

EMPLOYMENT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITY IN UGANDA: WHAT EMPLOYERS SAY.

Background and Justification:

Significant effort by government and development partners has been exerted towards promoting employment for persons with disability (PWDs) in Uganda. Several vocational rehabilitation centres and sheltered workshops were set up 1960s and 70s respectively, to train PWDs in vocational skills and to provide them with convenient and protected employment. Recently, legislative provisions aimed at promoting employment for PWDs, such as *Persons with Disabilities Act, 2006*, have been instigated. Organisations for and of PWDs and other agencies like the Federation of Uganda Employers have also been active in lobbying and advocating for the employment of PWDs in the formal sector. Nevertheless, many PWDs despite possessing the requisite education and training qualifications for certain jobs find it difficult to obtain employment.

Employment in the formal sector is preferable for PWDs because they are assured of regular income and are protected from the disadvantages associated with informal employment which is susceptible to changes in labour market conditions. Research and documentation relating to the problem of employing PWDs tend to reflect mainly PWDs' views (1) and viewpoints of policy makers. The perspectives of employers have not featured, yet they are key stakeholders in the employment of PWDs.

What is already known:

- There are many initiatives to promote employment of people with disabilities.
- Yet PWDs still have problems finding employment.



Ali and Moses collecting data in Mbarara District

Aim and objectives

The study aimed at finding out the views and concerns of employers in the private and public sectors on employing disabled persons in Uganda. Its objectives were:

1. To analyze employers' knowledge and opinions on employing disabled persons
2. To examine the perception of employers of the job-related needs of disabled persons
3. To find out the measures organizations take to meet the job-related needs of disabled persons
4. To explore the challenges employers encounter in employing disabled persons

Methods

The study employed a qualitative research design using in-depth interviews with purposively sampled employers selected from private (16) and public (2) employment sectors in the districts of Kampala (9), Mbarara (6) and Arua (3).

Results

Perspectives on employing PWDs by employers		
Reasons for employing PWDs:	Reasons for not employing PWDs:	Positive qualities of PWDs workers
- corporate responsibility	- Not many PWDs seeking employment	- Reliable and stable
- boosting organizational image	- Reluctance to incur extra costs on adapting the work place	- Easy to motivate
- Act of philanthropy	- Fear that PWDs may not be capable of work required	- Efficient and committed
- Belief in the abilities of PWDs as workers	- Ugly physical appearance	
- Possession of qualifications	- PWDs may be involved in accident leading further disability	
- PWDs having previous relationship with employers		

Perceptions on job-related needs of PWDs	Measures taken to meet the job-related needs of PWDs	Challenges encountered in employing PWDs	Suggestions on promoting employment of PWDs
Mobility needs	Placement of PWDs in jobs that suit residual abilities	Lack of knowledge of what to do about the needs of a disabled worker	Government should put more emphasis on employment of PWDs in the formal employment sector
Transport needs	nothing suggested	Lack of awareness on the employment abilities of PWDs	Sensitization of employers on potential, abilities and needs of PWDs among employers needed
Safety needs	nothing suggested	Lack of organizational policy regarding employment PWDs	Make employment of PWDs one of criteria for the prestigious Employer of the Year Award.
Communication difficulties	Communicate with deaf through writing and gestures	Communicating with deaf workers	Set up a employment advocacy body

Conclusions:

- Many employers lack information on the potential, abilities and needs of PWDs and how they can be integrated.
- Some employers are eager to take on PWDs provided their philanthropy is recognized. They feel this is necessary considering the possible liability.
- People with mild to moderate disability and those with motor disability stand better chances of getting employed than others.
- The problem of employment is compounded by PWDs lack of initiative and ambition to seek employment

Recommendations:

- Federation of Uganda Employers should encourage its member organizations to institute disability sensitive employment policies.
- The Government should respond by instituting policies aimed at encouraging employers to employ disabled persons with qualifications.
- Establish a bureau to specifically address the policy issues pertaining to employment of PWDs.
- Advertise job opportunities widely in various media. Include a specific clause encouraging disabled people with qualifications to apply.
- Disabled students should be provided with career guidance services early enough during their educational career to facilitate their employment prospects.

What the study has added:

Greater awareness of the need to:

- sensitize employers about how to employ PWDs
- encourage greater confidence by PWDs in the process of seeking employment

References.

Baguwemu, Busulwa, A. & Kanya, J.(2001). *Perspectives on the employment of persons with disability in Uganda*. African journal of special education, 6(2).

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