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Our Constitution states that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it; we are united in our diversity.” Whilst South Africa has developed policy and legislation to overcome barriers that face people with disabilities (PWD’s) in the labour force, practically these may be of a more challenging nature.

This study aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of the experience of employers when hiring and integrating people with disabilities within the workforce. An instrumental collective case study design was employed with multiple sources of data (triangulation) at two major organisations in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

This paper will highlight findings within the context of empirical literature. The research illustrates that South African legislation is compelling organisations to meet equity targets, which are difficult due to a lack of qualified and skilled PWDs. South Africa’s history of previous discrimination also appears to impact on perceptions of PWD’s and employers and employees likewise. PWD’s resort to non-disclosure, with stereotyping of PWD’s by able-bodied individuals being evident. Physical barriers remain a major hindrance to the employment of PWD’s. Notwithstanding these, the organisations report advantages of employing PWD’s, which include positive attitudes, the ability of PWD’s to be easily trained and higher productivity levels, inter alia.

Our challenge as “vocational specialists” remain in determining factors that impact PWD from accessing suitable employment, exploring reasons for non-disclosure as well as the challenge of skilling and preparing PWD’s to enter and re-enter the open labour market.