Self-regulation and disability policy: a critique

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Abstract

The Disability Confident scheme, introduced by the Government in 2013, aims to get employers to sign up and commit to a series of disability friendly policies. The thesis will investigate the use of the Disability Confident scheme as a type of self-regulatory policy in the workplace. It will examine whether self-regulation is an effective approach when encouraging employers to support disabled employees. In addition, it will examine liberal and radical approaches to equal opportunities and how this aligns with the aims, objectives and outcomes of the policies and practices of Disability Confident organisations. It also will investigate whether there is a gap in the implementation of these policies and practices. Finally, it will examine the experiences of Disability Confident employees in the context of the impairment effects model of disability. These aspects will form my theoretical framework.

Methodology

The research findings will be evaluated using a critical realist perspective. Critical realism presents an ontology which 'assumes that there is a reality “out there” independent of observers' (Easton, 2000:106). Critical analysis needs to take place in order to examine and explain social phenomena, (Sayer 1992:3). The research will therefore seek to critically analyse the efficacy of the Disability Confident scheme as a type of self-regulation.

Semi-structured interviews will take place in three organisations which are part of the ‘Disability Confident’ scheme: a Level 1 organisation, a Level 2 organisation and a Level 3 organisation to allow a comparative case study to take place within the differing levels of the scheme. The interview questions will be shaped by the impairment effects model of disability and will focus both on the effects of impairment but also the effects that reasonable adjustments have upon the disabled people in Disability Confident workplaces. Additional insight into the scheme will be gathered from an analysis of the available documents which relate to this scheme such as the guidance given to employers which outlines the aims and objectives of the scheme as well as giving them information about what steps they have to take to sign up for each of the three levels of the scheme.

What is the Disability Confident scheme?

A voluntary scheme started in July 2013 run by the Department for Work and Pensions which aims to get employers to sign up and commit to a series of disability friendly policies and in return employers are awarded a kitemark which they can display on their websites and publicity material. The scheme is divided into 3 levels – 1, 2 and 3.

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References


