

Disability: Employment Equity

NID Training Disability Diary

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Introduction

Steven Hawkins (2011) admonished governments throughout the world for overlooking the vast potential of people with disabilities. South Africa has the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998, amended in 2018 that aims to achieve equity in the workplace (RSA, 1998).

Discussion

The intention of the Act and the Amendment is to promote equal opportunities and fair treatment of all people in employment (RSA, 1998; 2018).

By eliminating unfair discrimination and implementing affirmative action measures to ensure that designated, previously disadvantaged groups (blacks, women and persons with a disability) are afforded opportunities to be employed in all occupational categories and at all levels in the workplace.

The amendment made it possible for numerical targets to be set for such affirmative action. The Act also prohibits discrimination against an employee according to race, gender, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, HIV status, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language and birth (RSA, 1998; 2018).

At the same time the Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) is a statutory body that reports on the progress of the implementation of the Act. The most recent report covers the period from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020. The 2020 report found that there is a significant proportion of the Act that had not been achieved (RSA, 2020).

It is disappointing that targets for the economic empowerment of persons with disabilities had not resulted in their economic independence in both the public and private sectors. Most persons with disabilities were employed in semi-skilled, unskilled or temporary positions. In 2011/2 only 1.9% of top management, 1.2% of senior management, and 1% of professionals constitute people with disabilities, while the 2019-2020 Employment Equity Report states that the representation of persons with disabilities in each occupational level remained no higher than 1% (RSA, 2020).

Conclusion

The United Nations Organisation requires that every It is unfortunate that in the more than twenty years since the Employment Equity Act was passed, so little has been achieved in favour of persons with disabilities. The question that needs to be addressed is: 'Who should accept responsibility for this?' The education and training system that has not purposefully provided skills training for youths with disabilities, employers for not being prepared to employ persons with disabilities, or society as a whole? No matter how many laws and Acts are promulgated, there must be the will from all concerned to implement them to ensure that persons with disabilities have equal opportunities to be educated and employed.

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