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Accessibility Coordinator: Manager and Leader of Change

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The article attempts to answer whether we may call the accessibility coordinator a manager and what role they play in a cultural institution. Do coordinators indeed only undertake coordinating actions, as suggested by the position's name, or do they manage the accessibility implementation process in public cultural institutions?

Research Design & Methods: To collect data, we used narrative collages. We obtained fifty-seven narrative collages, which described, using creative metaphors, the managerial roles adopted by the accessibility coordinator in a cultural institution.

Findings: The authors of the collages mostly emphasised the importance of interpersonal roles (connector, leader) and informational roles (observer, propagator).

Implications/Recommendations: The research indicates that the accessibility coordinator serves as a manager in the organisation and is a change leader who creates conditions that enable the preparation and implementation of accessibility in a cultural institution.

Contribution: Research shows that the theory of managerial roles is still valid and can also be applied to new professions, such as accessibility coordinators in cultural institutions.

Article type: original article.

Keywords: accessibility coordinator, manager, change leader, cultural institution.

JEL Classification: J38, D63, M12, Z1.

1. Introduction

There are two common terms: accessibility coordinator and accessibility manager in the literature on the subject. Although both roles focus on implementing accessibility, they sometimes differ in terms of scope, responsibilities, and impact on the organisation or the context in which they operate (Orero, 2017; Remael *et al.*, 2019). Usually, the coordinator is tasked with implementing policies and procedures in the organisation. Their role focused on ensuring compliance with accessibility standards (Bedford-Jack, 2023). The accessibility manager often has a broader and more strategic role. They are responsible for developing and supervising comprehensive accessibility programmes across the entire organisation (Zhang, 2019). In Poland, the applicable legal regulations and practice adopt the term “accessibility coordinator.” However, when analysing the available literature and looking at practical solutions implemented in cultural institutions, one can get the impression that their role is broader than just coordinating activities. This observation was not a hypothesis, but rather a preliminary research assumption of the authors.

According to statistical data from Statistics Poland, in the first quarter of 2023, 4,703 cultural institutions were functioning in Poland (Główny Urząd Statystyczny, 2023). Since 2019, all public institutions, including cultural institutions, have had a statutory obligation to ensure accessibility for individuals with special needs (Ustawa z dnia 19 lipca 2019 r. o zapewnianiu dostępności osobom ze szczególnymi potrzebami, Dz.U. 2022, poz. 2240). According to the provisions of the law, appointing an accessibility coordinator is voluntary (Sobolewska & Wilk, 2021, p. 22); however, such a decision positively influences the cultural institutions’ effectiveness and efficiency in terms of accessibility (Konior, Pluszyńska & Grabowska, 2021). Nationwide research reveals that 26% of institutions employ accessibility coordinators by creating separate positions, while 68% of institutions designate a person responsible for implementing accessibility-related activities (Pluszyńska & Konior, 2023). On social media, the Forum of Accessibility Coordinators group (Forum Koordynatorów i Koordynatorek Dostępności, 2021) has 5,500 members, and the open group Network of Accessibility Leaders (Sieć Liderów i Liderki Dostępności, 2020) consists of 1,600 individuals. The new law has influenced the implementation of accessibility activities by public institutions and has also expanded the circle of individuals interested in this topic.

We may define the role of accessibility coordinator/manager as a profession involving “a set of tasks (a set of activities) identified as a result of the social division of labour, performed consistently or with minor changes by individual persons and requiring appropriate qualifications (knowledge and skills) acquired through education or practice” (Reduta, 2015, p. 101). In response to market needs, there now exist documents specifying qualifications and outlining the scope of knowledge and skills that a person responsible for implementing accessibility in an organisation should possess (Orero, 2017; Remael *et al.*, 2019; Zintegrowany System Kwalifikacji, 2020). A synthetic characterisation of learning outcomes indicates that the coordinator “is responsible for implementing accessibility as well as legal provisions and best practices in the organisation, including architectural, digital, and informational-communicative standards” (Zintegrowany System Kwalifikacji, 2020). Such formulated tasks do not diminish the director’s responsibility in a public institution, but the coordinator takes on the majority of duties related to implementing accessibility (Pasterak & Studziński, 2023, p. 53), and the success of the institution depends on the coordinator’s real influence on decisions in this area (Gov.pl, 2020). This is a starting point for further considerations of the role of accessibility coordinator in a cultural institution in Poland. In response to the existing cognitive gap, the following research problem was posed: Can an accessibility coordinator be called a manager? Do coordinators indeed only undertake coordinating actions, as suggested by the position’s name, or do they manage the accessibility implementation process in public cultural institutions?

2. Theoretical Background

According to the current regulations (Ustawa o dostępności, Dz.U. 2022, poz. 2240), accessibility coordinators prepare, coordinate, and monitor the implementation of action plans to improve accessibility by public entities. Moreover, they support individuals with special needs in accessing services provided by these entities.

Having analysed the results of the research conducted in the cultural sector (Pasterak & Studziński, 2023; Pluszyńska & Konior, 2023), the content of recommendations and guides (Gov.pl, 2020), and the cited law, the job title does not seem adequate to the performed functions. The name “coordinator” suggests that this person is only involved in coordinating activities within a specific project or process, and their main task is to ensure synchronisation and that everything adheres to the plan. However, in the context of an accessibility coordinator in a cultural institution, the role involves not only coordination but also planning, control, and ensuring effective communication of the organisation with individuals with special needs. Therefore, they function as a manager, specifically a functional manager, as they are responsible for a particular type of activity (Zakrzewska-Bielawska,

2020, p. 143), namely the process of implementing accessibility. Coordinators are also mid-level managers, as they implement the policies and strategic plans of the director (Kozmiński *et al.*, 2023, p. 29) or the cultural institution. Formally, such a coordinator is responsible for the organisation's accessibility. However, because of the terminology established in practice, we will use the term "accessibility coordinator" to refer to a manager responsible for implementing the accessibility process and taking actions to achieve the main goal, which is architectural, digital, and communication-information accessibility of a cultural institution.

The accessibility coordinator at a cultural institution managing the accessibility implementation process plays various roles in the organisation. The literature most often cites the list of ten roles developed by Mintzberg (1971, p. 98), which we can group into three categories: interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles. Observing the work of accessibility coordinators, we should note that they, too, are involved in various activities. Moreover, the roles they play in the organisation correspond to the categories of managerial behaviour developed by Mintzberg (1971). Table 1 presents a detailed summary of the managerial roles that accessibility coordinators perform in cultural institutions.

Table 1. Accessibility Coordinators' Managerial Roles in Cultural Institutions

| Category | Role | Sample Activities |
|---------------|--------------|---|
| Interpersonal | Figurehead | Represents the institution in dealing with recipients (such as people with special needs); participates in conferences and public meetings |
| | Leader | Accessibility leader sets goals in this area and mobilises colleagues to achieve them |
| | Liaison | Establishes cooperation with the external environment, including a group of people or non-governmental organisations for people with special needs or working on their behalf |
| Informational | Nerve centre | Monitors legal changes, analyses information from the environment regarding the accessibility implementation process, observes technical innovations supporting accessibility |
| | Disseminator | Shares acquired knowledge with colleagues and supports new initiatives of the institution with their experience |
| | Spokesperson | Communicates to the outside of the institution its accessibility decisions and mediates between the institution and, for example, the organiser, centre of competence, or Statistics Poland |

Table 1 cont'd

| Category | Role | Sample Activities |
|------------|---------------------|---|
| Decisional | Entrepreneur | Encourages colleagues to create accessible cultural activities, initiates such activities, consciously makes changes, and takes risks |
| | Disturbance handler | Eliminates barriers or proposes alternatives |
| | Resource allocator | Participates in and helps draft the institution’s accessibility budget |
| | Negotiator | Negotiates with the institution’s managing director and department heads, sets the terms of problems to be solved, makes decisions on concessions and compromises |

Source: the authors, based on Mintzberg (1971).

Depending on the accessibility coordinator’s position in the institution’s hierarchy, the coordinator may implement and draw attention to various roles in different ways. This differentiation may also stem from the individual preferences of a given coordinator, their personality traits, temperament, and intelligence (Zakrzewska-Bielawska, 2020, p. 149).

Previous research shows (Pluszyńska & Konior, 2023) that only 36% of public cultural institutions create a separate position for an accessibility coordinator in the organisational structure. The majority of institutions (68%) merely designate a person responsible for conducting activities related to accessibility implementation. Simultaneously, accessibility coordinators usually work in the administrative or educational department. Thus, they also perform other tasks not related to accessibility. Although this phenomenon of “multitasking” is common in the cultural sector, it is worrisome (see Waczyński, 2020; Maciejewska, 2024). A coordinator in a cultural institution should perform multiple roles, but having other duties as well means that they will only be able to perform selected, most urgent accessibility tasks.

3. Material and Methods

We aimed to determine whether we may call the accessibility coordinator a manager. What is the accessibility coordinator’s role in a cultural institution? To collect data, we employed the narrative collage method. It serves to study social phenomena focusing on the sphere of perceptions about an issue (in this case, the role of the accessibility coordinator). We can use this method to present the organisation’s cultural context. The task of the authors/respondents is to create stories that begin with the words that the researcher provides. In turn, the researcher plays

the role of an active editor. They select, arrange, and interpret the research material (Kostera, 2015, p. 81). Moreover, in narrative collages, respondents also often use metaphors. Their use in management science can be a way to look at organisational reality from a different perspective and provide an opportunity to better understand this reality. Simultaneously, the use of creative metaphors can unveil new meanings previously hidden by the interpreter (Sułkowski, 2004, pp. 7–10).

We asked graduate students with cultural and media management fields of study to complete the sentence: “The accessibility coordinator should be like...”. The choice of this research group is justified for several reasons. The students participated in the Managing Diversity in Organisations class, where they gained basic knowledge about theoretical and legal issues related to diversity and accessibility. They also participated in practical classes teaching the necessary skills required of accessibility coordinators: writing alternative texts, preparing audio descriptions, using the Polish sign language, and learning etiquette towards people with disabilities. An important part of the classes was study visits to cultural institutions, during which students met with accessibility coordinators who talked about their work in such institutions as cultural centers, museums, theaters, or accessibility centres. Thus, the students acquired the necessary knowledge, competencies, and skills to become accessibility coordinators in the future. Moreover, their perceptions of this position deepened during interviews with accessibility coordinators conducted in class. At the same time, the students were a group that looked at the work of accessibility coordinators from the sidelines, so to speak, and thus, their perspective seemed interesting to us. We conducted the study from 14 December 2023 to 19 January 2024, via an online form.

We obtained 57 narrative collages that creatively answered the question posed. Students used metaphors more than once in their answers, comparing accessibility coordinators to various characters or objects. We coded all narrative collages in the Maxqda software. As both of us did it, we achieved the triangulation of researchers. In coding, we used both concepts derived from management theory (Mintzberg’s managerial roles) and in-vivo codes derived directly from the subjects (metaphors, coordinators characteristics) (Creswell, 2013, p. 202).

The justification for the chosen concept is that Henry Mintzberg’s managerial role theory, despite its popularity, has not been used as a conceptual framework for creating scientific articles. The EBSCO database, after entering the phrase “mintzberg managerial roles,” indicates 26 scientific articles in which it was used (a search was used in all fields, without a time limit). Previous publications using Mintzberg’s theory as a theoretical framework referred to the education sector (Mech, 1990; Anderson, Murray & Olivarez, 2002; Güleriyüz & Duygulu, 2020), health care (Guo, 2002; Bartelings *et al.*, 2017; Alanazi & Falqi, 2023), sports (Quarterman, 1994; Horch & Schütte, 2003), or entrepreneurship (Zabid, 1987;

Durowoju & Tijani, 2021). They analysed managerial roles in professions that were relatively new at the time of the analysis, such as audit manager (Wolf, 1981), Chief Information Officer (CIO) (Grover *et al.*, 1993), Chief Academic Officers (CAO) (Anderson, Murray & Olivarez, 2002). Researchers also related the roles created by Mintzberg to cultural contexts other than the original, American one – they indicated managerial roles undertaken in Asian culture (Pearson & Chatterjee, 2003). They also wondered to what extent roles and skills would change with the advent of industry 4.0 (Güteryüz & Duygulu, 2020). Based on the classification created, they also tried to develop an office automation system (McLeod & Jones, 1987) or word processing and management information system integration (McLeod & Jones, 1987). Only two of the analysed articles concerned culture (Mech, 1990; Labaronne & Müller, 2024). There is an obvious research gap in this area. Other studies suggest that Mintzberg's concept is well suited to analysing managerial roles in arts and cultural organisation (Kurke & Aldrich, 1983).

4. Analysis Results

4.1. Leadership Roles Undertaken by Accessibility Coordinators

Analysis of the narrative collages shows that, according to students, accessibility coordinators perform each of the managerial roles defined in the theory. Respondents strongly emphasised interpersonal and informational roles, while roles of a decision-making nature were assessed as less important. The most frequently emphasised role of the accessibility coordinator was that of a liaison who is handling disturbances, nerve centre, leader, and disseminator. When describing what an accessibility coordinator should be like, students often used creative metaphors that aptly conveyed the nature of the activities undertaken by the coordinator.

4.2. Leader

As a leader, the accessibility coordinator sets clear goals and motivates others to achieve them. It is also important for the coordinator to manage the team efficiently, recognise the potential of team members, and use them to implement joint activities. It was also emphasised that the accessibility coordinator should be part of the team and interact with others. Comparisons of the accessibility coordinator to a leader appeared most often in this context:

However, above all, the accessibility coordinator should be a leader who can inspire and motivate others to work for accessibility [K121].

The coordinator should be a leader who actively supports initiatives to create an environment friendly to people with different types of disabilities. This requires identifying existing problems, planning, and implementing effective solutions [K30].

The leader's clear statement of purpose also resonated in this engaging metaphor:

Like Ariadne's thread giving hope to get out of the most difficult situations [K02].

Moreover, students used the metaphor of a coach ("running coach that prepares you for a marathon" [K06]) or the ship captain. In both metaphors, it was important to constantly monitor the situation and adapt actions to the changing environment to achieve the set goal:

During the marathon, the coordinator motivates people, responds to changes, and thus adapts themselves and the participants to new conditions, helping them survive moments of weakness [K06].

When thinking of an accessibility coordinator, I also see the captain of a ship, who primarily aims to take care of the crew so that everyone feels confident and comfortable on the journey. Their job is to constantly monitor the sea and the changing situations to minimise the impact of unfavourable conditions that will naturally arise [K53].

Respondents also used the conductor metaphor, meaning a person who harmonises the team's actions and gives it rhythm:

Such a conductor should be able to handle stressful situations and direct people so that even if they make mistakes, they will reach a great finale together. Such a conductor should strive to build lasting relationships with their orchestra based on mutual trust and support. They should create a place where musicians cooperate among themselves instead of running an unhealthy rat race to achieve their benefits. Furthermore, the conductor should, by their example, encourage the audience to frequently use the repertoire they have prepared and talk about it to musical laymen as well [K45].

4.3. Liaison

Respondents related the liaison's role primarily to communication between the organisation's inner structure, namely its employees, and the environment, which mainly involves recipients with special needs. In fulfilling this role, the coordinator should focus on identifying and meeting recipients' special needs and on communicating about them to the organisation's employees. Coordinators should do so to broaden the employees' perspectives, open them up to diversity, and point to issues that the employees have not yet considered but which are extremely important for the recipients. From this perspective, it is important to involve a wide range of stakeholders, namely experts, activists, community organisations, the organiser, or other audiences, and work together for accessibility. Interestingly, some students directly defined the accessibility coordinator as a "liaison" [K01, K24, K48]. Others did not define this role in such a direct way but used other metaphors to do so. The most popular metaphor was that of a bridge or its builder:

By creating accessibility bridges, this builder not only makes life easier for people with disabilities but also inspires a change in mentality and attitudes toward diversity [K03].

An accessibility coordinator should be like a builder of bridges, in this case, social bridges, who actively seeks not only to create lasting connections between diverse groups but also to transform the environment into a place where everyone can freely participate and take advantage of available resources [K51].

Others compared the coordinator to a binding element, translator, mediator, baker, golden mean, guide, or a knot that joins two ends of a rope.

The accessibility coordinator should be like a knot joining together the two ends of the “rope.” One is the world, institutions, and public places, and the other – is the part of society with unique needs [K04].

An accessibility coordinator should be like an interpreter for different communities, helping them understand each other and feel comfortable [K15].

An accessibility coordinator should be like a guide who leads one social group into the world of another group and makes sure that the first group does not enter into a conflict with the other group but instead supports it, creating a new and unique reality without hate [K16].

An accessibility coordinator, like a baker, must pay attention, first and foremost, to the needs of the team (the dough) and the stakeholders (the customers) [K52].

4.4. Nerve Centre

On the other hand, the nerve centre was a person with extensive knowledge of the applicable accessibility requirements but also of the technologies that support their implementation. This knowledge must be up-to-date. It is also a person who constantly analyses situations and tries to identify areas of possible improvement. One respondent directly used the term “nerve centre” [K09].

Students using metaphors to describe the role of the nerve centre tended to use them from two perspectives. The first referred to the fact that an accessibility coordinator should have an extremely broad knowledge of accessibility, be an expert on the subject, and a person to turn to for advice. Hence, respondents used metaphors related to an oracle, a sage, or a master craftsman (tailor, cook):

He must be like an oracle, anticipating all possible scenarios and eventualities while trying to prevent them [K32].

Moreover, the solid craftsmanship skills that define an experienced tailor are also indispensable for an accessibility coordinator. The coordinator must be proficient in the various aspects of shaping an accessible environment for different groups, where each group has its own individual needs. (...) An accessibility coordinator often deals with multiple areas of accessibility at the same time, such as architectural accessibility and web accessibility. This requires a tremendous amount of knowledge and skill [K37].

Respondents also emphasised the necessity of constantly improving one's competences, being open to new knowledge, and having curiosity about the world. We noticed metaphors related to education: a student, a child, or a detective finding new clues to solve a mystery:

The accessibility coordinator should also be a learner, as they need to be aware of the need for continuous improvement through learning. Their willingness to acquire knowledge will enable them to learn more quickly about emerging innovations, as well as to understand the ever-changing legislation related to accessibility. As a participant in the continuous learning process, they will be better prepared to respond effectively to new challenges and keep the organisation at the forefront of accessibility efforts [K09].

A good investigator is constantly expanding their knowledge in various fields because even issues that at first glance are not related to their work may turn out to be the key to solving certain cases – this is also how an accessibility coordinator should act, who, in addition to practical knowledge, obviously extremely important in this field, should also acquire theoretical knowledge, which is the basis of their activity [K50].

One person used the metaphor of an athlete who should continuously work on their physical fitness through regular training:

An accessibility coordinator should also be like an athlete. Athletes train and develop their skills all their lives to strive for mastery in their field. The person in charge of accessibility should also be training all the time, increasing their knowledge and skills. Very often, people use modern technology for this [K26].

4.5. Disseminator

In the role of a disseminator, the accessibility coordinator should convey their knowledge about accessibility to their colleagues – both during training and workshops and by developing individual solutions. The coordinator should make colleagues aware of the possible needs of the institution's recipients. The role of the disseminator was also evident in the creation of action plans for improving accessibility and developing relevant guidelines and standards. Metaphors comparing the accessibility coordinator to an inspirer or advocate were given:

The accessibility coordinator should be like an inspirer who will motivate and influence the rest of the team/institution/environment [K19].

Their task resembles the role of a sage who shares experience and organises training to raise awareness and teach about accessibility. The ability to educate is crucial to include others in the process of creating more accessible solutions and inclusive space for all [K38].

4.6. Disturbance Handler

Respondents understood the coordinator's role as a person who counteracts disruptions primarily in the context of removing barriers that arise when a person with special needs wants to use the services provided by a cultural institution. Therefore, the coordinator's role is to adjust the institution in such a way that the institution can achieve this independently. When writing about the barriers present in the organisation, the students also emphasised those of a mental nature, which is related to the need to sensitise the public to the needs of people with disabilities. Referring to the role of handling disturbances, the authors of collages compared the coordinator to a ninja, a warrior, a map expert, or a detective:

The coordinator is like a ninja, eliminating current obstacles and seeking the best path without barriers [K13].

As a warrior, the coordinator is a person who fights against the barriers present in their organisation. Their task should be to minimise the number of such obstacles and preferably remove them altogether [K47].

Like an expert in topographical maps, the accessibility coordinator should keep a close eye on the "landscape of differences and needs" within the organisation. Their role is not only to identify difficulties but, more importantly, to lay out clear paths that will allow all team members to move freely [K53].

The accessibility coordinator should be like a detective who analyses each piece of the puzzle, uncovers hidden barriers, and determines accessible paths for everyone [K55].

In this context, respondents used the metaphor of a gatekeeper several times:

The coordinator's ability to anticipate possible obstacles and think on the spot gives them a resemblance to a guardian of galactic highways, constantly patrolling to make sure everyone can travel without hindrance [K38].

An accessibility coordinator should be like a Texas Ranger, only instead of fighting crime, they should help overcome barriers but with the same efficiency [K56].

4.7. Other Managerial Roles

Students were far less likely to refer to other managerial roles played by accessibility coordinators, and no such elaborate metaphors were used as for the roles of leader, liaison, nerve centre, disseminator, and disturbance handler.

The role of the *figurehead* belongs to the group of interpersonal roles. Therefore, by performing it, accessibility coordinators should contribute to the development of good relations with various stakeholder groups, especially people with disabilities. Interestingly, the authors of narrative collages characterising this role often used the name "spokesperson," which is a term for another managerial role. In their understanding, the accessibility coordinator should not only be a representative of the

cultural institution but, first and foremost, an ambassador for people with special needs within the organisation:

The accessibility coordinator simultaneously serves as a spokesperson for people with needs that are generally overlooked or ignored, so it is the coordinator's responsibility to ensure that their voices are heard and taken into account not only on the scale of a single organisation but also in the larger social discourse [K43].

When assuming the *spokesperson* role, which is an informational role, accessibility coordinators should communicate the implemented accessibility activities externally and share information about these activities not only with the recipients but also with the organiser:

This role makes the coordinator not only a doer but also a reporter, gathering information on the progress and challenges in the accessibility area [K22].

They must maintain an active dialogue with the community and strive to apply the best possible solutions. Their ability to provide balanced information and inspiringly mobilise the community is the key to success in achieving the accessibility mission [K51].

The *negotiator's* role involves mainly a dialogue regarding the scope of the changes to be undertaken between members of the organisation, groups of customers with special needs, and providers of various types of products and services. Accessibility issues cover a wide variety of issues and apply to the work of various departments. Hence, it is necessary to negotiate the scope of the required transformations, but also to bring about an understanding of why they are needed:

The coordinator should become a conversation mediator, helping to find compromises and solutions that are beneficial to everyone. Their role is not only to eliminate barriers but also to build partnerships and create an atmosphere of mutual respect, understanding, and acceptance between different social groups [K43].

As the *resource allocator*, the accessibility coordinator first tries to manage the existing capital (human, material, information, financial) in the best possible way. They must monitor the state of the infrastructure on an ongoing basis and react if any deficiencies arise. In practice, this role involves adapting space (including online space) for people with special needs, providing support of assistants, or raising funds for additional solutions. One person pointed out a crucial aspect related to the role of the accessibility coordinator as the resource allocator – since these resources are always limited, the accessibility coordinator must also have the ability to select key activities and rationally dispose of the entrusted resources:

Due to the existing constraints in organisations (financial or architectural, among others), the accessibility coordinator should also have the ability to prioritise not only their tasks but also the planned changes to find the best solution adapted to the organisation's capabilities [K46].

Finally, respondents referred to the last role of an *entrepreneur*, especially in the context of implementing change and innovation in organisations. They highlighted the need to adapt to new challenges and the need to create as inclusive an environment as possible for employees and audiences, initiate new activities, and actively collaborate with the environment. Students described the accessibility coordinator as a “catalyst for change” [K25, K30]:

Therefore, the accessibility coordinator should act as a catalyst for change that introduces new principles of equality and equity in place of established habits and exclusions [K25].

5. Results

In the narrative collages, students most often emphasised the importance of interpersonal (liaison, leader) and informational (nerve centre, disseminator) roles. Decisional roles (disturbance handler) were of lesser importance. In the eyes of those being prepared for the job, an accessibility coordinator should, first and foremost, lead the team in the organisational change of increasing accessibility for people with special needs, setting clear goals, and motivating the team to make changes. Moreover, the coordinator should be a liaison between people with special needs and the organisation’s employees, taking into account the viewpoints of both groups and identifying solutions that will be most beneficial to all. An accessibility coordinator has up-to-date knowledge of accessibility and conveys it to other employees. They remove barriers to accessing cultural products and services to create the most inclusive environment possible.

The research shows that the effectiveness of the implementation of accessibility in a cultural institution depends, to a large degree, on accessibility coordinators because they are the causal agents in the process of implementing change. This special role of accessibility coordinators is related to the need to decide what changes are possible or necessary and the need to manage the process of change, that is, to take such actions that lead to the achievement of specific goals (cf. Osbert-Pociecha, 2009, pp. 324–325; Trenkner, 2014, p. 595).

Analysing the obtained narrative collages, we may trace the roles of coordinators in the process of implementing accessibility in a cultural institution by referring to the well-known three-phase model of the course of change, the so-called K. Lewin model (Clarke, 1997, p. 104). It includes:

- the unfreeze phase, i.e. preparing employees for change. In this phase, the accessibility coordinator explains the essence of the change and its benefits. At this stage, the accessibility coordinator can assume the role of a leader, disturbance handler, negotiator, or liaison;
- the change phase, i.e. implementing new solutions and creating conditions for the emergence of desired attitudes or behaviours of employees. At this stage,

the accessibility coordinator can act in the role of a disseminator, entrepreneur, or resource allocator;

– the refreeze phase, i.e., the consolidation of changes through activities that support or reinforce the newly introduced changes. At this stage, the accessibility coordinator can step into the role of a spokesperson, observer, or figurehead.

The change process of implementing accessibility in a cultural institution and the activities required to conduct this process testify to how big a role the accessibility coordinator plays. Managing the process of accessibility implementation is a highly humanised management concept, dependent largely on the social capacity of the cultural institution. The right attitude, empathy, understanding of the need to implement accessibility, and motivation are extremely important. On the other hand, as a leader of change, the accessibility coordinator creates the conditions for preparing and implementing accessibility. Taking a proactive stance in the various stages of implementing change, they perform a variety of roles. Recalling the metaphors created by the students, the accessibility coordinator can be a bridge of accessibility, a guide or mediator, a warrior, detective or guardian, a master craftsman, coach or captain, or even a conductor and inspirer.

6. Discussion

Based on the roles and responsibilities of accessibility coordinators in public cultural institutions in Poland, it should be acknowledged that they perform many managerial functions, such as: making decisions related to accessibility, supervising work in this area, developing strategic solutions and managing processes, implementing accessibility policy and cooperating with a wide range of internal and external stakeholders. According to the applicable legal system in Poland, the director is responsible for accessibility in public cultural institutions. Nevertheless, the coordinator is the leader of change. Due to the knowledge and competences he is responsible for implementing strategy to increase accessibility and inclusiveness.

Previous research shows that in many countries (in Poland as well), “staff members responsible for accessibility rarely hold roles that are purely dedicated to access, and usually work in education or marketing departments with some accessibility duties” (Remael *et al.*, 2019, p. 145; see: Pluszyńska & Konior, 2023). It is therefore hardly surprising that accessibility coordination is currently regarded as a set of ancillary tasks rather than as a management role. However, the research indicates that the accessibility coordinator is a new and highly responsible profession and the skills defined for the role are intended to serve as a starting point which is to be tested and improved in practice in the years to come (Zhang, 2019, p. 85) not only in Poland but also internationally. Therefore there is an urgent need to strengthen the role of accessibility coordinators in cultural institutions, as managers and leaders of change.

According to the authors, it would be worthwhile to conduct further research on the role of accessibility coordinators from the perspective of recipients. As Remael *et al.* (2019, pp. 143–144) rightly note “the principal actors and actors generating the need for this new profile of the arts accessibility manager are the audiences themselves, who increasingly depend on and expect greater accessibility.” The challenge for the future is therefore to remain open to further developments in the profession, to accept the complexity of this role, and to monitor the impact on the implementation of accessibility in the cultural sector.

Authors' Contribution

The authors' individual contribution is as follows: Each contributed 50%.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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