

Inclusivity and Disability Mainstreaming

NID Training Disability Diary

- Compiled by Dr Jean Mitchell



Inclusivity and mainstreaming are two contemporary 'buzz words'. Read further to find out more about these words and how putting them into practice can change the way an organisation approaches decision making and strategic planning.

Introduction

Inclusivity is described as the provision of equal opportunities, respect, and access to resources to marginalised people from minority groups, and those with physical or intellectual disabilities (Chaudhry, Paquibut & Tunio, 2021).

Disability inclusion in the workplace focuses on encouraging employers to employ and accommodate suitably trained people with disabilities. Disability mainstreaming, on the other hand, takes inclusivity a bit further and challenges any discrimination that might exist.

Discussion

Disability inclusion is a relatively new idea (Wickenden, Mader, Thompson, 2022). The fact that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) (UN, 2006) stresses the importance of inclusivity in all sectors of society, has added impetus to disability inclusion. It is of particular significance in the workplace. Employees in an inclusive workplace feel that they are recognised as members of a group and that they are treated fairly by the organisation. An inclusive workplace is also one in which all employees are made aware of the diversity among their colleagues, and diversity is celebrated (Chaudhry, Paquibut & Tunio, 2021).

It has been found that inclusive teams tend to encourage employee engagement and productivity (Wickenden, Mader, Thompson, 2022). However, in order to integrate people with disabilities into their businesses, employers should have some knowledge and understanding of the nature of different types of disabilities. In this way they will be able to give valuable guidance about necessary accommodations, skills and jobs that would best suit all their employees, especially those with disabilities. In addition, Sefotho (2015) advises that people from every sector of a business should be included in decision-making for the business to be truly inclusive.

Disability mainstreaming involves entrenching disability in the planning processes and project designs of an organisation. The aim is to guarantee that people with disabilities are included in evaluating and addressing all services, even those that do not necessarily focus on disability. It is a way to promote inclusion and to remove any

barriers that exclude people with disabilities from enjoying their human rights (UNRWA 2013).

The Western Cape Government has a Disability Mainstreaming Strategy 2015 – 2020 (WCG 2015). This document describes disability mainstreaming as ‘the integration of disability issues into an organisation’s analysis, planning, performance, personnel, policy, monitoring and assessment’ (WCG 2015: 12). In so doing they plan to address the concerns and needs of people with disabilities and their families so that inequality is not continued. It is believed that the strategy will provide a sense of security and belonging of people with disabilities.

Conclusion

The aims of disability inclusion and mainstreaming are to achieve equity and equality for those who might be the victims of unintentional discrimination so that we can reduce and eventually eradicate all forms of discrimination. When people enjoy direct and equitable participation in decision making, they are empowered to contribute to an organisation. At times organisations might suffer from ‘disability blindness’ (NSCI, 2014) because they wrongly assume that decisions taken affect all employees, with or without disabilities in the same way. As a result, decisions are not made from a disability-specific viewpoint.

Organisations should consider their processes and ask themselves whether disability inclusion and equality are evident or whether there are signs of discrimination. If the latter is evident, it is evident that changes are necessary.

For further information about this article contact
lientjievansburg@nidtraining.org.za



References

- Chaudhry, I. S., Paquibut, R. Y. & Muhammad Nawaz Tunio, M. N. (2021). Do workforce diversity, inclusion practices, & organizational characteristics contribute to organizational innovation? Evidence from the U.A.E. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1). DOI: 10.1080/23311975.2021.1947549
- Sefotho, M. M. (2015) Mainstreaming disability in education beyond 2015. *South African Journal of Education*, 35(1), <http://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za>
- United Nations (UN) (2006). United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/disability/crpd/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-crpd>
- United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). (2013). Promoting the rights of persons with disabilities disability mainstreaming definition and implementation. https://www.unrwa.org/userfiles/file/disability/3_disability_mainstreaming.pdf
- Western Cape Government (WCG) (2015). Disability Mainstreaming Strategy 2015 – 2020 Department of Social Development
- Wickenden, M., Mader, P., Thompson, S. & Shaw, J. (2022). Editorial: Mainstreaming disability inclusive employment in international development. *Journal of International Development*, 34(5) pp. 933-941. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jid.3679>