

Science:

Description and aims

People with disabilities are much more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than people who do not have disabilities, and in the developed world the percentage of disabled people in work is going down rather than up. Our interdisciplinary workshop aimed to bring together leaders of Disabled Peoples Organisations (DPOs), training providers, education researchers—particularly those involved with the innovative Universal Design for Learning paradigm—and social scientists and researchers to reveal and analyse barriers to education and work, and measuring the impact of focused interventions.

Tangible outcomes

We drafted a research-based report before and during the workshop. This will be presented first to the UWV on 29 November of this year in an event involving workshop attendees and UWV staff. It will then be sent to a variety of national, EU and international agencies afterwards. Workshop attendees and their colleagues are encouraged to use it in their own work.

We generated extensive data about research gaps. This will be the focus of a session at the 3rd International Disability Studies Conference in Amsterdam in December 2017, which is aimed at stimulating new directions for productive and much-needed research.

Also during the workshop, we began to work on a book proposal based on our findings. A core group has formed to carry this forward, and we expect the proposal to be submitted this autumn.

One or more papers are also likely.

“Aha” moments

Realising that the literature on vocational education and work for disabled people focuses on the developed world and often ignores intersectional issues that contribute to poverty was an issue that emerged during the preparatory stage. This insight was further developed during the workshop. We also found that much of the existing literature fails to look at the barriers mentioned by disabled people themselves, including bullying in school and work, discrimination, and rigid employment and HR practices. Finding a way to connect directly with Human Resources professionals is definitely needed.

Organization/Format:

We found the format and venue very conducive to the kind of work that we needed to do. We worked in small groups, included an arts-based activity (the inclusive dance workshop) that energised the group, and tried some methods for identifying and prioritising issues that were really helpful.