INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE– A FAIR SHOT FOR DISABLED

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ABSTRACT:

A disability is a physical or mental condition that limits a person's movements, senses, or activities.A disability can be permanent or temporary; as well as visible or invisible. People with disability may have the skills that are required in an organization. Inclusive cultures demonstrate organizational practices and goals in which those having different backgrounds are welcomed and treated equally in the organization. Unfortunately not many organizations are welcome to people with disability due to the stigma attached to them. Not all are accepted in organizations. If a person with disability is accepted then the infrastructural issues have to be dealt with. Normally issues like infrastructure, hike in pay scale, etc are not discussed by the employees with disability to the management due to the sole reason of appearing ungrateful. So before one hires the next time, people with disability should be considered because research studies shows that employees with disabilities have average or better attendance, job performance and safety records than their normal counterparts. The next issue to be considered is the facilities like change in infrastructure are to be provided when hiring one. Utilizing the employees with disabilities can be dealt by the technique called job design where the work can be designed by matching impairments with skill requirements. Disability is in the mind. When a person with disability through his skills and talent can strive to come this far thenit becomes the responsibility of an employer to provide equal job opportunity with suitable working environment.

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INTRODUCTION:

A disability is an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; and an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations. Disability is thus not just a health problem. It is a complex phenomenon, reflecting the interaction between features of a person's body and features of the society in which he or she lives. (WHO)

Disability may effect on organs or body parts and can also effect a person's participation in areas of life. Correspondingly, three dimensions of disability are recognized in ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health): body structure and function (and impairment thereof), activity (and activity restrictions) and participation (and participation restrictions). Types of disabilities include various physical and mental impairments that can hamper or reduce a person's ability to carry out his day to day activities. Few disabilities are autism, hearing loss and deafness, intellectual disability, learning disability, vision loss and blindness, etc.

The number of people with disabilities in India is substantial and it is likely to grow (World Bank, 2007). According to the 2001 Census of India, 21.9 million people were reported to have a disability. Of these, persons with a visual disability (48.6%) were the largest group; those with a hearing impairment (5.8%) were the smallest group (Rao, 2008). Other disabling conditions, e.g., speech (7.49%), mobility (27.87%), and intellectual disabilities (10.33%) were also prevalent.

A disability can be either permanent (for example, a hearing or mobility impairment) or temporary (for example, a treatable illness or temporary impairment that is the result of an accident). A disability can also be visible (for example, a wheelchair or white cane indicates the person has a disability) or invisible (for example, a mental illness).

People with disabilities may just have the skills and competencies one requires within their organization yet they are often under-employed. It is important to consider how the organization can tap this potential source of employees.

Inclusive cultures demonstrate organizational practices and goals in which those having different backgrounds are welcomed and treated equally in the organization.Andbuilding inclusion for employees with disabilities means all employees including those with disability should be able to participate in, and contribute to, the progress and success of an organization. It also means that they are not discriminated and are seen beyond their disability.

Disability is a state of mind. When someone looks at a person with disability, sympathetic behavior is shown towards them as to what will they do in life or how can they be at any workplace. But people like SudhaChandran (A 50 yrs old classical dancer who met with an accident at the age of 16 and had to amputate her feet. She overcame her disability by getting a prosthetic "Jaipur Foot" and became one of the most popular and acclaimed classical dancers of the country.), Shekar Naik (a T20 Blind Cricket World Champion who has 32 centuries to his name), etc have turned their disability into opportunity.

A fair chance is all it takes:
Before one hires the next employee, he should consider someone with disability. In every phase of life they face lot of challenges- be it going to a normal school, getting a mode of transportation, obtaining a graduation etc. If they have overcome all these then why can't they get a fair chance in job?

The benefits that a person with a disability brings can be significant. Research studies have consistently shown that employees with disabilities have average or better attendance, job performance, and safety records than their non-disabled counterparts, as well as a lower turnover rate. Sturgell (2013)

There are five major concerns regarding the employment to people with disability.First is Finding and Hiring Qualified Employees with Disabilities. Finding qualified candidates is equally straightforward due to the limitations or discrimination in education sector like not giving chance to study in normal school. Second is Retaining People with Disabilities. Five factors are important for retaining people with disabilities and creating workplaces where they excel—on boarding, reasonable accommodations, workplace climate, employee resource groups,

and mentoring. To retain an employee with disability few benefits like suitable infrastructural changes, working environment etc has to be person specific. This can be seen as company limitation. Third concern is Costs of Employing People with Disabilities. The financial benefits of employing people with disabilities significantly outweigh the costs as several government programs provide financial incentives for hiring people with disabilities and many such. Fourth concern is Business Growth. To achieve growth benefits, businesses should brand themselves as employers of people with disabilities as Consumers want to do business with companies that employ people with disabilities. And the fifth concern is Top Management Commitment. Numerous studies cite top management commitment as a critical variable in successfully recruiting, retaining, developing, and advancing employees with disabilities. Linkow (2010)

Giving voice to the disabled:

Most companies have nondiscrimination policies and encourage people with disabilities to identify themselves and request accommodations. Unfortunately, the reality is that most people who have disabilities, even visible ones, choose not to discuss their situations in the work environment. Many "invisible" disabilities are particularly difficult for people to disclose, such as depression, anxiety disorders, dyslexia, attention deficit, hearing loss, traumatic brain injury, or PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). The belief that they must actively conceal their disabilities—and anything in their personal lives that might reveal them—leaves many employees feeling invisible or alone.

Kulkarni, et.al (2010) explored how employees with physical disabilities and their human resource managers perceive practices aimed at entry, integration, and development of disabled employees. The results indicate that both sets of respondents want to treat people with disabilities as 'regular' employees and take attention away from disability. PWD(people with disability) are unaware of the special policies pertaining to them. The results also indicate that employees would like to get additional help, but are afraid to ask. Employers do not offer additional support unless asked, not wanting to highlight the disability given fears of stigmatization. Given this reluctance from both employees and employers, it is possible that people with disabilities remain an underutilized resource.

In India the theory of karma says that it is the fault done in previous birth which leads to being born as a girl, disabled etc. This ideology affects such that the disabled think it's their fault. The person with disability doesn't ask for hike or in some cases few benefits which he/she is entitled to. Fear of retaliation and of being perceived as ungrateful or not grateful enough often prevents employees with disabilities from articulating their needs, negotiating any increase in wages or access to opportunities, and registering any complaints against discrimination.

It becomes the duty of employer as well as other employees to be an advocate. Train all to be an inclusive leader by cultivating non-judgmental attitude, slowing down the responses, etc.

Is the workplace equipped?

A study was done to determine the knowledge level of learning disabilities (LD) among teachers in India. After doing the survey on teachers in few normal and special schools, the results showed that teachers of special schools had fewer score which was shocking as they handle children with disability and teachers of primary school had scores below average. The cornerstone of successful inclusion is a trained teacher who is prepared to handle the cognitive, social and emotional challenges presented by children with special needs. Saravanabhavan, et.al (2010)

G.N.Saibaba, a Delhi University professor was arrested for his links with the naxalites in 2013. His bail application was rejected by the high court. He was 90 percent disabled from childhood. But do the prisons in India have the facility to keep disabled in them? Incarceration of people with disability aggravates their suffering disproportionately in comparison to other prisoners, defeating the fundamental right to equality.Kannabiraman (2017)

Wheelchair bound Deepa won silver medal in shot-put in 2016 Paralympics, the first ever Paralympics medal by Indian women. Deepa says that though Indian government and their own states feted the Para-athletes, the able bodied athletes got more attention from across the country and corporates looking to sign endorsement deals. She says that there are a few facilities for Para-athletes in general. Finding basic facilities like wheel chair, accommodation, transportation, etc is difficult. Banerjee(2017)

In many organizations inclusive workplace is adopted. But just recruiting a person with disability is not enough. One must ensure that they are given with basic facilities eg. Ramp and lift for wheelchair bound employees etc. If these are not provided then the basic idea of inclusive workplace is not achieved.

Organizations' like ABB Zurich have AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act) which was established to prevent and remove barriers to accessibility and meet accessibility requirements; Individual accommodation plan which helps to access the disability accommodation requirements of employees based on their job requirement. ABB India Ltd has adopted inclusive workplace and has ramp facilities as well has provided the wheel chair bound employee with wheelchair, etc.

Utilization of the resource:

Located in the western region of India, Mica Enterprise (ME) is a private manufacturer of plastic fasteners and markers for the defense and space research, heavy engineering, and automobile industries. The owner started hiring people with disability. Work is designed by matching impairments with skill requirements, thus trying to "overcome" the disability in performing assigned tasks. For example, those with hearing impairments are made to work on noisy machinery, those with developmental disabilities are assigned the task of pulling fasteners apart, and those with limited mobility are confined to single rooms.

The "job design" is the best way organizations can improve inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities. This means that once the company assesses the basic skills of the employee, the final job description is adapted to the employee's skills and expectations. For instance, many intellectual disabled employees enjoy doing manual repetitive tasks in a job, something other employees avoid doing. This brings benefits to the company and to the disabled employees. Casinge(2014)

CONCLUSION:

An inclusive workplace enables one to embrace the diversity and richness of backgrounds and perspective of people, and to leverage their diverse talents to arrive at winning business

solutions. Hence it is of great importance that people with disability are given opportunity and are seen beyond their weakness. There are few schemes like AIDP(Assistance to the disabled persons for purchase/ fitting of Aids and Appliances which is for those whose income is less than 5000 rs per month to them buy aids or appliances according to their disability)and acts like PWD act (People with Disabilities act 1995which aims at giving equal opportunities and protection of rights and full participation) given by the government as well as by the organization in the personal interest to the disabled but due to lack of awareness it is not being utilized by the people with disability.

The researcher feels that it is the duty of every individual to be aware of and also make awareness among others so that it is seen that the target group is benefitted by it.The gap between employee with disability and the employer should be minimized and place given for assumptions has to be reduced. Access to amenities required for them is as significant as giving them opportunity. The researcher mainly feels that Job design is a very effective way of giving equal opportunity for people with disability. But there are many cases where this is taken as an advantage and they are exploited. It has to be made sure that Job design should not be a way of exploiting them but should be a medium to create fair shot.

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