

Employing people with disabilities in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has developed policy and legislation to overcome barriers that people with disabilities face in the labour force, yet there remain practical issues relating to the implementation of these policies. This research aimed at identifying the knowledge, attitudes and perceptions and experiences of employers when hiring People with Disabilities (PWDs). Two organisations were selected using a purposive sampling method where interviews were conducted based on a completed questionnaire. It was found that there was a lack of knowledge about disability and although there were negative attitudes presented toward disabled people from fellow employees as well as physical barriers to their employment within the organisations, there were also clear benefits. These benefits were related to among others, the positive contribution made by the employees with a disability.

Key words: people with disabilities, attitudes towards People With Disabilities, employment of people with disabilities

Introduction

The South African constitution states that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it; we are united in our diversity”^{1:1243}. The South African White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS)² envisions “A society for all...encompassing human diversity and the development of all human potential”, encouraging people with disabilities (PWDs) to make contributions of their experience, capabilities and talents to both national and international development.

According to the national mid year population estimates of 2007, South Africa has a population of 47, 9 million³. There are no current statistics available on the number of PWDs currently in South Africa; however according to the 2001 census, approximately 5% of the population had disabilities⁴. If this statistical measure has remained constant, there are an estimated 2 395 000 PWD in South Africa. The Commission for Employment Equity indicates that 43 716 of PWD are currently in part time, temporary or permanent employment⁵. Although this is a marked improvement on the 12 049 employees employed in 2003, only 1.8% of PWD are now employed. This makes a mockery of the statements given in paragraph one.

Literature Review

It is evident that South Africa has developed policy and legislation to overcome barriers faced by the PWDs in the labour force, but the practical implementation poses a challenge. It is essential that occupational therapists who are involved in the vocational assessment and management of clients understand the knowledge, perceptions, attitudes and experiences that employers have towards hiring people with disabilities.

Literature indicates that a lack of opportunities and resources increase disability prevalence². Cultural myths and misconceptions appear to have also played a role in disability discrimination, as some African cultures view disabled children as a social and economic curse on the family and are often considered a burden. As a result many PWDs consider themselves to be without purpose.

South Africa has developed a number of policies with respect to fairness and equality of race, gender and disability in order to overcome segregation and discrimination. These include, *inter alia*, the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination act⁶, the National Skills Development Strategy 2005- 2010⁷, the Employment Equity Act (EEA)⁸ and The White Paper on an Integrated National Disability Strategy (INDS)². Whilst governmental



policies such as the Employment Equity Act provide a guideline for employers and employees on promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment of PWDs, section 2.2. indicates that “failure to observe it does not, by itself, render a designated employer liable in any proceedings, except where the code refers to obligations that are required by the Act”⁸. Section 3.2. suggests that it is therefore ultimately the decision of the employer to facilitate employment of PWDs based on current policy⁸.

Barriers to Employment of PWD’s

The literature published both nationally and internationally has described the barriers to employing PWDs. These include, amongst others, a lack of knowledge and awareness of disabilities, employer and fellow employee attitudes, discrimination, physical infrastructure, cost of accommodations, productivity of PWDs, and legislation guiding the employment of PWDs. The following discussion highlights some of these barriers to employment.

Discrimination

Discrimination against PWDs as a result of negative attitudes and lack of knowledge and awareness is frequently described in the literature. When one has a prejudicial attitude, discrimination can occur. Insufficient information, rather than prejudice itself, has been found to be a significant obstacle in eliminating discrimination in the employment of PWDs⁹. People without disabilities usually have negative impressions about people with disabilities, viewing them as inferior¹⁰. These impressions can foster discrimination within the workplace and contribute to unemployment and poor working conditions.

Physical Environment

The physical environment, such as infrastructure, equipment and machinery have been found to be significant barriers in preventing the employment of PWDs. The inability of PWDs to access workplaces due to inadequate parking facilities and inaccessible public transport were some cited concerns¹¹.

South African studies have supported this finding. In a study by Gida and Ortlepp⁹, who investigated human resource management practices in the Financial Mail’s top 100 organisations in South Africa, participant employers indicated that inaccessible facilities and public transport prevented them from hiring PWDs⁹. Research within the Bank Seta¹², a local statutory body, established by the Minister of Labour, to support and grow the level of current and future skills needed in the banking sector, indicated that most of the employers within the banking sectors commented that the buildings were not accessible to PWDs and major changes were required to accommodate PWDs appropriately. Wordsworth¹³, in his South African research, which looked at generic barriers to employment of PWDs in the open labour market, identified inaccessibility of buildings and infrastructure as the predominant physical barrier to employing PWDs.

Experience & Skill

According to the INDS², it is estimated that in South Africa only 30% of the children with disabilities who are at the appropriate school going age, are attending school. This inevitably results in increasing levels of limited skills and illiteracy amongst PWDs. A lack of skills and qualifications among PWD were identified frequently in the research. Wordsworth’s study again indicated that employers thought that PWDs frequently did not have the experience and skills required for certain jobs¹³. Further research found that whilst employers were willing to employ PWD, they failed to do so because applicants with disabilities did not possess the adequate level of qualification¹⁴.

Non-disclosure

An additional barrier which was highlighted in Gida and Ortlepp’s⁹ study, not indicated in other perused literature, was the voluntary failure of PWDs to disclose their disability. This acts as a barrier to employers, as non-disclosure results in the company not identifying specific needs of the employee, which may impact work motiva-

tion and performance as well as preventing the company from gaining the benefits in terms of employment equity status when employing PWDs.

Disability Policy & Legislation

According to International Labour Organization¹⁵, many employers assume that people with disabilities have limited working capacity, that they bring problems and that once employed it is difficult to terminate the contract because of their legal rights. In the USA, the Disabilities Act does not protect disabled workers who are unable to adequately perform their job and employers are able to terminate employment if it is not related to the disability¹⁶. In South Africa, the EEA indicates that an employer can terminate employment if the employee is not capable of fulfilling the job requirements and reasonable accommodation cannot be made⁸. According to studies done by Perry¹⁷, although anti-discrimination, human rights legislation and quota systems aim to motivate employers to adjust their attitudes and commit to hiring PWDs, these measures have not been effective as they suggest that disabled people cannot be employed on merit and require special treatment within the work environment. Research by Heaver et al¹⁸, in the United Kingdom, indicated that knowledge about disability in companies with an employee who was disabled was also higher than those who did not have a PWD. However, although they knew about the legislation, they were unaware of the implications of the relevant Act for their organisation¹⁸. In the same study researchers indicated that they didn’t understand the concept of ‘reasonable accommodation’; some were even unaware of the term¹⁸.

Locally Gattoo¹⁹, an occupational therapist, in her article in an online Human Resource magazine affirmed that from a legislative standpoint, South Africa had made efforts, short of passing a separate disability act to ensure that PWDs were treated equitably at work and that it was up to the individual organisation to make the effort in implementing the legislation. The International Labour Office^{20:19} also indicated that “In South Africa, the need to encourage employers to be more involved in promoting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities is evident. Some employers are involved, and examples of good practices exist, but many more jobs are required.” Research done by Wordsworth¹³ found that South African legislation does not focus enough on PWDs and therefore does not provide sufficient support for their employment. But Dube et al²⁰, found examples of good practices in South Africa, as disabled people were seen to play significant roles in governmental departments at all levels.

In perusing numerous studies which focussed on determining the PWDs’ experience of employment, it was found that there was a paucity of local studies which paid specific attention to the employers’ perspectives. The need to explore the barriers as afore-mentioned within a South African context was thus necessary.

Methods

Aim

The study aimed at identifying the knowledge, attitudes, perceptions and experiences of employers when hiring PWDs, so that practical strategies during the vocational rehabilitation process might be applied to effectively integrate PWDs within the workforce.

A descriptive qualitative study approach was utilised, more specifically an instrumental collective case study design.

Sampling of companies selected to participate in the research

A recruitment agency was approached for a list of companies which actively recruited people with disabilities and which could be approached for the study. The agency referred the authors to their website where a list of companies was obtained. Purposive sampling was utilised to select the first two companies that met the following inclusion criteria: the organisation had to be a private enterprise that had previously hired or had in their employ a person with a disability, be situated within the Durban central business



district and have more than 50 employees within the organisation. The two organisations selected were from the manufacturing and finance sectors. The persons interviewed were the human resource manager of each organisation and a supervisor, who had supervised an employee with a disability.

Data gathering tools

According to Yin²¹, there are six sources of evidence for data collection: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct and participant observations, and physical artifacts. For the purpose of this study the following were used:

- ❖ **Questionnaire:** This was used to gain demographic information and current recruitment and employment practices about the organisation (see Appendix 1).
- ❖ **Semi-structured interviews:** Interviews occurred at the organisation's respective business premises. The interview questions were based on the questionnaires completed by the Human Resource Managers prior to the interview. Interviews spanned approximately 40-60 minutes each. Interviews conducted were digitally audio-recorded and manually transcribed. All transcriptions were proof read and matched to the audio tapes by all researchers.
- ❖ **Documents:** These included the organisations' current policies on employment and recruitment of able-bodied and PWDs, as well as the organisations' profiles.

Construct validity was obtained by use of multiple sources of evidence. Triangulation (data and investigator triangulation) was employed to ensure that the methods used to obtain the data were reliable and that the conclusions generated by the

research were valid. Each researcher individually analysed the data prior to collectively discussing emerging themes and then debated the interpretation of the data to reach non-biased conclusions.

Data were analysed using qualitative **content analysis**. Initially, **within-case** analysis was used to provide a detailed description of each of the cases and also to establish themes within the cases. Issues in each transcription of the participants spoken words were identified (Level 1 analysis). This was followed by categorisation of similar themes under a common heading (Level 2 Analysis). Level 3 analysis comprised a comparison of themes to develop patterns (pattern matching). This was followed by **cross-case analysis** which was an attempt at considering processes that occurred in both cases and was thus utilised in identifying patterns that extended further than the single case. This cross-case analysis assisted in developing stronger descriptions and arguments of the phenomena of interest, i.e. barriers to employment of PWDs.

Ethical clearance was obtained from relevant structures within the University of KwaZulu- Natal. Informed consent was received prior to data gathering with the participants' right to privacy and confidentiality and their right to accurate information being adhered to. Transcriptions have been confidentially archived with controlled access.

Results

Organisation and Participant Demographics

Two organisations participated in the study – a profile of the companies can be seen in Table 1. Both companies were located in Kwa Zulu Natal and both were privately owned with one being from the manufacturing sector and the other, the financial sector.

The details of the staff that were interviewed at each of the organisations can be found in Table 2. In the case of Organisation A, two staff members were interviewed whereas in Organisation B, three were interviewed.

This study was aimed at determining the barriers employers face when employing PWDs. The themes identified are discussed within the context of available literature.

Recruitment of employees

The International Labour Office¹⁵ indicated that examples of good practices in promoting employment of PWDs are present in South Africa. Good practices were evident in both organisations which were actively **recruiting** PWDs. Organisation A used two recruitment agencies that specialised in the placement of PWD whereas organisation B used a "word of mouth" process. Both organisations gave preference to PWDs who met the minimum requirements for the position that had been applied for. The recruitment officer of organisation B had additionally undergone training on how to conduct interviews with PWDs. In organisation A the human resource manager attempted to have an employee with a disability on the interview panel so that a disabled applicant would feel more at ease.

Table 1: Organization Demographics

	Organisation A Motor Manufacturing Company	Organisation B Banking Network
Description	Privately owned company Production driven and highly competitive.	Privately funded 96 business units
Philosophy	To build mutual respect, trust and understanding & to enhance personal & professional growth.	To abide by government legislation that promotes equity & aspires to be a bank for disabled clients & employees.
Location	KwaZulu-Natal	KwaZulu-Natal
No of Employees	10 500 (permanent & temporary placements)	± 1000 employees
% of Disabled Employees	1.5% (Target for Company is 4%)	0.4%
Types of Disability	Variable	Physical and psychiatric
Developmental programmes & Facilities	Health Care Facility (GP's, OT & Nurses) Employment Assistance Programme (EAP) Educational programme	24-hour Counselling Service Employment Assistance Programme (EAP)

Table 2: Participant Demographics

	Organisation A Motor Manufacturing Company	Organisation B Banking Network
Participant 1	Head of Human Capital Management Indian, middle-aged female Bachelor in Social Science (BSC); MBA, PhD in Business Administration Employed in company for 2 years	Regional Human Resource Manager African, middle-aged male Bachelor in Arts (Psychology) Honours Registered Psychometrist Employed in company for 8 years
Participant 2	Manager - Engineering Maintenance Division Indian, middle-aged male Diploma in Engineering, BCom Management, MBA Employed in company for 17 years	Recruitment Officer White, middle-aged female (disabled) Certificate in Human Resource Management Employed in company for 4 years
Participant 3		Branch Manager White, middle-aged female Certificate in Banking Employed in company for 25 years Currently supervising a disabled employee



Despite these efforts in the recruitment and selection processes, the employment equity targets of both organisations had not been met.

The barriers highlighted in this research are discussed below.

Barriers to employment

Literature shows that there are many perceived and experienced barriers preventing successful employment of PWDs. The South African Minister of Labour has stressed that it is the responsibility of the employers to remove barriers that PWDs experience, as most of these barriers were created by the employers themselves²².

Legislation and Policies

Both organisations indicated that they align all guidelines and policies to governmental legislations and policies, especially with respect to employment equity requirements. However only organisation B had an internal policy with respect to the employment of PWDs. Organisation A had only one general policy promoting equality in the workplace. The reason provided was that they had not intended to discriminate against any individual with respect to race, gender or disability.

Legislation and policies play a vital role in overcoming segregation and discrimination of PWDs within the work place. Research conducted in Ireland²³ and South Africa⁹ suggests that the majority of employers have equal opportunities policies, but only some employers have specific strategies or policies in place for the employment of PWDs. A significant barrier to the employment of PWDs was that companies do not have internal policies targeted at recruiting and employing PWD¹⁴.

The authors' concluded that a lack of internal policy with respect to the employment of PWDs, in organisation A, may be a contributing factor to the difficulties that it is experiencing in meeting its equity targets. Organisation B utilises its internal policy to formulate guidelines to assist in overcoming the very same difficulties. The supervisor in organisation B reported that although she was aware of the internal policy she had not seen the positive effects of implementation, in that the organisation had not met its equity targets. It is thus concluded that although policies and guidelines are in place it appears that they are not always implemented effectively.

Employer Ignorance and Lack of Employer Awareness and Knowledge of Disability

Anecdotally, it appears as though psychiatric disabilities in general, more than physical disabilities are not fully understood and acknowledged by society. Organisation A did not acknowledge psychiatric illnesses as being disabling, when probed about its understanding of disability. *Physical disability, learning disability and fear of heights* were mentioned as categories of disabilities. The general understanding was that PWDs can only be placed in administrative positions. They were viewed as unable to fulfill the requirements in manufacturing and engineering divisions, due to the inaccessible and hazardous environment. This once again reinforces the ideology of the organisation in viewing disability as mainly "physical" in nature. The Human Resource manager and the recruitment officer of Organisation B described disabilities as being physical. They also described stress, anxiety and depression as disabilities which are not visible to the "naked eye" because they affect the person's overall functioning.

"Uh somebody that hasn't got all the functioning's that a normal person has got umm... like with his arm (unilateral upper limb amputee) but that's not the only disability obviously there's various disability mmm ya, it's not ONLY somebody who's born with all their body parts and functioning parts. Disability could also be in the brain but in this case it's not..." (Recruitment Officer, Organisation B).

This again demonstrates that their restricted exposure to disability limits their awareness and understanding of disability.

The organisations indicated that professionals were consulted when adjusting the environment to suit PWDs. The manager in organisation A reported that they use professionals, such as occupational therapists, for vocational assessments, within their existing health facility. The supervisor on the other hand did not consult

these available therapists for assistance when making reasonable accommodations. The use of recruitment agencies that specialise in the employment of PWDs were also reportedly utilised. Organisation B consulted with building professionals rather than rehabilitation professionals when attempting to make their facilities accessible to disabled employees and clients.

The authors concluded that organisation A had limited **awareness** and exposure to psychiatric disabilities. A limited awareness of disability was also evident in organisation B. It was reported that the Human Resource Managers were often approached by unit managers for an explanation of how the corporation defines disability. Research conducted in SA indicated that banks in general had a lack of **knowledge** about the types, degrees and definitions of disability¹³. This lack of knowledge and understanding of disability and role of the various professionals that could be consulted, contributes to the barriers experienced by the organisations in recruitment, selection and employment of PWDs in these instances.

Attitudes

Gida and Ortlepp⁹ indicated that the cost of accommodation is no longer about money spent on reasonable accommodation but rather about time and effort spent trying to change attitudes towards PWDs.

Further research conducted in South Africa²⁴, revealed that ignorance relating to disability resulted in negative attitudes towards the PWDs. According to Bachelder and Braddock¹⁴ negative attitudes affect the employment of PWDs, as they influence the type of position offered and the extent to which reasonable accommodations are made for the PWDs. This is supported by research conducted by the International Labour Organisation¹⁵, which has shown that discrimination may occur in the work place if negative attitudes are present.

Contradictory views were evident in organisation A. The HR manager described the environment as very friendly and welcoming to PWDs. This was contradicted by the supervisor who observed **negative attitudes**, such as stereotyping and non-supportive behaviours towards a PWD from other employees. It can be assumed that managers may not always be aware of the challenges at ground level in a company that has a PWD in their employ, which could impact the efficacy of accommodations made, such as sensitivity workshops to assist in increasing knowledge and awareness of disability which may in turn impact attitudes.

Organisation B reported that employees generally have a **negative mindsets** towards PWDs as identified in their diversity workshops. The manager suggested that this could be due to a lack of education and understanding of PWDs as well as employees being unsure of how to interact with PWDs. This is supported by Gida and Ortlepp⁹ who found that a number of employers indicated that ignorance leads to negative attitudes towards PWDs. The supervisor of a PWD interviewed within this organisation indicated that the approach and acceptance of PWDs by the employer play a vital role in successfully integrating the PWD. The managers have resolved to overcome this barrier through educational programmes presented at each branch unit which is currently in place within the banking network. A more positive approach to disability was noted in this organisation which may be attributed to its nature of business (service-orientated), presence of a disabled employee in the active recruitment of PWD as well as the manager's background in psychology and sociology. Despite these endeavours, interestingly, the percentage of PWDs in Organisation B's employ is lower than that of Organisation A. One wonders whether the service-driven nature of the business is what prevents PWDs from being recruited into these positions or it could be due to the tertiary qualifications required in the financial sectors rather than negative attitudes and mindsets. This is also debated in the literature^{25, 26}.

Non-disclosure of Disabilities by Employees

Gida and Ortlepp⁹ found that PWDs in South Africa do not disclose their disability voluntarily. Non-disclosure was a barrier recognised by both organisations at the application phase. The perceived contributing factors were highlighted as possibly being linked to



the fear that PWDs harboured of the consequences of disclosure e.g. not being appointed for a position or possible retrenchment or termination and the possibility of labeling or stigmatisation. With those employees that are already appointed, both organisations aim to create an environment that would encourage disclosure if this was not apparent or disclosed at the recruitment, interview or appointment stages. The reason cited for this was so that necessary supports may be put in place as well as the fact that it increases the number of PWDs on the organisations statistics, which have associated benefits e.g. employment equity status etc.

In order to overcome this perceived barrier experienced by employers, both organisations indicated that they conduct diversity and awareness workshops. Through these workshops organisation A aimed to improve acceptance of diversity within the workplace. Organisation B's focus differs slightly. Although they aim to create a welcoming environment by removing misperceptions, they also use this as a tool to encourage PWD to disclose their disability. This method of eliminating the barrier of non-disclosure and stigmatisation appears not to be always effective, as the supervisor of organisation A indicated that little change in attitudes have been subjectively noted despite these workshops. The above clearly indicates that the stigmatisation associated with disability is still prevalent and PWDs remain hesitant to disclose their status despite the legislation put in place promoting equalisation. Moreover, one may also assume that PWDs may not entirely be aware of their rights as employees. It may also be possible that PWDs want to be seen as being "normal" if the disability does not negatively impact their ability in executing functions of a job for which they are appointed.

Lack of a pool of skilled PWDs, disability type and nature of work

Both organisations indicated that formal qualifications are required for most positions and that they experience difficulty in sourcing PWDs with **adequate skills and qualifications**. A study in South Africa by Wordsworth¹³ established that there is a lack of PWDs with adequate qualifications for the job, which may include a history of limited access to education via a supportive scholastic environment. Whilst South Africa has developed policy in order to establish an inclusive education system, the implementation has been one of a slow process. This is supported by the Integrated National Disability Strategy² which reported that greater than half of the children with disabilities are not receiving adequate education. It may be assumed that part of the problem of unskilled PWDs is related to the educational system and opportunities for children with disabilities. The authors were unable to source other literature that supported the existence of a pool of unskilled PWDs. Organisation A attempts to overcome this challenge by employing previously disadvantaged individuals (including PWDs) at entry level positions and providing them with opportunity to study with a bursary from the company. The number of PWDs who have accessed this opportunity within the organisation was however not given.

Even though PWDs may have a formal qualification their opportunity to work can be further restricted by their **type of condition** and the actual **nature of the work**, as indicated by both organisations. Although both organisations had encountered PWDs with adequate qualifications for the job, the nature of disability at times restricted employment of the individual. In organisation A, barriers included the fact that access to the working environment could not always be reasonable given the highly technical equipment, hazardous environments and product-driven nature of the company. Organisation B indicated that accommodation in a service driven environment with deadlines were not always conducive to individuals with certain types of disabilities e.g. physical disabilities impacting endurance levels and mobility. These results are in line with Gida and Ortlepp⁹ and the Bank SETA¹² who indicated that the nature of the industry can act as a barrier when employing PWD.

The authors acknowledge from their study that there seems to be an **inadequate pool of PWDs** from which to recruit, which may, to a greater or lesser extent be impacted by the fact that PWDs do not have the educational background or qualifications for

skilled positions, they do not disclose their disabilities or that they do not actively apply for jobs. This could be attributed to a lack of self confidence or capability to 'compete' with able bodied persons for a job. The type of disability and the nature of the business may also be a barrier, preventing the employment of PWDs.

Productivity of Disabled Employees

Productivity was highlighted by organisation A as a barrier, because the supervisor interviewed had experienced a situation where other employees had to carry a PWDs workload. This was a concern due to the productivity driven nature of this company. It also may suggest that the PWD had not been suitably realigned or reasonably accommodated. Unfortunately no further supporting evidence was provided for this barrier within this organisation. Studies by Graffam et al²⁷ and Kirkbride and Peck²⁸ found that employers are concerned about productivity levels of PWDs. Organisation B did not identify productivity as a barrier rather they reported on an employee with a disability who performed at higher productivity levels than his able bodied colleagues. This is supported by international research^{29,30}, in which equal or greater productivity rates of PWDs in comparison with able bodied employees were reported.

Physical Infrastructure as a Barrier to Employment

The **physical environment** was identified as a significant barrier by both organisations. They indicated that their infrastructure is often not disability friendly, and this further restricts the employment of PWDs. This is supported by research by the Bank SETA¹² and Wordsworth¹³. Both organisations, when revamping and building premises, are conscious of making the environment accessible to successfully integrate PWDs in the workplace. Organisation A indicated that they are in the planning stages of making their infrastructure accessible to PWDs according to national standards whereas organisation B was in the process of implementing their plans of making their environments accessible to PWDs with mobility impairments. Both organisations emphasised accessibility in terms of mobility as a primary concern. The organisations additionally indicated minor accommodations that have been made, such as moving a desk, changing a workstation, or reorganisation of office equipment and furniture. Gida and Ortlepp's⁹ research found that most employers had to make minor adjustments to accommodate a PWD.

Further studies^{13,31} highlighted the fact that most accommodations required, need to be reasonable and may not be excessively expensive for a company. In our study, both organisations stressed that cost was not a significant barrier when employing a PWD, as long as the accommodations required were reasonable. However what does "reasonable" mean? According to the Employment Equity Act section one of Chapter one⁸, **reasonable accommodation** is considered to be "any modification or adjustment to a job or to the working environment that will enable a person from a designated group to have reasonable access to or to participate or advance employment," and that accommodating a PWD should not result in "unjustified hardship" for the company. It is ultimately the company's decision as to what may constitute justifiable or unjustifiable hardship. The authors concluded that in some cases, PWDs may not always require expensive accommodations to be made.

Benefits of employing a PWD

Although the organisations experienced a number of barriers when recruiting and integrating PWDs in the workplace, they emphasised many **benefits**. Organisation B indicated that employing PWDs is a business strategy. This is congruent with a study done by Hosey and Mattis³² which suggested that employing PWDs can increase the companies' profitability levels. Consumers favour these companies and thus provide them with more business. It was emphasised by both organisations that a great benefit of employing PWDs is that they score equity points. This makes them more lucrative and competitive. They further added that it is easy to train PWDs because of their positive attitude to work. Organisation A indicated that the manager of a PWD performs better because he has to problem solve



around making adaptations for PWDs. It was further highlighted that if it was not for the South African Legislation stipulating that PWDs should be employed, employers would not have recognised the benefits of employing PWDs. Both organisations realised that PWDs can make a positive contribution to their business hence their positive attitude and active attempts to recruit PWDs.

Conclusion

The authors aimed to gain a deeper understanding of the experience of employers when hiring and integrating people with disabilities within the work force. This was explored within two organisations, within the manufacturing and finance sectors.

Findings reflected that employers still lack adequate knowledge, awareness and an understanding of disability that contributes to the ineffective integration of PWDs within the workforce. Additionally, findings illustrated that whilst South African legislation is compelling businesses to meet equity targets, they have difficulty in meeting these targets due to their inability in accessing qualified and skilled PWDs. The type of disability and the nature of the work are additional factors that restrict PWDs from integration within specific sectors in the open labour market. Non-disclosure of disability was found to play a role, due to uncertainty of the consequences of disclosure. This history of discrimination has additionally had an impact on the stereotyping of PWDs by able bodied individuals i.e. stigmatisation from other staff. Physical barriers also remain a major hindrance to the employment of PWDs.

Despite these many barriers, the organisations reported advantages for employing PWDs. PWDs were said to have a positive attitude and were easily trainable in addition to having higher productivity levels. Businesses scored equity points and were more competitive as well as opportunities to work and learn from PWDs were created. Finally, it was reassuring to note that these organisations were working towards the social model of disability, by removing barriers through reasonable accommodation and education programmes which positively impact PWDs future opportunities for integration.

As indicated in this article, there is evidence *albeit* limited that suggests that organisations are indeed willing and actively attempting to reduce the barriers associated with the employment of PWD.

Our challenge as “vocational specialists” and implications for future research remain in:

- Further determining factors that prevent PWDs from accessing suitable employment.
- Exploring reasons for PWDs non-disclosure.
- Embracing the challenge of skilling PWDs to enter and re-enter the open labour market.
- Commenting on policy and legislation related to employment of PWDs.
- Providing practical strategies to employers in reasonable accommodation and realignment processes.
- Marketing of the profession and our scope of practice within vocational rehabilitation and realignment.

To conclude, the authors would like to quote Colozet and Geist³³ regarding the end point of successful rehabilitation and the starting point of effective integration:

“The attitudes of potential employers (are) of vital concern to vocational rehabilitation since successful rehabilitation is achieved when the disabled person is accepted as a worker in the labor market”^{33:44}.

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APPENDIX I QUESTIONNAIRE

Please mark appropriate response with an X

a) Is your organisation

1	Governmentally funded	2	Privately funded
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b) How many people are currently employed by your organisation?

1	0-49	5	500-749
2	50-99	6	750-999
3	100-249	7	1000 +
4	250-499		

c) Please indicate the type of industry/employment sector

1	Financial	8	Communications
2	Education	9	Wholesale/Retail /Repair
3	Manufacturing	10	Restaurants/Hotels
4	Banking	11	Real Estate
5	Health	12	Health
6	Construction	13	Other....please indicate
7	Transport		

d) Please indicate your current position within your organisation

1	Management	4	Shop steward
2	Human resource practitioner	5	Other (please indicate):
3	Occupational Health & Safety Officer		

e) Are you involved in the process of recruitment of staff?

1	Yes	2	No
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f) Does your organisation have internal policies or guidelines when governing the employment of persons with disabilities

1	Yes
2	No
3	In the process of developing one
4	Don't know

If yes, please specify _____



g) If yes, are these policies aligned with any South African legislations/policies/ guidelines?

1	Yes	2	No
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If yes, please state the policy/ies: or legislation\ your own policy is aligned with:

h) Is your organisation aware of the following policies, guidelines and legislation in South Africa that govern employment

1	Employment Equity act
2	Code of Good Practice
3	Technical assistance guidelines on employing people with disabilities (TAG)
4	Skills Development Act

i) Please indicate how useful you\your organisation has found the following policies\legislations.

	Policy	Useful	Not useful
1	Employment Equity act		
2	Code of Good Practice		
3	Technical assistance guidelines on employing people with disabilities		
4	Skills Development Act		

j) Does your organisation proactively seek to recruit job applicants who are persons with disabilities?

1	Yes
2	No
3	Don't know

l) Is the organisation aware of any services in KZN that assist companies in recruiting, selecting, placing and/or training people with disabilities?

1	Yes	2	No
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m) How many people with disabilities are currently in your employ?

1	1	3	5-10
2	2-4	4	> 10

n) Please indicate the number of employees with the following disabilities:

	Category	Number
1	Physical Disability, e.g. paraplegia	
2	Psychiatric Disability, e.g. depression	
3	Visual Disabilities / Blindness	
4	Hearing impaired	
5	Multiple Disabilities (more than one)	
6	Other (please indicate)	

o) Were you aware of the disability when hiring the individual/s?

1	Yes	2	No
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p) Did any employees become disabled while employed by the organisation?

1	Yes	2	No
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If yes, did the employee return to work?

1	Yes	2	No
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q) Has the organisation used any of the following consultants\specialists to assist in the recruitment, selection, placement, training or reasonable accommodation process?

1	Occupational Health & Safety Officer /Nurse
2	Occupational Health & Safety Doctor
3	Social Worker
4	Occupational Therapist
5	Psychologist
6	Not applicable
7	Other (please indicate)

r) If external consultants/specialists were used in the employing of people with disabilities within your organisation, please indicate during which stage/s they were involved in.

1	Recruitment
2	Selection
3	Placement
4	Training
5	Reasonable accommodation
6	Not applicable

s) Identify which of the following steps the organisation takes to meet the needs of the employee with the disability

1	Provide specific\modified equipment
2	Modify work station
3	Made existing facilities accessible to employees with disabilities
4	Restructured jobs or modified work hours
5	Employ job sharing (share work load with other employee)
6	Working from home
7	Allow for special leave necessitated because of the disability
8	Provide additional on the job support or assistance
9	Provide training or retraining
10	Provide counselling
11	None
12	Other please indicate

t) Please tick all the barrier(s), if any, that the organisation encounter when hiring a person with a disability

1	Physical environmental barriers, such as inaccessible buildings
2	Social based barriers, such as stigma, stereotyping, attitudes
3	Financial/ Cost implications for accommodation
4	Lack of knowledge on reasonable accommodation
5	Lack of person's with disability with qualification
6	Abilities don't match essential requirements for job position
7	Lack of knowledge with respect to person with disability
8	Cost of training
9	Additional cost of supervision
10	No barriers

u) What were the benefits and difficulties of having a person with a disability employed in the organisation?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION

