselves, requiring deliberate effort and commitment at every

organizational level. This effort must be grounded in a long-term perspective, recognizing that inclusion is not a one-time task but a strategic process that evolves over time.

A way to operationalize an organization's strategic goals of an inclusive workplace (see Chapter 2), is by effective collaboration between employers and external service providers. These collaborations can take different forms, ranging from minimal interaction to strategic partnerships. Here we explore four main types of such collaboration (Aksnes & Breit, 2024): unilateral, ad hoc, co-creation, and strategic. They each offer distinct advantages, depending on the needs and resources of the company.

10.5.1 Unilateral Collaboration: Employer-Led Efforts

In a unilateral collaboration, employers will handle most of the hiring process and the subsequent follow up of a person with disability by themselves and only ask for support when specific challenges arise. They may reach out to external services like job coaches or advisors occasionally but largely manage the process independently. Although referred to as "collaboration", this approach involves minimal actual collaboration, as it largely leaves employers to navigate the hiring and support process on their own, with only occasional or insufficient external support.

Employers in this category may feel that the external support they receive is insufficient, prompting them to fill the gaps themselves. This can involve managing day-to-day challenges that arise during the employment process, such as providing personal support to the employee or handling complex administrative tasks. As employers may struggle with the workload and lack the resources to address the social and personal needs of their employees, the absence of consistent support may diminish their motivation making this approach unsustainable in the long term.

10.5.2 Ad Hoc Collaboration: Support When Needed

In ad hoc collaborations, employers engage with external service providers on an as-needed basis, seeking assistance only when specific issues arise, such as access to wage subsidies or help during critical situations with an employee.

This form of collaboration is flexible and reactive, allowing employers to maintain control over the inclusion process while accessing support

when challenges exceed their capacity. It typically involves practical support, such as extending agreements or arranging short-term accommodation. For employers who are confident in their ability to manage most aspects of the employment process, ad hoc support can be ideal. It allows them to access targeted assistance without a long-term commitment to more intensive support programs. These employers will typically value the ability to tailor the support they receive and appreciate the quick response from service providers during critical moments. However, this approach may lack the strategic planning needed for long-term integration and retention of employees with disabilities.

10.5.3 Co-Creation: Collaborative and Relational

Co-creation involves a more interactive and sustained partnership between employers and external service providers. This form of collaboration emphasizes joint planning, regular communication, and shared responsibility for the success of the inclusion process.

Co-creation is characterized by regular meetings between employers, job coaches, and the employee, where they jointly set goals, evaluate progress, and adapt strategies as needed. It relies on a high degree of trust and mutual engagement between the employer and the service provider. This closer form of collaboration allows for a more tailored approach to support, addressing the unique needs of both the employee and the employer. It can lead to better outcomes through continuous adjustment and shared problem-solving which reduces the burden on employers while improving the quality of support.

10.5.4 Strategic Collaboration: Long-Term Partnerships

Strategic collaborations represent the most integrated and long-term form of partnership, where employers and service providers work closely to design and implement customized inclusion strategies.

This partnership is often based on shared goals and a proactive approach to inclusion. Employers may work with service providers to develop specific programs, such as tailored training paths or structured employment models that align with the company's long-term objectives. Strategic collaborations can provide significant benefits for employers, such as access to specialized

expertise, streamlined access to financial incentives, and the ability to influence the type of support they receive. The process of hiring and retaining employees with disabilities can then be made more seamless and aligned with business needs. By engaging in strategic collaborations, employers can gain a competitive advantage through enhanced inclusion practices and a reputation for being an inclusive workplace. Furthermore, such collaborations are integral to building and strengthening employers' inclusion competence and capacity—their ability to navigate and implement inclusive practices effectively within their organizations. This capacity includes understanding the specific needs of employees with disabilities, promoting a supportive workplace culture, and developing policies and procedures that ensure sustainable employment.

Reflection Exercise: What are the potential benefits and challenges of moving from a unilateral or ad hoc approach to more integrated models like co-creation or strategic collaboration?

10.6 Summary

Addressing employers' capability, opportunity, and motivation to hire PWD can require both economic and social support that address their specific concerns. External service providers play an important role in addressing employer concerns by offering tailored resources, such as job-matching services, workplace accommodations, and wage subsidies. However, promoting truly inclusive workplaces goes beyond external support; it demands a strategic commitment from employers, complemented by collaborative partnerships with service providers. By engaging in various forms of collaborations employers can overcome barriers, enabling a more diverse workforce.

Individual Task

Using Table 10.1 as a starting point, reflect on the challenges and opportunities an employer in your context face when considering employing persons with disabilities (PWD). Focus on the following:

Table 10.1 Employer concerns, social support and economic support

Employer concerns	Social support	Economic support
1. Capability		
Lack of resources and knowledge to employ PWD	Examples: Job Matching Services, Employer Guidance in the Recruitment Process, Awareness Training	
2. Opportunity		
Insufficient infrastructure or resources to accommodate PWD	Examples: Supported employment programs, Guidance to help employers understand how to create accessible environments	Examples: Grants to employers for adapting workplaces
3. Motivation		
Diminished motivation to employ PWD due to fears of extra workload, uncertainty about performance or expected extra cost of accommodations		Examples: Wage subsidy programs, Compensation schemes, Tax incentives

- Identify Employer Concerns: Consider the three categories of concerns outlined in the table—Capability, Opportunity, and Motivation. Can you think of specific examples or scenarios where these concerns may arise?
- Explore Available Support: Reflect on the types of social and economic support that are available to address these concerns in your country. For example, are there job-matching services, wage subsidies, or workplace adaptation programs?
- Identify External Service Providers: Who are the key actors or organizations that provide this support? Think about public employment services (PES), non-governmental organizations (NGOs), social enterprises, or private consultancies.

Group Task

Discuss what steps employers can take to move beyond relying solely on external support and take a more strategic role in creating an inclusive workplace?

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11

Structural Characteristics

Julie Ulstein

Abstract This chapter introduces how the organizational context in terms of structural characteristics can contribute to sustainable employment for PWD. The chapter starts by examining the dynamics of inclusion in the public, private, and third sectors, focusing on sector-specific variations that can affect sustainable employment. Next follows an examination of how low-skill and high-skill industries can impact sustainable employment for PWD. The chapter also sheds light on how small firm informality on the one hand and large firm formality on the other, are associated with different challenges and opportunities when employing PWD. The theoretical predictions are followed by empirical evidence on the associations between structural characteristics and sustainable employment for PWD. Next, the chapter links sustainable employment with configurations of structural characteristics—combinations of sector, industry, and size—with examples of how the interplay of various challenges related to specific structural traits can be tackled strategically by managers. The chapter concludes by highlighting the importance of using the evidence-based knowledge of structural characteristics to develop effective, context-specific inclusion practices and strategies for managers and organizations committed to creating sustainable employment for PWD.

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Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter on structural characteristics, you should be able to:

- Understand how configurations of organizational sector, industry, and size can contribute to or challenge the inclusion of PWD in the workplace.
- Use this understanding to evaluate your organization's configuration of sector, industry, and size, and determine strategies that can contribute to the inclusion of PWD.

Case Study

A large, public sector company in the high-skilled industry has a goal of hiring and integrating more PWD in the workplace, as part of a new equality and diversity policy. The company formalizes practices and plans for how to support and accommodate the new PWD at the workplace. The company publicly announces the new vacancies and encourages PWD to apply. At the end of the application period, however, the company has received no applications from PWD.

A small, private sector company in the high-skilled industry has an employee with a disability. This employee, due to deteriorating health, has been absent from work for extended periods, despite attempts to accommodate both work hours and tasks. The company is not sure how to proceed. The other colleagues see the accommodation of the absent employee as special treatment, while the company now feels the economic exposure of having fewer projects to cover salaries and other fixed expenses due to the reduced work capacity of the employee.

A small, third sector company in the low-skilled industry has an employee with disability on a short-term training contract. This employee requires extensive workplace accommodations and close managerial supervision, leading the company to invest significant time and resources in adjusting the employee's work hours and tasks. As the third sector company has no long-term contracts, it now faces the challenge of finding a long-term position for the employee in a public or private company that is able and willing to provide the same level of support.

Discussion Questions

- What are the structural characteristics of the companies in the three examples?
- What are the benefits and challenges associated with the structural characteristics you identified for the sustainable employment of PWD?

- How can these challenges be overcome?

11.1 Why Structural Characteristics?

We know from organizational and management studies that contextual factors matter for organizational success (e.g., Mintzberg, 1980). The same holds true for sustainable employment of PWD in organizations. This chapter focuses on three specific structural characteristics of organizations—sector, industry, and size. These organizational settings constitute the environment in which hiring and retention occurs, which is why these characteristics can impact sustainable employment for PWD. Focusing on structural characteristics offers several advantages. First, they are relatively stable over time, making it possible to differentiate between organizations. Second, they are less prone to social desirability bias—the tendency of respondents to answer questions in a way that is likely to be viewed favorably by others. Social desirability bias is particularly common when employers are asked to rate their attitudes toward hiring PWD. Research shows that employers generally express positive attitudes (Burke et al., 2013); however, these attitudes do not always align with actual behavior. Employers with positive attitudes may still engage in negative hiring practices (Burke et al., 2013). This mismatch between attitudes and behavior can make it difficult to identify employers that genuinely want to hire and integrate PWD, complicating efforts to improve employment outcomes for this group. Using contextual information such as sector, industry and size can therefore be valuable. To illustrate this point, the following sections will discuss the ways in which these structural characteristics can influence the inclusion of PWD.

11.1.1 Sector

Sector refers to the distinct parts of the economy to which an organization belongs: the public, private, or third sector (volunteer/non-profit). Public sector organizations, owned and operated by the government, typically have more stringent regulations and formal hiring procedures than private and third- sector organizations (Byron, 2010). The formal procedures of the public sector are often referred to as "the great leveler" because they increase the representation of women and minorities in the workforce (Byron, 2010). This has been highlighted as potentially beneficial for PWD, because the rules

and regulations can contribute to secure fair and equitable hiring processes that limit discrimination. However, the stringent requirements for education, experience, and skills in many public sector organizations, as illustrated by the public company in the first case example, can present significant challenges for PWD who lack formal qualifications. These organizations often have limited flexibility to accommodate individualized treatment (Østerud, 2020). Moreover, public sector organizations often face high efficiency demands and resource constraints. As a result, public employers may hesitate to hire PWD if they perceive them as less productive, potentially leading to the avoidance of hiring PWD (Østerud, 2020).

Private sector employers, on the other hand, are less regulated in terms of formal hiring practices, and therefore have greater opportunities to be flexible in recruitment of employees regarding requirements to education and experience, compared to public organizations. This can contribute positively to sustainable employment for PWD, which might need individualized treatment to acquire and remain in employment over time (Bacon & Hoque, 2021; Stone & Colella, 1996). For example, greater flexibility and autonomy over hiring practices can allow private organizations to create jobs that fit with PWDs' individual skills and experience, rather than expecting PWD to fit a predetermined job (see also Chapter 7 on flexible job design, and Chapter 4 on the vacancy approach to inclusive leadership). At the same time, private organizations can have corporate cultures that might be incompatible with individualized treatment and accommodation, where rewards and promotions are based on competition and productivity (Schur et al., 2005). In these organizations, individualized treatment of PWD might be perceived as unfair, which can negatively affect PWD well-being and job satisfaction, and ultimately sustainable employment, as demonstrated in the private company from the second case example. Additionally, private employers are less regulated in terms of hiring practices and are more likely to use social networks to fill vacancies. This can make it more difficult for PWD to access private sector jobs, because they might lack the network information necessary to apply.

Many third sector organizations are specifically designed to address unemployment challenges faced by disadvantaged jobseekers, offering an alternative pathway to employment for PWD. This sector includes work integration social enterprises, non-profits, and volunteer organizations (Battilana et al., 2015; Lindberg et al., 2022; Spear & Bidet, 2005). Driven by socially motivated principles, these organizations aim to bridge the gaps left by the profit-driven private sector and the resource-constrained public sector, focusing on delivering targeted training, skills development, and tailored

employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups (Spear & Bidet, 2005). These organizations, with their mission to enhance the lives and employment outcomes of disadvantaged jobseekers, offer the advantage of a targeted and holistic approach to work inclusion. They prioritize accommodating individual needs by making significant efforts to adapt work hours and tasks, ensuring a more inclusive and supportive work environment (Lindberg et al., 2022). Third sector organizations can offer a wide range of opportunities to PWD, such as temporary or permanent employment, internships, mentorships, job-matching services, and training or educational programs (Lindberg et al., 2022). However, as non-profit or volunteer-driven entities, their capacity to ensure sustainable, long-term employment for PWD remains uncertain, as illustrated by the third sector company in the third case example.

The evidence on the role of the public and private sectors in promoting the sustainable employment of PWD is inconsistent. Some research suggest that public employers provide better work opportunities for PWD, while other studies find the same for private sector employers (Beatty et al., 2019; Ulstein, 2023). For third sector organizations, some evidence suggests that, despite their goal of providing sustainable employment for PWD and other disadvantaged groups, they fail to offer long-term work opportunities. Instead, the organizations channel participants to other employers, either instantly or after shorter term employment (Lindberg et al., 2022). Sustainable employment outcomes therefore become dependent on the organizations PWD are channeled into rather than on the third sector organizations.

11.1.2 Industry

Industry refers to categories of companies that are in the same line of business. An organization can be in the industry for agriculture, fishing and forestry, manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, or public administration, to mention a few examples. Industries are commonly classified as either low-skill or high-skill. The industry in which an organization operates can determine whether PWD have higher or lower chances of gaining employment. Industries that need and prefer low-wage and low-skilled workers have been predicted to provide more work opportunities for PWD. Examples of low-wage, low-skill industries are manufacturing, wholesale, retail, and trade, and management and facility services. Industries with fewer formal requirements for qualifications, skills, and work experience offer increased accessibility for PWD (Kaye, 2009; McGurk, 2014). In these industries, PWD can gain

entry-level jobs and build up work experience, as demonstrated by the low-skill industry company in the third case example. After building some work experience, PWD can apply for other jobs that have more formal requirements in terms of work experience or qualifications. However, low-skilled and low-wage industries often rely on short-term contracts and provide limited job security, as employees can be easily replaced if they fail to meet production or productivity expectations. While organizations in these industries can offer initial employment opportunities for PWD, the work is often physically or mentally demanding, and the risk of job loss disproportionately affects the employee. This dynamic can result in further disadvantage for PWD, as roles in these industries typically lack opportunities for career development, stability, and long-term growth (Sissons & Green, 2017). Thus, while these industries may serve as an entry point to the labor market, they often fail to support sustainable employment outcomes.

High-skill industries are characterized by formal qualification requirements regarding education, experience, and training (Kaye, 2009). Examples of high-skill industries are information and communication, professional and technical services, scientific research, and public administration. High-skill industries involve tasks that are less physically demanding, such as managerial and supervisory roles, while providing greater opportunities for personal development, and career progression. Additionally, these industries typically offer higher wages and more stable employment conditions. For PWD, high-skill industries can provide a pathway to sustainable employment by offering greater job security, opportunities for advancement, and less physically demanding work. However, the stringent entry requirements may pose significant barriers to employment, as many PWD may lack the necessary formal education, training, or experience to meet these criteria. This is illustrated by the high-skill company in the first case example, where the high qualification requirements resulted in no applications from PWD.

From previous research, there is evidence to support the overrepresentation of PWD (and other disadvantaged groups) in low-wage, low-skilled industries. Moreover, evidence suggests that these industries are where PWD experience low employment sustainability in terms of job duration (Kaye, 2009; McGurk, 2014; Sissons & Green, 2017; Ulstein, 2023). The evidence can be interpreted in one of two ways. First, short job duration may result from PWD taking jobs in low-skill industries to gain work experience, after which they can move on to more skilled and secure positions in other industries. Second, the short job duration can also be attributed to the low job security in these industries, where temporary contracts are predominantly used.

11.1.3 Size

Size refers to the number of employees in an organization. Different countries can have different definitions of organizational size. In the European Union, organizations with fewer than 50 employees are categorized as "small", while "large" organizations are those that employ more than 250 employees. Both larger and smaller organizations have been predicted to be beneficial for the inclusion of PWD, but in different ways. The predicted benefits and challenges related to hiring PWD are linked to the degree of organizational formality, which varies with employer size. The features of large organizations that have been highlighted as beneficial for the recruitment and integration of PWD are the substantial resources, presence of human resource (HR) professionals (see also Chapter 3), and formal equality practices (Bacon & Hoque, 2021). These resources can be used to provide necessary training, accommodations, and follow-up at the workplace, as exemplified by the large company in the first case example. HR professionals, with expertise in equitable treatment and workplace diversity, play a key role in implementing inclusive policies and ensuring fair recruitment practices. Moreover, large organizations are frequently subject to legal requirements concerning the hiring and retention of disadvantaged workers, further incentivizing inclusive practices. Large organizations can also offer a broad range of tasks to PWD, allowing for task adjustments that can contribute to job stability and long-term employment prospects. These advantages stem from a high degree of organizational formality. However, the same formality that characterizes large organizations can also pose challenges for the inclusion of PWD. Standardized work and bureaucracy—such as rigid rules and uniform practices—can limit opportunities for the individualized treatment and flexibility often necessary for PWD to obtain and maintain employment (Bacon & Hoque, 2021; Schur et al., 2005; Stone & Colella, 1996).

For small organizations, on the other hand, the features that have been highlighted as beneficial for the inclusion of PWD result from lower organizational formality. These include more contact and closer relationships between top managers and employees, individualized treatment, and higher job autonomy (Bacon & Hoque, 2021; Stone & Colella, 1996). Closer interaction between managers and employees can foster better social integration and increase the willingness to accommodate and retain PWD (see also Chapter 4). In smaller organizations, the less bureaucratic structure and fewer formal regulations can create more opportunities for personalized treatment, enabling managers to adjust work hours or tasks more easily to accommodate PWD (see also Chapter 6). As illustrated by the small company in the third

case example, this flexibility can help ensure that PWD have the support they need to remain in the workplace. Similarly, job autonomy can be beneficial for PWD, allowing them to adapt work arrangements and tasks in ways that support continued employment (Schur et al., 2005). This flexibility can be particularly helpful for those facing challenges related to health or disabilities, as it can enable them to decide how, where, and when to complete work tasks. At the same time, limited resources can make hiring PWD seem economically risky for small organizations. Small organizations can be more exposed economically if they hire an employee who frequently experiences illness or has work limitations that restrict work ability. This can potentially reduce the willingness of small organizations to hire and retain PWD, as illustrated by the small company in the second case example.

While the discussion above outlines several ways in which an organization's size may influence sustainable employment for PWD, the evidence regarding this impact remains mixed. Previous research indicates that *both* smaller and larger employers can positively contribute to employment outcomes for PWD, but in different ways (Bacon & Hoque, 2021; Ulstein, 2023). For example, large organizations can benefit from having HR professionals, as well as formal equality and diversity policies, which can facilitate the hiring and retention of PWD. Simultaneously, small organizations can offer closer managerial contact and greater flexibility in providing individualized treatment and accommodations, which can also support inclusion of PWD. Size can therefore represent different organizational conditions—such as practices, resources, and policies—that may contribute positively to the sustainable employment of PWD.

11.2 Configurations of Structural Characteristics

Awareness of the impact of the structural characteristics of organizations is highly advantageous for practitioners aiming to promote sustainable employment for PWD. While the theoretical predictions and empirical evidence on sector, industry, and size discussed above examine these structural characteristics individually, organizations are in practice shaped by *configurations* of these characteristics—that is, combinations of sector, industry, and size. These configurations often present multiple benefits and challenges simultaneously when pursuing sustainable employment for PWD. Table 11.1 outlines the advantages and obstacles linked to each structural characteristic.

Table 11.1 Structural characteristics: benefits and challenges to sustainable employment for PWD

Structural characteristics	Possible benefits	Possible challenges
Public sector	Equitable hiring processes	Qualification requirements Demands to efficiency
Private sector	Flexible recruitment Person-job fit	Corporate culture Productivity requirements Recruitment through social networks
Third sector	Socially motivated organizations Alternative route to employment	Providing long-term employment opportunities
Low-skill industries	Entry-level jobs Low skill requirements	Low job security Lower wages Few opportunities to advance
High-skill industries	Job security Higher wages Opportunities to advance	Qualification requirements
Large organizations	Resources HR-staff Formal equality practices	Bureaucracy Standardized work
Small organizations	Closer workplace relations Individualized treatment Job autonomy	Limited resources Economic exposure

It is important to note that the presence of structural characteristics with the potential to either support or hinder the sustainable employment of PWD does not guarantee that the organization will experience these outcomes. The research evidence is mixed, suggesting that there is likely variation in how organizations experience benefits and challenges related to the inclusion of PWD. However, managers and practitioners can only determine whether their organization possesses inherent advantages or obstacles by analyzing its organizational configuration—specifically its sector, industry, and size. This analysis will provide critical insights into how structural traits may influence the organization's ability to support sustainable employment for PWD. It can also guide managers and practitioners in identifying which strategies to implement to improve the inclusion of PWD, ensuring that the most effective approaches are tailored to the organization's specific structural characteristics.

Consider the first case example of the large public organization in a high-skills industry. This organization may face challenges in hiring PWD due to strict education, skills, and experience requirements, along with high efficiency demands. To overcome these barriers, the organization could offer

trainee positions or internships to PWD and other disadvantaged jobseekers, helping them build experience and skills to meet the job requirements. Leveraging the organization's resources and HR expertise would further support the success of these initiatives.

Next, consider the second case example of the small, private organization in the high-skills industry. This organization faced challenges related to employees perceiving accommodations as unfair, as well as economic strain. To address these issues, the company could implement disability sensitivity training to improve the corporate culture and foster a better understanding of disability. The close employee contact in a small organization could help promote stronger collegial bonds, thereby improving social integration and PWD well-being.

Lastly, consider the third case example of the small third sector company in the low-skills industry. In this company, the challenge was finding a permanent position for an employee requiring significant accommodation. A potential strategy could involve forming contracts with private or public companies to provide labor, with clear specifications for the necessary accommodations. This approach would allow the company to offer PWD valuable short-term contracts to gain work experience, while simultaneously contributing to sustainable employment by channeling employees into organizations guaranteed to provide good employment opportunities for PWD. More difficult to strategically address can be the high efficiency demands in the public sector and the economic constraints in small organizations.

The examples above illustrate how configurations of structural characteristics can impact work inclusion of PWD, and how organizations can address these challenges to achieve sustainable employment for PWD. While these examples serve as a starting point, many additional strategies can likely be developed to support inclusion of PWD. These possibilities show that managers and practitioners still have room to maneuver and can strategically tackle challenges associated with structural characteristics. Although some barriers may be more straightforward to address than others, systematically analyzing structural configurations can allow managers to identify both obstacles and opportunities for inclusion. By understanding the inherent dynamics of their organization's structure, managers can tailor strategies that contribute to sustainable employment for PWD. Therefore, for organizations committed to promoting inclusion of PWD, it is essential to evaluate how configurations of structural characteristics can influence sustainable employment outcomes and to use this understanding to develop effective, context-specific inclusion practices and strategies.

11.3 Summary

This chapter has presented how the structural characteristics of organizations—specifically sector, industry, and size—can impact sustainable employment for PWD. Public sector organizations offer equitable hiring but can have strict qualification requirements. Private sector employers can provide more flexibile recruitment but may operate within competitive corporate cultures. The third sector focuses on inclusion but can struggle to offer long-term employment opportunities. Low-skill industries provide accessible entry-level jobs but can lack job security, while high-skill industries can provide stability and opportunities for development but frequently require formal qualifications and experience. Large organizations have resources and formal hiring practices, but bureaucracy can limit individualized treatment. Small organizations can offer greater job autonomy but can face resource constraints. These characteristics appear as configurations—combinations of sector, industry, and size—that should be considered when designing strategies to enhance benefits or address challenges to improve sustainable employment for PWD.

Individual Task

Consider the company where you are currently employed, or one where you have worked previously. Reflect on its structural characteristics—sector, industry, and size. Identify the factors that could either support or hinder the integration of PWD. What strategies could be implemented to amplify the positive aspects? How can your organization address the challenges it faces in promoting inclusion? How much leeway does your organization have to implement such strategies?

Group Task

Take as a point of departure the answers from the previous exercise. As a group, discuss the advantages and obstacles relating to the inclusion of PWD specific to the companies of the group members. Explore the similarities and differences between the companies based on variations in sector, industry, and size. Identify any common benefits or obstacles that emerge. Can any strategies be applied across companies to address these challenges and improve inclusion of PWD?

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This review focuses on what affects the treatment of PWD in the workplace, including organizational characteristics

12

Conclusion

Eric Breit, Siri Yde Aksnes, Paul Boselie, and Jasmijn van Harten

Abstract This book offers inspiration and knowledge for promoting workplace inclusion for people with disabilities (PWD). The aim of the book has been to provide a practitioner-oriented (executive) teaching resource on this topic, thus placing managers and HRM professionals as practitioners at the heart of attention. While there is an increasing literature on workplace inclusion of PWD and other disadvantaged groups, the actions of managers and HRM practitioners is where new attention is needed. Hence, the overall goal of the book has been to make readers better understand the key ingredients for successful workplace inclusion, along with practical ideas for implementation and strategies to overcome potential challenges.

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This book offers inspiration and knowledge for promoting workplace inclusion for people with disabilities (PWD). The aim of the book has been to provide a practitioner-oriented (executive) teaching resource on this topic, thus placing managers and HRM professionals as practitioners at the heart of attention. While there is an increasing literature on workplace inclusion of PWD and other disadvantaged groups, the actions of managers and HRM practitioners is where new attention is needed. Hence, the overall goal of the book has been to make readers better understand the key ingredients for successful workplace inclusion, along with practical ideas for implementation and strategies to overcome potential challenges.

In the chapters, scholars have provided evidence-informed insights translated into hands-on suggestions, cases, and other materials that can be used by HR professionals and managers in their daily work practice. As the scholars come from different backgrounds (e.g. disability studies, management, human resource management, and social policy) and from different countries, the book thereby offers a broad perspective and multidisciplinary view on workplace inclusion of PWD. The chapters show in various ways how workplaces—i.e. the relations of managers, HRM professionals, and co-workers—are crucial arenas for understanding how labour market inclusion takes place 'in situ' and for promoting increased inclusion.

As the chapters and cases demonstrate, PWD is a highly heterogeneous group, ranging from individuals with extensive work experience that due to an illness or life crisis fell out of work and are now ready to give work a try again, to persons who use a wheelchair but otherwise do not need more support or accommodations than other employees, to those with more complex challenges requiring extensive support and accommodations from both internal and external actors in the workplace. Given this variation in the target group, their needs will vary, and so will the required inclusion in the workplaces.

Throughout the chapters, the authors have presented the opportunities that exist in facilitating the inclusion of PWD in the workplace, and the added social value of being an inclusive workplace, while also recognizing potential tensions and challenges in this process. This means that the approach towards workplace inclusion of PWD in this book is a *realistic approach*: we focus on positive and stimulating factors instead of barriers, while also not being blind to the challenges or even hindrances as faced by practitioners. Our realistic approach urges the actions of practitioners in employing organizations based on the assumption that despite hindrances or other kinds of contingences (perceived or real) all practitioners can do

something. And this 'something' of practitioners is an important ingredient–if not *the most important* ingredient—in obtaining a fully inclusive labour market. The book builds on the notion of room to manoeuvre for workplace inclusion.

The labour market inclusion of PWD has primarily been regarded as means to encourage employers to hire them. However, upon closer examination at the level of workplaces, we discover a multitude of organizational practices that promote inclusion. In this book, we have organized these practices into five cornerstones of workplace inclusion: strategic support policies, leadership and interpersonal relations, work design and accommodations, co-worker collegiality, and external support. In addition, the cornerstones are dependent on organizational structural characteristics. Throughout the chapters, these cornerstones are explored through various theoretical perspectives and empirical evidence and case studies are presented to illustrate them.

In this final chapter, we bring together the insights from the preceding chapters and underscore four key lessons from this book. Our objective in this chapter is not to summarize each chapter, but rather to analyze them collectively and extract essential principles for practicing workplace inclusion. In so doing, we offer recommendations for each lesson to assist readers in implementing workplace inclusion. In accordance with our realistic approach where we avoid assumptions of 'easy-to-copy' best practices and rather spur reflexivity, we underpin these recommendations with questions.

12.1 Key Lesson 1: Workplace Inclusion of PWD Does Not Require Very Different Practices from HRM or 'Broader' Inclusion

Views on workplace inclusion can be seen as a continuum, ranging from the belief that employing PWD is fundamentally different from standard employment to the perspective that their employment is no different than any other. The chapters in this book generally demonstrate that practices within each of the six cornerstones are not that different from ordinary, or mainstream employment.

For instance, Chapter 3 shows that PWD benefit just as much from 'classic' strategic HRM practices such as training and development as 'able-bodied' workers. Workplace inclusion does not require a lot of extra work or a large financial investment, as for instance is demonstrated in Chapter 5 in which the benefits of the easy-to-implement practice of mentor support are explained. Likewise, conducting work accommodations or design according

to the needs of PWD (Chapters 6 and 7) is not doing something completely different, as also more 'able-bodied' employees require accommodations.

In fact, workplace inclusion relies heavily on natural support: support that occurs naturally in the workplace, that 'comes with the job' and involves supervisors and co-workers, as is demonstrated in multiple chapters. Chapters 8 and 9 show how co-workers can be powerful change agents on the 'workfloor', but also that their support cannot be taken for granted and may indeed result in resistance.

The key lesson learned is to aim for a fit between, on the one hand, the requirements of the organization and the tasks in particular, and, on the other hand, the PWD and their interests, needs and strengths. Again, this balance is in principle not something that is special to the context of PWDs—it is generally a core feature of HRM or supervision for any employee. For instance, as is demonstrated in Chapter 4, like any other employee, PWD have a need for belonging and this could be addressed through leadership that is showing care and concern for them. The 'extra' work and attention that is needed is the willingness to invest time (rather than money) and showing genuine interest in getting to know the person, perhaps simply by taking the initiative for an informal and friendly coffee chat.

This first lesson's call for action is to *start practicing inclusion*. Within this premise of inclusion of PWD remaining similar to HRM and other kinds of inclusion, 'learning by dong' is a central way of increasing one's competence. When workplace inclusion is regarded as 'learning by doing' or an experiential learning process, the threshold to get started is lowered and the risks of failure are decreased as there is room for making mistakes. Each of the chapters include exercises to prompt reflection but also to spur action.

Questions to trigger action:

- Do PWD have the same access to HRM and leadership support as any other employees in your organization? If not, how come and how can you lower the thresholds?
- Do you speak with PWD about their needs and do you follow-up these conversations?
- What specific aspects of workplace inclusion have you read in the chapters of this book that appealed to you? What is needed for you to start experimenting with it starting tomorrow?

12.2 Key Lesson 2: Workplace Inclusion of PWD Requires Reflectivity About Context

Another key lesson is the centrality of practicing inclusion through reflexivity and experimentation. This reflexivity requires awareness about the key contextual factors that impact the workplace or organization in question. From the perspective of reflexivity, there is always some room to manoeuvre for actors—and, as mentioned in the first lesson, the room to manoeuvre does not need to be especially large (e.g. in terms of resources) to obtain beneficial results.

In this book, Chapter 11 explicitly highlights industry, sector, and size as key contextual factors for workplace inclusion. The chapter describes how these factors are configured differently in different organizational contexts, and it prompts readers to reflect about how such configurations impact inclusion in their workplace. In addition, institutional characteristics such as national rules and laws provide an important context for what HRM practitioners and managers can and cannot do. Chapter 9 elaborates on the role of trade unions as well as labour market rules and legislations regarding inclusion. And Chapter 10 provides an overview of the different institutional contexts for external support provision.

The chapters also show how the room to manoeuvre can be found both at the strategic decision-making level and the day-to-day operational level. Chapter 2 highlights how strategic decision-making regarding staff resourcing is promoted and inhibited by factors at the strategic level (e.g. future workforce planning or skill shortages in the labour market). Chapter 3 underscores the importance of being attentive to the needs of the stakeholders, as evident in organizational effectiveness, employee well-being and societal well-being. This kind of (strategic) balancing between the present and the future requires reflexivity around the concrete room to manoeuvre.

At the level of day-to-day operations, internal contextual factors such as organizational culture will play an important role. The culture of any workplace will be enacted explicitly or implicitly by is employees, whether these are managers or co-workers of PWDs. All chapters either directly or indirectly highlights developing an inclusive work culture—which again requires understanding of the status quo of its culture. Chapter 9 illuminates trade unions as a potentially strong reflection partner when it comes to understanding the culture from the co-worker perspective. Chapter 4 elaborates on the role of leaders in developing an inclusive culture. Other chapters highlight the importance of the structural characteristics, including the job tasks

for PWD (Chapter 7) and the technical, practical-organizational and broader adaptations that are possible to accomplish (Chapter 6).

Hence, it is important for the readers of this book to be reflexive about the contextual factors and the way these factors play a role in the shaping of workplace inclusion. Insights from other organizations can contribute to inspiration for the own organization, but reflexivity also means that copycat behaviour is to be avoided. This lesson contradicts the tendency to adapt a best practice approach and its manifestation in quick fixes, toolkits, and checklists.

The starting point should therefore be to thoroughly understand the internal and external organizational context, because context affects the shaping of employment relationships including workplace inclusion of PWD. This call for action encourages you to begin exploring the connections between your organization's context and inclusion practices.

Questions to trigger action:

- Given your organization's contextual conditions, what do you consider as your room to manoeuvre to improve workplace inclusion in your organization?
- What is the link between these contextual factors and the ways in which you practice inclusion?
- What are the contextual drivers (i.e. that you can utilize) and the barriers (i.e. that you need to pay attention to)?

12.3 Key Lesson 3: Workplace Inclusion of PWD Requires Investing in Personal Relations

This book shows the multitude of stakeholders that are involved in workplace inclusion of PWD. These stakeholders need to interact to make inclusion work. Hence, inclusion depends on social relationships within the organization and with actors outside the organization.

All chapters in this book show that the active ingredients in inclusion processes largely build on social processes. They clearly show that merely having strategies and/or policies of inclusion is insufficient if these are not realized in developing and nurturing constructive social relationships at the workplace. By extension, workplace inclusion is a shared responsibility for all actors involved. A lesson learned is that each actor has a responsibility—whether it is a supervisor, co-worker, job coach, HR professional, external

support provider, trade union representative or managing director. They all play an important and relevant role in workplace inclusion.

For example, Chapter 6 demonstrates that even the most technical and instrumental workplace accommodations can only lead to sustainable workplace inclusion of PWD when actors such as colleagues and managers are involved. Likewise, Chapter 8 shows that actions and attitudes of PWDs' co-workers are vital for the establishment of an inclusive climate at the workplace. If inclusion is merely the perceived responsibility of managers, the crucial engagement also of co-workers is left at chance. This is unfortunate, as co-workers by definition are those involved in—and ideally with a major responsibility for—inclusion in the day-to-day operations at the work floor.

Also, other types of relations are highlighted. Chapter 4 emphasizes the development of strong relations between managers and PWD. Ideally, such relations have an 'active ingredient' of mutuality, which refers to a reciprocal exchange of trust and understanding of each other's situation and role. Chapter 9 describes the relations between managers and trade union representatives, whereas Chapter 10 describes the collaborative relations between employers and external service provider such as job coaches.

In the end, workplace inclusion of PWD is all about people management and the employment relationships for those involved. This lesson's call for action for practitioners is therefore to invest in social relationships at the workplace and to involve actors right from the start of inclusion experiments (see also lesson 1).

Questions to trigger action:

- Do you include co-workers, line managers, HR, and other actors when hiring PWD? Do you include these actors as part of the socialization of the newcomers (PWD)?
- Do you interact with other actors involved with workplace inclusion within your own organization? Do you regularly see them?

12.4 Key Lesson 4: Workplace Inclusion of PWD Requires Work and Attention Across Multiple Layers in Organizations

One of the implications of the involvement of multiple actors is that workplace inclusion of PWD takes place at several levels in the organizations and, to some extent, also outside the organization. It is thus a multilayered process. The six key cornerstones of workplace inclusion providing

the backbone for the structure of the chapters, and which we outlined in Chapter 1 (strategic support policies, leadership and interpersonal relations, work design and accommodations, co-worker collegiality, external support, and organizational structural characteristics) indicate these different levels in the organization.

The cornerstones range across a continuum from a *strategic* level—i.e. the indirect work environment of PWD consisting of actors that are at a slighter distance of PWDs, such as executive managers and HRM staff—to an *operational* level—i.e. direct or proximal work environment of the PWD where technical, 'hands-on', task-related and emotional support is provided by actors that are in frequent contact with the PWD, for example supervisors, mentors, co-workers. The cornerstones also range between actors inside the focal organizations and external actors providing support to the organizations.

The key learning lesson from the chapters is that these different cornerstones are interconnected and cannot be isolated when it comes to workplace inclusion. Hence, removing or downplaying one of them will diminish efforts of inclusion. Chapter 2 underscores that there needs to be an alignment within organizations between HR, diversity, equity and inclusion teams and other teams and hiring managers. This means that a strategic orientation is important for overview and overall direction, but it needs to be part of the operational work structures such as work design (see Chapters 6 and 7). Bottom-up initiative through for example pilots and experiments by supervisors or co-workers on the other hand may affect strategy and operations. In addition, support by for instance co-workers or in many instances by external support providers is needed for practical, day-to-day matters (Chapter 8).

The multi-layered nature of workplace inclusion means that it is important to recognize the role and responsibility of actors involved with different parts of the cornerstones. In larger organizations, which are thereby likely to work more specialized, the actors are likely easier to identify. For example, the organization will have a designated HRM department, trade union representatives, and so on. In SMEs, work is more fluid and flexible, and tasks may be shared or even held by one person, such as the owner or director of an organization. As we are reminded in Chapter 11, the flexibility of smaller organizations can smoothen things up and accelerate workplace inclusion, but larger organizations have, despite risks of bureaucracy, the opportunity to strategically connect workplace inclusion to the overall organizational goals through strategic HRM.

This fourth lesson can be linked to the concept of 'line of sight' from HRM studies. This concept refers to the alignment between an individual employee's daily tasks, responsibilities and performance and the overall

strategic goals in the organization—in our case, the work inclusion goals of the organization. From a strategic level, it is about optimizing all employees' line of sight regarding inclusion, i.e. to ensure that there is a general understanding of the goals of work inclusion among all employees. From an operational level, it is about reflecting upon one's own line of sight, and how to improve it. This better the sight, the more (perceived) the room to manoeuvre.

This fourth lesson's call for action for readers involves considering and acting upon the multiple layers of the workplace. This action requires flexibility across the different levels as well as room for personal and organizational development. This means that actors reflect upon, or be trained in, how to move between the levels and make connections between the different levels. This action may mean reflecting upon the following issues:

- First, there is the 'You'—who are you and where are you placed in terms of the cornerstones/levels in the organization?
- Second, there is the dimension of 'You and the PWD'. This will involve your relations with the PWD, as a colleague or supervisor for example. How would you characterize these relations, and what is needed to improve them?
- Third, there is the 'You and your team', which refers to the collective or your management role towards a team of employees working with the PWD. How can you contribute to develop the inclusion climate in your team?
- Finally, 'You and your organization' refers to the strategic decision-making and goals related to the inclusion of PWDs in the organization. How can you contribute to develop the inclusion climate in your organization?

We summarize the learning points and calls for action in Table 12.1.

Table 12.1 Overview of the learning points and calls for action

Learning points	Call for action
Learning point 1: Workplace inclusion of PWD does not require very different practices from HRM or "broader" inclusion.	• Do *something*—start practicing inclusion • Experiment with work inclusion, and don't be afraid to fail (e.g. by a PWD losing motivation or dropping out)
Learning point 2: Workplace inclusion of PWD requires reflexivity about context	• Be aware of the key structural conditions (e.g. size, sector, industry) and how they inform inclusion in your workplace • Reflect upon your room to manoeuvre to improve workplace inclusion—and act upon it.
Learning point 3: Workplace inclusion of PWD requires investing in personal relations	• Invest in social relationships—they require time and attention. • Involve relevant actors such as co-workers, line managers and HR when hiring PWD, as well as in the socialization processes.
Learning point 4: Workplace inclusion of PWD requires work and attention across multiple layers in organizations	• Reflect and act upon multiple layers in your organization—i.e. strategic and operational level. • Reflect upon how to align or move between the levels.

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E. Breit et al. (eds.), *Shaping Inclusive Workplaces for Persons with Disabilities*,
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