

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!* 

Acceptance of people with disabilities at work

What is it and how can we measure it?
Katharina Vornholt (katharina.vornholt@maastrichtuniversity.nl)




Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!* 

Why is it important to get to know more about "acceptance"?

- Acceptance as a prerequisite of belonging (and integration into a group of colleagues)
- Acceptance as a prerequisite of sustainable employment

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience


Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!* 

Research question

How can acceptance be defined?

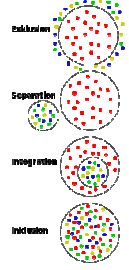
Which factors influence the acceptance of people with disabilities in regular employment settings?

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!* 

Defining acceptance: *Inclusion*

- Is the extent to which people with disabilities are **accepted**, helped, and treated as others by their coworkers (Colella, 1996)



Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!* 

Defining acceptance

- **UN convention:** persons with disabilities have the right to work on an equal basis with others
- **ADA:** physical and mental disabilities in no way diminish a person's right to fully participate in all aspects of society

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!* 

Defining acceptance: *Social acceptance*

- means that other people signal that they wish to include you in their groups and relationships
- occurs on a continuum that ranges from merely tolerating another person's presence to actively pursuing someone as a relationship partner

(Leary, 2001)

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Theoretical concept of social acceptance

```

    graph LR
      SA[Social acceptance] --> CA[Cognitive acceptance]
      SA --> AA[Affective acceptance]
      SA --> BA[Behavioral acceptance]
  
```

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Literature Review

Which factors influence the social acceptance of employees with disabilities within a group of colleagues?

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Method

- PsychInfo, Web of Science, cross-referencing (period: 1996 – 2011)
- 48 articles were selected, coded and analyzed by three independent coders
 - Majority of research carried out in North America
 - Mixed samples
 - Mostly survey designs

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Results

Acceptance of people with disabilities influenced by three variable groups:

- *Characteristics of co-workers* (gender, age, education, career, attitudes, personality etc.)
- *Characteristics of employee with a disability* (nature of disability, performance, social behavior, communication ability etc.)
- *Employer/Organization* (interdependence of work tasks, amount of responsibility, organizational culture, openness to diversity etc.)

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Integrative framework

```

    graph LR
      EO[Employer, Organization] --> A[Acceptance]
      CC[Characteristics of colleagues] --> AC[Attitudes of colleagues]
      AC --> A
      CE[Characteristics of employees with disability] --> A
      A --> ML[Motivation, Satisfaction, Quality of Life etc. of employee with disability]
  
```

*Refers to factors that have not been part of studies so far.

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Conclusions

- Lack of consistency and clarity in defining acceptance
- Limited number of studies
- Lack of experimental and longitudinal studies

→ Many gaps remain in the understanding of the concept of acceptance

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Acceptance questionnaire

Based on cognitive, affective and behavioral aspects of acceptance

Cognitive acceptance
*I think that I'm a full member of the group of colleagues.
Co-workers in this department believe that it is difficult to form friendship with their colleague with disability.*

Affective acceptance
*I feel comfortable around my colleagues at work.
Co-workers in this department feel comfortable about working with their colleague with disability.*

Behavioral acceptance
*I regularly eat lunch with my colleagues.
Co-workers in this department regularly eat lunch with their colleague with a disability.*

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Future perspectives

- Further investigation of theoretical model of acceptance
- Measuring acceptance over time

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience

Maastricht University *Leading in Learning!*

Thank you very much for your attention!

Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience