

An inclusive corporate culture: Examining the visible and invisible levels of disability inclusiveness in two large enterprises

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ABSTRACT

This study used Erving Goffman's analytical framework of the visible frontstage versus the invisible backstage aspects of impression management to compare employers' public statements concerning the inclusion of persons with disabilities with actual practice. Information on frontstage image was obtained from the websites and annual reports of two large private companies in Norway, while their backstage practices were revealed through inductive thematic analysis of interviews with companies' employees. Although both companies emphasized their commitment to the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the public domain, the sole 'backstage' activity they undertook was providing work training to people seeking to enter the workforce. Interviewees regarded work training as a good intention, as creating value, and as providing meaningful tasks. However, cases were limited, and trainees had no physical or intellectual disabilities. Thus, the study found a major discrepancy between the companies' frontstage and backstage activities concerning the inclusion of persons with disabilities.

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Introduction

In recent decades, the employment of persons with disabilities has received increasing attention. European and international disability policies, notably the EU Equality Directive (2000/78/EC) and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN 2007), require employers to eliminate discrimination and to provide equal treatment in all forms of employment in an inclusive and accessible work environment. In response to this development, employers publicly pronounce their commitment to workplace inclusiveness, and publications of 'best practices' multiply internationally (Fembek et al. 2013; ILO 2010). Nevertheless, expressed willingness to comply with public expectations often exceeds actual hiring of employees with disabilities. Earlier research suggested a weak relationship between publicized commitments and their practical implementation (Ball et al. 2005; Hernandez, Keys, and Balcazar 2000). The discrepancy between publicly stated values and the internal priorities of the enterprises gives reason to re-examine the relationship between the official self-presentations and internal company practices towards persons with disabilities.

Although employers publicly state commitment, it is apparently more difficult to change the priorities and preferences of human resource (HR) management and other employees (Bruyère, Erickson, and VanLooy 2000; Kaye, Jans, and Jones 2011; Schur, Kruse, and Blanck 2005). Previous research has argued that the experience of employing persons with disabilities in the workplace can significantly change employers' attitudes, promote future hiring and retention of such employees and, consequently, create an inclusive corporate culture (see e.g. Schur, Kruse, and Blanck 2005; Smith et al. 2004). Moreover, research has found that public policies and special programmes that increase

employers' awareness of employees with disabilities are important in stimulating employers to hire them (Kaye, Jans, and Jones 2011; Smith et al. 2004).

In the Nordic countries, public authorities have taken an active role in facilitating the employment of persons with disabilities and in achieving high labour market participation rates (Halvorsen and Hvinden 2014). Regarding persons with disabilities, the Norwegian government prioritizes active labour market policy measures, such as rehabilitation, vocational training, and job placement at regular workplaces (Halvorsen and Hvinden 2014; Olsen, Svendal, and Amundsen 2005; Vedeler and Mossige 2010). This prioritization reflects a relational model of disability, recognizing disability as a mismatch between personal capabilities and the functional demands of the social environment (Hansen, Andreassen, and Meager 2011; Tøssebro 2004). The emphasis was on making persons with disabilities more attractive to the labour market. During the last 15 years, the Norwegian authorities, however, have focused more on the demand side of the labour market; new policy measures have been adopted to provide incentives and persuade employers to hire and retain persons with disabilities.

Taking into account the increasing legal and moral obligations of employers towards persons with disabilities in the ordinary labour market, this article aims to explore how two large private companies in Norway presented their work to promote a corporate culture that is inclusive towards employees with disabilities and to what extent they supported this inclusive image in practice. The article compares the 'visible' level (or the 'frontstage' presentation) of the corporate culture and the 'invisible' levels (or the 'backstage' activities) of what is actually implemented by the companies.

Theoretical framework

Schein (2004, 2009) presents corporate culture as a complex concept that embraces three levels: visible artefacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions. The 'visible artefacts' level refers to architecture, technology, office layout, dress code, visible behaviour, public documents, norms, and products. The second level, 'espoused values', is communicated through, for example, documents, leaflets, and ethics policies. Both artefacts and espoused values are 'visible' or easy to observe. The third level is defined as 'shared tacit assumptions' and is essentially 'invisible'. This invisible level represents the beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, and feelings of the employees. When there is repeated success in implementing certain values, they become shared assumptions, while other values remain only future aspirations. 'Shared assumptions' are the essence of corporate culture, however, it is difficult to identify them, and employees may not even realize why they behave in a certain way (Schein 2009).

The distinction between the three levels of the corporate culture resembles the analytical framework of 'impression management' developed by Goffman (1959). He argues that, when an activity occurs in the presence of others, some facts are expressively accentuated and appear in a 'front region or frontstage', while other aspects are suppressed and appear in a 'back region or backstage'. The willingness to express a certain action may be fabricated on the frontstage, while on the backstage 'the performer can relax and step out of his character'. Everything exposed visibly supplies a 'special setting of the scenery' for a certain performance to make an impression on others (Goffman 1959, 33–34, 114). Similarly, when employers may demonstrate inclusiveness on the 'frontstage', their 'backstage' behaviour may in fact reflect an unwelcoming corporate culture that prevents persons with disabilities from entering or retaining employment (Ali, Schur, and Blanck 2011; Ball et al. 2005). Not only the 'perfect front', but also positive attitudes, support, and commitment need to be developed on the 'backstage' to create a disability-inclusive culture (Davis 2005; Schur, Kruse, and Blanck 2005).

According to Schein (2004), presupposed beliefs and values can be changed mainly by learning new ways of doing things or behaving. Thus, gaining experience with disabled employees can promote a change in employers' attitudes and, consequently, generate an inclusive corporate culture (Robinson 2000; Schur, Kruse, and Blanck 2005). Such experiences can be initiated through

different programmes and policy measures, including work placement, vocational training, supported-employment and/or work-experience programmes (Boone and van Ours 2004; Hernandez, Keys, and Balcazar 2000; Kaye, Jans, and Jones 2011; Samant et al. 2009). Vocational training and supported-employment programmes can increase employment chances of persons with intellectual and learning disabilities, mild behavioural disorders, and mental illnesses (Crowther et al. 2001; Hernandez, Keys, and Balcazar 2000; Lövgren and Hamreby 2011; Wehman 2003). Earlier research has found that employers come to regard these employees as reliable, productive, capable of interacting with others, and demonstrating above-average attendance (Hernandez, Keys, and Balcazar 2000; Samant et al. 2009; Unger 2002). A critical factor is whether employers move beyond demonstrating inclusive culture on the 'frontstage' to also undertaking practical initiatives that become part of such a culture.

National policy context

Attaining workplace inclusion has been a central goal of Norwegian labour market policy since at least 1977, with the enactment of the *Working Environment Act* (WEA) (Regjeringen 2012), to regulate employer obligations to ensuring proper employment conditions and employment protection. The WEA also includes provisions or adjustments for employees with reduced working. In 2001, A *More Inclusive Working Life Agreement* (IA Agreement) was introduced as a tripartite voluntary agreement between the employers' federations, trade unions, and the Norwegian government (Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV)) to promote the inclusion of vulnerable groups into the workforce (Mandal and Ose 2013; Olsen, Svendal, and Amundsen 2005). The IA Agreement was renewed in 2006, 2010, and 2014 and addresses three goals: (1) reducing sickness absenteeism, (2) increasing the employment of 'persons with reduced functional abilities', and (3) retaining ageing workers (Hansen, Andreassen, and Meager 2011; Olsen 2004; Solheim 2010). For the period 2014–2018, the IA Agreement targets the inclusion of young persons with disabilities (Idebanken 2014). To implement the second goal, employers must seek to bring long-term unemployed persons or those with a reduced work capacity or with disabilities into the mainstream labour market (Duell, Singh, and Tergeist 2009). More than 6500 enterprises, including many large enterprises, have signed this agreement in Norway since 2001 (Jakobsen 2009). Nevertheless, enterprises prefer including own impaired workers over persons with pre-existing disabilities (Solheim 2010).

Supplementary to the IA Agreement, the Norwegian government introduced the *Jobs Strategy for People with Disabilities* (2011–13) to increase the employability of young persons with disabilities through work-experience programmes. Finally, the *Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act* (2008) imposes on public- and private-sector employers duties to take affirmative action and to report annually on their actions to promote equal opportunities in the workplace, to prevent discrimination, and to provide accessible facilities and working conditions.

Data, methodology and analytical framework

Company selection and research methodology

The present study applied a case study methodology involving open-ended, semi-structured, and in-depth interviews with company employees (Justesen and Mik-Meyer 2012; Yin [1984] 1989), because this approach offered the greatest likelihood to move beyond the companies' public 'frontstage'. The target population included employers with stated commitments to the inclusion of persons with disabilities. Within this group, the study focused on large private companies because of their assumed capacity to include employees with disabilities, consistently with earlier research (see e.g. Graffam et al. 2002; Rabby 1983; Unger 2002). Employers organizations and trade unions in Norway, which include a large proportion of IA-enterprises among their members (Hammer 2007), recommended eight large companies as potential cases. Two of these agreed to participate in this study: a

multinational consulting company represented in Norway and a Norwegian multinational engineering company, hereafter referred to as Company A and Company B. Other recommended companies declined the invitation on the grounds of shortage of time, involvement in similar projects, or giving preference to activities other than hiring persons with disabilities.

Data collection and analysis

To obtain a complete picture of two participating companies, it was necessary to consider both the 'visible' and 'invisible' levels of their corporate culture. Data about the 'visible' levels were collected through corporate websites, annual and Corporate Social Responsibility reports, and introductory meetings with HR managers. Interviews with 'insiders' seeking their perspectives and accounts of their organizations provided data about 'tacit assumptions' or the 'invisible' level. Based on the agreements with the selected companies, the interviews were conducted during August–December 2012 at each company with the following employees:

- *Company A*: HR/Diversity Manager; HR Lead; Top Country Manager; and Supervisor;
- *Company B*: HR/Inclusion Manager; HR manager; HR Administrative Manager; Diversity Manager, Corporate Office; and Department Manager.

The HR managers at both companies became the initial key contacts, who participated in the introductory meetings and provided general information about their companies' activities. They also acted as 'gatekeepers' who granted access to other interviewees, mainly top leadership and department managers. In some cases, they were also present during interviews and controlled or corrected the information presented by other interviewees. One HR manager explicitly stated that 'the employees could say something wrong'.

The interviews were conducted in English and addressed questions concerning the initiatives undertaken by the companies to ensure the inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the experiences of the interviewees with these initiatives. The interview data were transcribed and analysed using inductive thematic analysis or 'encoding qualitative information' (Boyatzis 1998, 4). The interviewees' responses were reduced to a manageable size and afterwards encoded on the basis of similar meanings and causally related qualifications, which further resulted in common themes based on the analytical interpretation of these codes.

The Norwegian Social Science Data Service approved this study. According to the agreement with the selected companies and individual consents signed with each interviewee, this study keeps the companies' names and personal data confidential.

Findings

The visible frontstage

Global inclusive initiatives

Company A is a global management consulting company represented in more than 50 countries worldwide. The corporate website of Company A has a section about diversity initiatives mentioning the commitment to providing an inclusive, open, and equitable environment to persons with disabilities. To support employees with disabilities, the company encourages networking and information sharing, states that it provides reasonable accommodations, and organizes disability events and training. The website also features the personal stories of employees with disabilities working at different company locations.

Company B is a Norwegian technology-based company represented in more than 30 countries worldwide. The corporate office of Company B is located in Norway and spans separate legal entities in different locations, one of which participated in this study. The information available from the corporate website presents Company B as committed to corporate responsibility, and as implementing the principles of the UN Global Compact in the areas of human rights, labour, environment, and

anti-corruption. Principle Six of the Compact requires participating companies to commit to the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation, including discrimination on the grounds of disability. Furthermore, the corporate policy commits all company offices to work against harassment and discrimination, ensure equal opportunities, and imposes special diversity requirements supporting a culture open to diversity.

Inclusive activities in Norway

Information about the companies' inclusive activities in Norway was neither published on companies' websites nor in publicly available documents, and was therefore obtained from company representatives. During the introductory meetings with the two companies, the key interviewees expressed a willingness to participate in the study, since they considered their companies open and inclusive IA-enterprises. However, in response to the detailed questions about inclusive activities, it appeared that neither company had specific policies aimed at including persons with disabilities, in contrast to the information presented publicly. The Top Country Manager of Company A presented 'The global corporate guide on providing inclusive and accessible workplace for employees with disabilities', although the HR interviewees did not use this Guide in local practice. The interviewees from Company B did not mention any specific policy promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities but emphasized that the corporate policy already complied with equal treatment and non-discrimination principles. Both companies signed the IA Agreement in 2001 and conducted activities primarily aimed at reintegrating those of their own employees who had acquired an illness or disability during their employment.

In both companies, interviewees talked about work training as the main IA-activity provided to promote employment opportunities for persons with disabilities seeking to enter the workforce. Company A started providing work training in 2012 to people who had been unemployed for several years due to illness. Company B mentioned a few cases since 2005. The corporate office did not offer work training, but mentioned cases of reintegrating their own employees after disablement or illness. None of the interviewees could provide detailed data about all work training cases or employees with disabilities, as they considered such information confidential.

The invisible backstage

In both companies, the 'backstage' with respect to creating an inclusive culture was the provision of work training. An inductive thematic analysis of the interviews identified three main themes in relation to work training as the activity companies engaged in to promote a corporate culture inclusive to persons with disabilities or reduced functional abilities: (1) work training as a good intention; (2) work training as value creation; and (3) work training as a meaningful task. The first theme – 'good intention' – refers to the companies' statements of their good intentions in providing work training. The second theme – 'value creation' – connects work training with company and personal values. The third theme – 'a meaningful task' – refers to how the companies justified or emphasized that work training was an important activity that supported their official statements.

Work training as a good intention

The interviewees associated providing work training with the inclusive workplace policy (the IA Agreement) and with increasing employment opportunities for persons with disabilities seeking to enter into the workforce.

Company A:

We do it because it is a good part of being the IA [enterprise]. We want it and we have a great focus on corporate social responsibility. (HR Lead)

Inclusion is an important part of corporate social responsibility, and we offer support. (HR/Diversity Manager)

Our message is not to treat people badly. It is important to develop and to demonstrate corporate social responsibility activities. (Top Country Manager)

Company B:

Including people is a part of company social responsibility [...]. (Diversity Manager, Corporate Office)
 We follow three IA-goals ... one is to include people that have problems to find a job. We want to be open and to include people with challenges – who have been on rehabilitation, on sick leave, or never been in work. (HR/ Inclusion Manager)

The provision of work training was encouraged by NAV, whose support the interviewees considered very important. In August 2012, Company A accepted two NAV-recommended trainees, both over 60 years old, for six months of work training; one at the HR department, and another to perform basic IT services. The interviewees from Company B mentioned a few work training cases in 2006–2007 when they included people recommended by NAV who had either been out of work for a long time or never worked before. In 2011, NAV asked Company B ‘to facilitate the workplace for people with mental health challenges’. Eventually, Company B accepted one trainee who was on long-term sick leave due to ‘burnout’ or a stress-related illness. Even though Company B had a target to include a specific number of people per year, the actual number varied according to the company’s capacity. Interviewees from both companies recognized the need to include persons with disabilities, but believed they did not get a sufficient number of relevant candidates from NAV.

Company A:

We started cooperation with NAV [to include people out of paid work] due to illnesses or being unemployed [...]. NAV motivates and challenges us to work with senior people who come for training, but we never discussed accepting persons with disabilities ... (HR/Diversity Manager)

We had two people recently. They are [enrolled in] NAV programme to get back to work and get money from NAV ... (HR Lead)

If our company accepts a person with a disability, NAV can pay some of his expenditures to the company. (Supervisor)

Company B:

According to IA-policy, we have to accept a certain number of cases in our organization. We have a dialogue with NAV, and we are looking at different ways to do it. We do not get diagnoses, just information about people’s working capacity ... Our focus for 2012 – what NAV told us – is to facilitate a workplace inclusive to people with mental challenges or stress-related illnesses. (HR/Inclusion Manager)

NAV says there should be at least two people per year. We wanted to include ten, but [...] right now we are full. (HR Manager)

Besides NAV support and recommendations, the personal involvement of responsible managers and supervisors, as well as the support of the companies’ leadership were important factors that promoted a continued interest in work training. The HR managers at both companies took on major responsibilities for IA activities. The HR/Diversity Manager at Company A demonstrated engagement in providing work training and considered support from the company leadership and colleagues very helpful. The HR/Inclusion Manager at Company B, who started in 2011, previously worked at NAV and had relevant experience with the IA Agreement. Nevertheless, the decisions of the HR managers at Company B to accept trainees strongly depended on the agreement of department managers. The interviewees from Company B did not mention top management support, besides the participation of the HR Vice Presidents, Health, Safety and Environment managers, and trade union representatives in semi-annual meetings of the IA-group to discuss achieved results and future plans. Despite overall positive intentions, none of the companies had policies on how to manage work training, especially for trainees with disabilities.

Company A:

I am very proud to become a part of that – it has been my ‘baby’. It is challenging [...] and everything we achieved so far is the result of Top Country Manager, HR Lead and HR managers ... (HR/Diversity Manager)

I think we are very good at trying to do what we can. We want it to be successful ... but we do not have plans or goals on how many we will take. We just had the first ones ... (HR Lead)

We have IA Agreement, and [work] training is a part of it. HR is responsible for IA. (Supervisor)

Company B:

The new HR manager comes from NAV that is very valuable for our department. He has the network and he knows more than the rest of us. (HR Manager)

Company decided to include all kind of people into working life, but the responsibility lies on functional managers ... If we have a candidate from NAV, we ask personal managers – can you accept this candidate? We cannot force managers to do what we want. (HR/Inclusion Manager)
 We have some people who have been here from NAV ... [The HR Inclusion Manager] knows all the rules and all the conditions, he is an expert on that ... he contacts NAV. (HR Administrative Manager)

Work training as value creation

While interviewees in both companies mentioned the importance of NAV's financial support, they did not consider this to be the main reason why the companies provided work training. The interviewees viewed work training as a good opportunity to promote the reputation of 'open and inclusive corporations' that care for people and give people necessary work experience.

Company A:

It has been an asset in our work ... We want to create people-oriented culture. (HR/Diversity Manager)
 We do not do it because of the money. It shows that we try to be open ... (HR Lead)

Company B:

Monetary compensation is not the main thing for us. It is about employer branding. We want to show to NAV and to our employees that we have an open environment, we understand these things, and what kind of company we are ... that we are inclusive in many ways. (HR/Inclusion Manager)

We are quite big and we can make a difference [...]. I think that [is] what gives us more money at the end. (Department Manager)

Providing work training opportunities contributed to the realization of corporate values at both companies, especially 'people' and 'responsibility' values that guided companies to become open, inclusive, and non-discriminative. It was important to demonstrate 'inside and outside' that accepted trainees could be 'a valuable work resource' that also strengthened the companies' image as loyal and inclusive corporations. Moreover, providing work training contributed to the personal values of the responsible employees. In Company A, which regularly assessed employees based on their performance and achievements, one of the evaluation criteria was 'people developer'. Accordingly, engagement in inclusive activities contributed to positive evaluation results. Company B considered that company values guided their employees' behaviour, especially towards persons with disabilities, and that this was also reflected in providing work training.

Company A:

We are people oriented. We want to show our employees that we do things like that. It gives value. (HR Lead)
 It is an open culture ... It is about making other people good at work. If you do not grow employees, you will not make a value. (Supervisor)

Company B:

The values are very important when you have employees with disabilities. (Diversity Manager, Corporate Office)
 Company values guide our employees in certain situations, and make us loyal to anything related to cultural backgrounds, disability, someone who struggles, etc ... (HR Manager)

Work training as a meaningful task

Interviewees from both companies considered work training beneficial to their companies and to accepted trainees. The HR managers from Company A did not provide permanent employment afterwards, though believed that work experience and skills their trainees acquired during the work training would help them in finding future employment. Interviewees from Company B were more positive about hiring trainees, especially if they demonstrated good results. The Corporate office mentioned the possibility of internal hiring for former trainees. The interviewees from Company B considered post-training employment of one trainee who had previously been on long-term sick leave following burnout to be particularly successful. These interviewees also noticed positive changes in their trainees: the trainee with low social skills 'improved and started communicating more', and the trainee after burnout 'got more confidence and motivation'. Demonstrating successful results was necessary for both companies to justify an inclusive corporate culture. The HR

interviewees from Company A carefully selected trainees and tried to engage them in 'meaningful work'. However, trainees with low social skills and limited work and education experience proved quite challenging to work with. Consequently, when discussing the possibility of taking on persons with disabilities as potential trainees, the HR interviewees from both companies expressed concerns about their types of impairments, skills, and competencies.

Company A:

When we take someone, it is a good possibility for this person. It is to give a person practice to be in a better position ... We need people able to participate in the tasks and to work in a team. (HR Lead)

We offer opportunities for people to come and work here. They test their working capacity, but there are no job options afterwards. (HR/Diversity Manager)

Company B:

It is easier if a person [...] is disabled in some physical way, than a person with social problems. (HR Administrative Manager)

It is a huge responsibility. If we do not have enough work, it will be a problem. We look at competence profile. If they do good work, we can offer permanent employment ... A person we took for work training after burnout had a specific background valuable for us ... The main concern is when we take people with disabilities – we want people who participate in the work environment and have social skills ... (HR Manager)

It is not a kindergarten; we have high expectations of people ... It has to be someone with right educational background, who can do the job. (Department Manager)

As for people who have been on some training at our departments, we have a big focus on hiring internally. (Diversity Manager, Corporate Office)

Interviewees from both companies justified their limited number of work training cases on the grounds of the considerable responsibility it imposed on the company. The HR interviewees from Company A considered 'a good match' highly important. They selected the 'right candidates' and tried 'to do it properly', since positive examples could influence their future engagement in this activity. The interviewees from Company B were also interested in obtaining positive experiences and focused on the 'long-term goals'.

Company A:

We cannot take anyone and find something to do. They cannot just sit and do something. Examples show it has to be successful. If it does not work well, we will never try again. We do that properly, and it means that we cannot take many. (HR Lead)

Company B:

We cannot do much more than this. It is a challenge, and we want to do it in a right way. We cannot open doors to as much as possible and people having nothing to do. (HR/Inclusion Manager)

We really look for long-term goals and for success stories that we can hire somebody at the end of training. (HR Manager)

That has been very successful ... At least two people have been hired afterwards. (HR Administrative Manager)

Interviewees from both companies considered work training a very demanding task. 'We do not plan to take more people because it is not that easy', said the HR Lead of Company A. In contrast, Company B expressed a willingness to continue, although after relocation of the HR/Inclusion Manager to another company office in 2013, it was unclear who would carry out the main responsibilities.

Discussion

This study compared the public image presented by two large companies with their actual practice with respect to the adoption of a culture inclusive towards persons with disabilities. In line with Goffman (1959), the findings show a considerable discrepancy between public commitments to inclusivity and their local implementation. In their public 'frontstage', the companies presented themselves as inclusive and highlighted their disability and inclusion strategies. However, interviews with employees in both companies revealed that at the 'backstage' these commitments translated solely into the provision of work training. Furthermore, in practice, both companies offered such training only to limited number of individuals including older people, persons experiencing long-term unemployment, employees returning from long-term sick leave, or those who have been out of work due

to stress-related illnesses or 'burnout'. Neither company offered work training to persons with physical or intellectual disabilities.

The thematic analysis of the interviews identified three main themes concerning work training as a 'good intention', as 'value creation', and as a 'meaningful task'. As 'a good intention', interviewees associated work training with the 'inclusive workplace' image implied by the IA Agreement and by the companies' social responsibility strategies. According to Goffman (1959, 44), 'a performance of a routine presents through its front abstract claims modified to fit into expectations of the society in which it is presented'. As IA enterprises, both selected companies engaged in different activities to maintain an image of being 'inclusive and socially responsible corporations'. Interviewees presented work training as an 'inclusive' activity to demonstrate the companies' good intentions, although, in practice, work training appeared to be of limited scope and 'hidden from the eyes of an external observer'. The work training had not become an overall company strategy, and depended mainly on the initiatives of the responsible HR managers. The companies thus delegated 'dramatic function' to specialists, who demonstrated an effective show before 'the audience', yet engaged in such activities to increase their own professional reputation (Goffman 1959). Non-HR interviewees could provide little information about work training, although they recognized this activity as an important part of a disability-inclusive corporate culture. Despite the companies' goals, NAV support and requests received from organizations seeking employment for persons with disabilities, the selected companies had not accepted trainees with disabilities and lacked a clear strategy for working with them. Similarly to prior research (e.g. Kaye, Jans, and Jones 2011; Smith et al. 2004), the interviewees' concerns were the work performance and abilities of trainees with disabilities, and the additional responsibilities employing them would impose. Therefore, in order to sustain the image of inclusive corporate culture, the 'performers' preferred to demonstrate work training as 'a good intention' while concealing detailed facts behind this front.

Defined as 'value creation', work training signified an important IA initiative contributing to the realization of corporate values. As argued by Schein (2009), values create the corporate image and influence decision-making and employee behaviour. When individuals present themselves before others, their performances incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values (Goffman 1959). Interviewees in both companies considered that the work training initiative contributed externally and internally to such company values as non-discrimination, equal treatment, and respect for individuals. In Company A, where commitment to values was an important performance evaluation criterion, the engagement of responsible employees into work training seemed more efficient. As Goffman (1959) describes, performers are aware of the standards required to be applied; and the results depend on the importance attributed to adhering to these standards. Nevertheless, if values, according to Schein (2004), are not based on prior learning, they only reflect 'espoused theories' and are not synchronized with what people actually do. Therefore, while the interviewees demonstrated that their activities reflected certain standards or referred to work training within the context of certain company values, they only fostered an impression of having ideal motives for the roles they were performing. However, in practice, the work training cases did not include trainees with disabilities.

Characterizing work training as 'a meaningful task', interviewees recognized the potential benefits of this activity to the companies and accepted trainees, however, cases were few and mainly recommended by NAV. Although the interviewees admitted the possibility of accepting trainees with disabilities, they stated it was not their main focus. Furthermore, they did not have a clear strategy on how to promote this activity, and expressed concerns that persons with disabilities may be unable to participate fully in work tasks and lack necessary social skills. Moreover, work training was limited only to the HR departments at both companies. According to Schur et al. (2009), only a broad distribution of employees with disabilities throughout a company is likely to lead to the development of an inclusive corporate culture. The interviewees from both companies presented the success stories as 'finished, polished, and packaged end products' (Goffman 1959, 52). However, the interviewees were not so enthusiastic to talk about less successful cases, and it was

impossible to access the trainees involved. Possibly the responsible interviewees did not present those cases so as not to ruin their own and the companies' perfect 'front' (Goffman 1959, 110). The absence of trainees with disabilities reflected prejudice, lack of awareness, and an unwillingness to take on additional responsibilities, similarly to the findings of Hernandez, Keys, and Balcazar (2000) and Kaye, Jans, and Jones (2011). Presenting work training as 'a meaningful task' and demonstrating successful results, the interviewees protected their companies' 'inclusive image' from being 'punished for deviations from the standards' (Goffman 1959, 87). The focus of the HR interviewees on selecting the 'right candidates' and finding 'a good match' raised the likelihood of successful results to support the companies' public image of an inclusive corporate culture, however, it prevented them from including trainees with disabilities.

Presented as a 'good intention', as 'value creation' and as a 'meaningful task', work training 'as an inclusive activity' supported the public image both companies projected as inclusive corporations. Nevertheless, discrepancies existed between this image and (the absence of) practical activities undertaken to include persons with disabilities. Companies protected their 'ideal reputation' and demonstrated mainly the 'successful cases' that supported the 'perfect front' while concealing those that did not. Both companies revealed limited experience with work training, and especially trainees with disabilities. Consequently, this activity was not shared by all company employees. Work training remained an occasional 'backstage' activity that supported the companies' inclusive public image but that did not demonstrate a stable intention to increase the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the workplace.

Conclusion

In the two large companies studied, efforts to follow the goals of IA Agreement and legal requirements to create a culture inclusive towards persons with disabilities were limited to the provision of work training to persons without physical or intellectual disabilities. The responsible HR managers carefully protected their companies' 'backstage' activities and access to information. The interviewees saw work training as a good intention, as an activity that created value, and as a meaningful task. They also considered it to contribute to the companies' image and values, and to the reputation of the responsible managers. However, the low number of trainees, lack of local company inclusion strategies, and low level of engagement of different employees and departments 'backstage' revealed that actual practice was still limited in both companies. Focusing mainly on successful outcomes, companies supported only their positive 'frontstage' image, while 'backstage' practices remained hidden from the audience, limited, and difficult to discuss.

Several important limitations need to be acknowledged. The findings represent the experiences of only two companies during a limited time period. Future research should therefore target additional companies and business sectors. The main challenge for data collection was the different responsibilities of interviewees, as well as the interviewees' intentions to demonstrate the 'perfect front' by presenting only publicly acceptable information. Greater insight into 'backstage' phenomena might be obtained through observing informal situations and collecting data at different time points, but is unlikely to be feasible because of the expected lack of employer cooperation and the large amount of field work required. Finally, the number of work training cases was too limited to enable generalization to other large companies, however, the tendency to expressively accentuate certain facts on the 'frontstage', especially as it relates to a disability-inclusive culture, should be further examined in future research. Further research involving thorough exploration of the companies in different business sectors in Norway or different countries that include persons with disabilities for work training opportunities can supply a greater accuracy on this matter and provide a better understanding of the companies' inclusive practices.

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