

# Diversity at Workplace and in Education<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract** There is a potential conflict between the value of diversity at workplace -- a concept touted and encouraged since the mid- 90's in America among private business/ corporates -- and the findings of the rights-based disability movement, namely, (i) a Person with Disability (PwD) doesn't need charity, and (ii) disability is not a spectacle. A PwD represents in some sense the 'spectacle of diversity' to an extreme in the mainstream unconscious imagination; if a prospective employer encourages hiring an employee with disability solely for the reason of diversity from such a perspective, then there is a problem. Both in education and employment, the mere reportage of either managers'/ teachers' or employees'/ students' satisfaction over employing PwD at the cost of ignoring the axis of domination to investigate such status, is not encouraged. This paper thus critically examines the construction of diversity at workplace and in education with a view to arrive at a possible base for understanding the notions that lie behind. The notion of social capital is put to use to 'measure' diversity, which in turn is considered to enrich our social life more than inclusion as it practiced today.

*Keywords:* Centring, Diversity, Inclusion, Social Capital.

## PART I: SETTING THE THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### *Introduction*

Diversity is a good thing. Or is it? This is the debate that launches the main idea in this paper. If disabled persons<sup>2</sup> are hired at a public or private sector company or admitted in a regular school, but are either kept at lower rungs of the office hierarchy or are removed periodically from regular schools, then disability is simply seen as a spectacle. A disabled person represents in some sense the 'spectacle of diversity' to an extreme in the mainstream unconscious imagination; if a prospective employer encourages hiring solely for the reason of diversity from such a perspective, then there is a problem.

However, it is not easy to sort this problem out. One, there ought to be some value to a practical implementation of a policy; i.e., designing an instrument that makes available a way of implementing a policy, is a good thing – the instrument here being increased diversity at workplace and institutions. In the realm of education, diversity has been shown to play a significant role by providing an opportunity to interact in a meaningful way with individuals from diverse backgrounds, the benefits that accrue from such exposure better prepares them for existing in a multicultural society. There is enough literature showing that diversity in the classroom and the curriculum adds to the quality of the educational experience for students and educators (Rudenstine 2001).

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<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I switch randomly between a person-first and a disability-first terminology, making in fact the claim that the tyranny of choosing one or the other must be overcome, since apart from the respective histories of the struggles, these different usages is also partly linguistic as English being a Subject-Verb-Object and Prepositional language allows nominal expressions with a prepositional phrase within it such as 'X with Y', which may not be allowed in a Verb-final, postpositional language.

However, typically 'diversity' in either education or workplace refers to diversity in ethnicity and race, persons with disabilities are marginalised once again and are not included in discussions regarding diversity, though it is clearly 'one of many areas in which true equality requires not identical treatment, but rather differential treatment in order to accommodate differential social needs' (Kymlicka 1992). Throughout history, disabled persons have experienced similar attitudinal and architectural barriers in the society. Although disability as a collective is heterogeneous and any social categorization on that basis is thus problematic, one can however perceive recognition of disability culture from the perspective of the social status of individual members of a group as full partners in social interactions. This particular view with regards to disabled persons is advocated in Danermark and Gellerstedt (2010) on the basis of the status model of recognition proposed in Fraser (2000).

Fraser's is a theory of justice where the normative is parity of participation. However, she takes the two crucial determinants of justice to be re-distribution of resources and cultural recognition, the latter remedying cultural injustice. However, recognition is to be understood as different from identity, which often displaces the politics of redistribution, the other arm of the model. So, rather than group-specific identity, the status of individual group members as full partners in any interaction is emphasized. However, Fraser's model places failure of recognition at institutionalized social relations, not in individual or interpersonal psychology. Thus the heterogeneity of disability referred to above can be accommodated through an appreciation of full participation as per the status model.

A mere reportage of either managers'/ teachers' or employees'/ students' satisfaction over employing/ being employed or admitting/ being admitted disabled persons and ignoring the axis of domination to investigate such status is undesirable. If there was a way to 'measure' (un)favourable reasons for presence of disabled persons at workplace and institutions, along with all the fault lines, then a truer picture may emerge. In short, in order to create an instrument that ensures diversity at workplace and institutions, we need to generate another instrument to 'measure' the true characterization of diversity.

'Measuring' of course is a much maligned word in the context of humanistic studies, but not so in social sciences, which nonetheless, is wrecked by the famous absence of the 'subject'. At the same time, if we go by Biklen's (2005) comment that disability is not 'knowable in any definitively objective sense...[it] can be studied and discussed, but it is not knowable as a truth. It must always be interpreted', then, a return to the humanistic studies seems to be the only sure way of arriving at the truth as far as disability is concerned, since it is only the humanities which rely on interpretation. In other words, studying disability seems to highlight a possible tension between the issue of the missing subject in the context of social sciences and the need for 'measuring' in the context of humanistic studies. How do we resolve this tension?<sup>3</sup> I will come back to this question after a brief and relevant detour.

### ***Centring Disability as Knowledge Empowerment***

In this section I will develop and outline my thesis of 'centring disability' with respect to Sign Language, which I will claim, informs and augments our understanding of language as such, the basis of much of human nature itself. On the face of it, it sounds like a rather tall claim but I will show that not only is there a precedence for such a framework, but in fact, this might be the only desirable way to move forward for knowledge development and, specific to the concerns of this paper, thinking about disability.

To re-emphasize the title of the section further, by the phrase 'centring disability', I mean the strategy of locating disability at the centre of studying other phenomena like modernity (McCagg and Siegelbaum, 1989 and Radford, 1994) or medicine (Zborowski 1960; Gilman 1985; and Morris 1991) and thereby obtaining an enlightened perspective on these other phenomena; this, I call, empowerment of knowledge in general. Although according to Linton (1998) the studies above do not exactly centre disability, Radford (1994) studying intellectual disability is quoted as saying the following which typically defines what I mean by centring

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<sup>3</sup> Although this question formed the background for the talk on which the present paper is based (Bhattacharya 2012), the question and the answer became sharpened and clearer in my mind from a question posed by the (late) Prof. Josodhara Bagchi present in the audience, whose untimely passing (in January, 2015) has caused a lot of grief among the intelligentsia in the country; I wish to express my gratitude to her for asking the most relevant question that the paper raises.

disability: ‘modernity is a lens through which we can see that our culture has not only marginalized people with an intellectual disability, *it has also marginalized the study of intellectual disability as a phenomenon.*’

My emphasis on centring has to do more with education, where a process of continuous displacement of the centre of knowledge-making, can be shown to include by its very process disabled students and other marginalities. As a strategy, centring can be achieved through interaction and classroom practices, and can be at the core of teacher training. It is not impractical and therefore doable, as has been shown in Bhattacharya (2014b, 2015a,b). The process can also be demonstrated through a simple consideration of the adjustments that any sensitive teacher will have to make if there is even a single disabled child in the classroom. For example, if in a primary class the lesson for the day is on the animal known as platypus, it will be very difficult for the teacher to convey an understanding of this particular animal for a blind student in a typical classroom in India, as platypus is not all a familiar animal in this part of the world. In order to include that solitary blind child in the lesson of the day, an innovative teacher will not show a picture of the animal but rather will think of doing something which the blind student can equally participate in. This can be easily done by creating something tactile, namely, a model of the animal. During the process of imparting the lesson of the day, the teacher would then pass around the model specifically meant for the blind student, to not just the blind student but to all other students. The simple experience of *feeling* the shape of the animal will create a much deeper impression in every student’s mind, and a result there will be higher recall possible for all the students.

Results from available studies show that adopting inclusive programmes targeted mainly towards disabled children benefited majority of non-disabled pupils. This was seen in a poor, multi-cultural, inner-city neighbourhood in the Newham borough of London where conscious efforts to phase out segregation and to adopt an inclusive neighbourhood schools system resulted in the biggest improvement nationally in GCSE results of all students in Grades A-G (Rouse and Florian, 1996, Rieser, 2006).

A striking example of centring disability can be read into Keller’s (1985) account of the Nobel laureate but much neglected cytogeneticist Barbara McClintock’s work on transposition. McClintock’s philosophy can be understood from what she has to say about research in general and her own research on transposition in corn kernels in particular:

If the material tells you, ‘It may be this,’ allow that. Don’t turn it aside and call it an exception, an aberration, a contaminant. . . . That’s what’s happened all the way along the line with so many good clues. . . . The important thing is to develop the capacity to see one kernel of maize that is different, and make that understandable. If something doesn’t fit, there’s a reason, and you find out what it is.”

(quoted in Fox Keller 1985, 1995)

McClintock’s world-view begins and rests with difference. Instead of viewing the world as constituted by dichotomy, in this view, difference gives rise to a radical reorganization of the world around us that finally resolves into multiplicity. The kernels of corn that didn’t appear to fit in, revealed a larger world of multidimensional order irreducible to a single law.

My thesis of ‘centring disability’ with respect to Sign Language is based on a conspicuous character of Sign Languages – the *multi-modal* nature of the language that achieves the impossible task of uttering two words at the same time in terms of a spoken language equivalent. Sound, as we know, is embedded in time, we can only utter Word<sub>1</sub> after Word<sub>2</sub> after Word<sub>3</sub>, and so on. Sign Language, on the other hand, being a visual language makes use of both space and time to produce language. For example, producing a certain handshape for asking a question does not by itself mean a question unless also accompanied by facial expression or non-manual marking, like raised eye-brow in this case. Producing a question with just a handshape will be taken as being inarticulate. In this example, thus the simultaneous production of handshape and raised eyebrow only can be a meaningful question. This multi-modal property of Sign Languages opens up dimensions otherwise invisible in spoken languages. Centring Sign Language in language studies can thus enable us to look at language -- the pure representation of the human mind -- in a new light (Bhattacharya and Hidam 2011). Thus, the fact that more than one modality can be active simultaneously in Sign Language may indicate that ‘order’ in spoken language may be an epiphenomenon. In Sign Language, a sign can co-occur with non-manual marking, mouthing, torso tilt, head tilt, etc.; whereas in case of speech, each unit of sound must be produced at a time, generating a linear order of sounds, or words. It is, as if, speech is tied to the time axis only because of the physical limitation of speech and not sign.

However, a more striking example of multi-modality of Sign Languages comes from the frequent employment of what is known as classifier constructions in Sign Languages. These are a set of handshape units that represent noun classes and/ or characterizing spatial relations and motion events. However, a unique property of these classifiers is the non-dominant hand representing yet another classifier at the same time as the dominant hand. For example, if the dominant hand represents the classifier unit for a 'vehicle', the non-dominant one might at the same time represent the classifier unit for a 'tree'. Furthermore, not only are the two handshapes meaningful, but the locations articulated by the hand(s) signify the space to represent the event. On top of this, different types of movements of the two hands within the signing space indicate existence, location or motion (Supalla 1986), a complexity that is beyond any known spoken language.

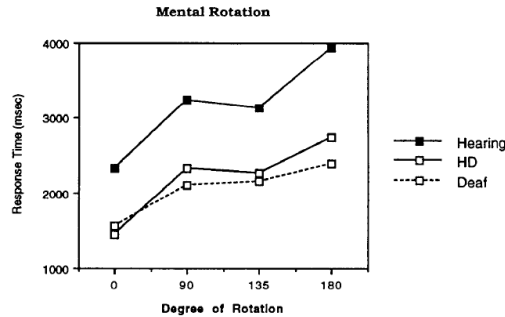
As it so happens, a certain view of the evolution of language, namely, the non-evolutionary view, in fact, derives the consequence that linear order is irrelevant. The non-evolutionary view of language evolution (Hauser, Chomsky and Fitch 2002), or the *exaptation thesis*, is focussed towards the emergence of language as an internalized event that is optimally designed with respect to the communication between different components of the faculty of language. This internalized, language-as-thought object is externalized as speech much later in the evolutionary history, when the early humans migrating out of Africa realized that the new sensation arising out of the coming together of sound and meaning, is also shared by other humans. Thus, speech came about as secondary, as an epiphenomenon of the prior internalized language-as-thought object. As has been pointed out above, the one-sound-at-a-time physical limitation of speech inflicts order on speech, for example, Word<sub>1</sub> preceding Word<sub>2</sub> preceding Word<sub>3</sub>, and so on. Order, then, in this analysis, seems to be a property of speech but not language. This realization, independently arrived at by considering a particular theory of language evolution, matches with the actual realities of Sign Language, where the notion of order is highly complicated, and overlapping modalities is the norm (see Hidam, 2015, for further on this point).

In terms of practice, this implies that if adequate services are provided in the classroom with D/deaf students in terms of teaching through Sign Language, acquisition of this medium of communication will open up such an enriching experience for the hearing student that it may radically alter their understanding of the world around them. In this perspective, an inclusive education will transform the lives of the so-called non-disabled majority students in immeasurable ways. I will demonstrate below that highlighting aspects where either a clear positive or equality in performance is noticed across D/deaf and hearing persons populations, may have equalizing and/ or integrative potential that can constitute an inclusive classroom.

Emmorey, Kossly, and Bellugi (1993) designed a task where subjects upon being shown two separate two-dimensional shapes were asked to decide whether the two shapes were the same (A and B) or mirror images (C and D), regardless of orientation (see Fig. 1)). As can be figured out, B is a result of 180° rotation of A, whereas D is a 180° rotation of the mirror image of C. The subjects were divided into 3 groups, Deaf signer, hearing signers, and hearing non-signers. The result in Fig. 2 shows that both Deaf and hearing signers had faster reaction times than non-signers at all degrees of rotation. The reason for this difference is that nominal expressions in sign language are marked with specific spatial loci in the signing space. However, normally, the locations are to be understood from the perspective of the signer and not the addressee. Thus, the addressee has to perform a mental rotation task to be able to translate the loci from the addressee's point of view. This is a constantly negotiating process in sign language communication. As a result, signers are adept at mental rotation tasks. The fact that signers produced similar results, shows that the experience with sign language is the reason behind this performance, and not the deprivation of hearing.



Fig. 1: Example stimuli in the mental rotation task (Emmorey *et al* 1993: 169)



**Fig. 2:** Comparative performance by 3 groups on mental rotation task (Emmorey *et al* 1993:173)

If there was a way to integrate this ability of signers into classroom or evaluations tasks, acquiring sign language by hearing students would equip them with faster mental rotation task abilities. A fall-out of such an integrative approach would in return result in positive valuation of D/deaf students in the class, and the possibility of parity of participation in other activities is likely to increase.

Yet another example of centring can be in the domain of diagnosis. In a recent book, Ghai (2015) repeatedly talks about the struggle between disabled persons and their diagnosis of disability by medical professionals. Diagnosis as a structural instrument is used culturally to define disability and in many cases malign and devalue the disabled individual. Medical diagnosis therefore remains the strongest weapon for medicalization of disability. However, if we locate disability as the site of our epistemology, then the perspective gained from understanding the role of diagnosis in disability will inform our general perspective on the role of diagnosis in various other domains, which at least cuts across gender and age, be it gynaecological or palliative care or dementia.

Finally, in terms of the questions raised at the end of the Introduction (*How do we resolve this tension?*), it is implied in the discussion below that bridging the gap between the humanities and the social sciences is yet another example of centring disability.

### ***Methodology: Humanities or Social Sciences?***

I will show that the two problems/ tensions referred to above (at the end of the Introduction section) are related and a resolution of one would lead to the resolution of the other. That is, the tension between encouraging diversity and using diversity as a mark of disability as spectacle on the one hand, and one between the famous lament for the lack of agency (see below) and ‘measuring’ on the other, may constitute two sides of the same coin, the latter more appropriately identified as the well-known tension between the humanities and the social sciences. To elaborate further, in the social sciences, it has been pointed out (Plummer 2001, for example) time and again that the discipline has moved away from the subject. Instead of the human subject, Social Science lent itself too willingly to what Giddens (1986) calls *structuration*, preference of system over agency. A similar tradition developed too in Psychology and Anthropology, from Skinner’s Behaviourism and Lacan’s Structuralism to the Structural Anthropology of Levi-Strauss. The difference refers to the chasm between looking inside, exploring, feeling and imagining, and recording externals, measuring, generalizing and theorizing; one ‘falls in love’, the other ‘observes love’ (Plummer 2001). So much so, that Levi-Strauss (1966) in fact announced the death of the subject thus: ‘the final goal of human sciences is not to constitute *human*, but to dissolve him *or her*’ (emphasis added).

### **A Return to ‘Design’**

The lament for subjectlessness in the social sciences was meant to re-ignite an appeal for a return to the narrative, thus bringing the two disciplines closer to each other. The technique that is mentioned most often in this regard is different versions of reflexive or biographical *life story* projects, successfully employed in Social Sciences and Anthropology. However, there is another approach to the whole concern for bringing the two (i.e., humanities and social sciences) together; I will terms this as a *Return to Design*. Let me explain.

If bringing the subject back in social sciences is one way of bringing the two disciplines closer by changing the way social sciences is studied, then there must exist another approach – a push from the other direction, namely, changing the humanistic, interpretive studies in a way so that the two disciplines are brought closer. The push, I claim, can be achieved through a return to design in the humanities, or, bringing back the much hated concepts like quantification and measuring within the perimeters of the humanities; in simplistic terms, *instrumentalizing* the humanities. But *what* and *how* do we measure?

## Social Capital

Putnam's (2000) notion of social capital marks an important shift in focus, within Western political theory, away from either the state or citizen to the civic space in between. This notion also highlights the need for quantification within the humanities for the analysis of community, by evaluating large amount of collected data of individual behaviour and opinion. Social capital, according to Putnam, unlike the popular notion of 'community', is 'quantifiable'. The quantifiability helps bridge the gap between more 'scientifically' oriented disciplines of social science (like Economics) and the more culturally bound study of politics, society and community, within the social sciences.

Putnam (2000) defines social capital as the 'connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them' that ultimately 'enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives'. In this view community becomes a repository of a common 'civic culture', which unites citizens in a sphere distinct from the liberal state. The focus is largely on the *amount* of social connectedness rather than a detailed analysis of the *nature* of any past or present connections (Arneil 2006). The spirit behind the concept of social capital is a re-emphasis on the social rather than individual basis of peoples' behaviours.

Within the context of developing countries in general, a more appropriate and context-specific measures of social capital would find informal rather than formal networks to be more profuse and relevant. For example, the suggestion made in this paper that a measure of social capital may provide us tools to understand diversity better, may be harvested in a more appropriate manner if both structural and cognitive aspects of social capital are considered. Structural and cognitive aspects of social capital broadly refer respectively to networks and norms of Putnam's definition of social capital. In fact Uphoff (2000) and Krishna (2000) add respectively, roles, rules, and precedents in the former group and values, attitudes, and beliefs in the latter. Let us discuss an example in this connection.

Within this framework, Kudlick's (2001) comparison of the objectives of two organizations within the blind community, namely, the American Blind People's Higher Education and General Improvement Association (ABPHEGIA), which had mostly blind people as members, and the American Association of Workers for the Blind (AAWB), membered by mostly sighted individual, attains importance. A study of the two magazines are *The Problem* and *The Outlook for the Blind*, respectively, indicates a shift in purpose in the second half of the twentieth century, from service to advocacy, only for the former. Judging from Kudlick's descriptions, it seems that *The Outlook for the Blind* showed all the negative values for the cognitive aspects, namely, sightedness as the norm, and therefore valued, the organization believed that they can 'help' the 'other', which indicated their attitude of superiority. The reason that the switch to self-advocacy therefore did not take root in AAWB is the maintenance of the normative of sightedness. As a result of this 'negative' predisposition of the cognitive aspects, the structural aspects, which facilitate positive norm values, remained neglected as no mutually beneficial collective action could take place.

Thus the advocacy driven interactive space mitigated by organization of disabled persons constitute the social capital as the *what* of measure indicated in the earlier section ('A return to design'). The *how* of measuring may require a reconsideration along the lines hinted above, where a more informal aspects of social capital, which is also contextually richer, is considered. Beliefs that people hold about their possible interactions with others in particular situations, provide a networking pattern that is a better indication of collective action in a marginalized sector than their membership to a particular organization. Coleman (1990) too thinks that social capital 'exists in the *relations* among persons.'

Of course, not all activities may be considered as contextually specific measures of social capital. Activities may thus be more or less individual-oriented, that is, that there are activities that are typically undertaken collectively or at least with other persons. Such a criterion will strengthen the structural and cognitive aspects of social capital. For example, the following may form a typical set of informal and relational social capital envisaged here:

- (a) The extent of belief and expectation of students or workers with disability (S/WwD) about their institution being an equal opportunity provider, structurally, academically, workspace-wise
- (b) The norms of interactive space outside the institutions in formal and informal settings
- (c) The structural typology of access the S/WwD consider essential
- (d) Structural situations where resolving of crisis involving S/WwD is involved
- (e) Structural situations of S/WwDs during natural disasters or other emergencies

This is only an indicative list of criteria that can be 'measured' as markers of social capital and thus have the potential to contribute to identifying true diversity and distinguish it from diversity as a spectacle. However, the suitability of any of these or other indicators will depend on actual field-based studies that may reveal patterns of informal networking that influence and impact the lives of disabled persons.

## **PART II: THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE**

### ***Disability at the Workplace and in Educational Institutions***

In this part, empirical evidence is presented that exposes the true nature of diversity as practiced and imagined at the workplaces and institutions. It was indicated earlier that the true nature of diversity can be understood if we have an instrument to measure job satisfaction at workplace and a sense of belonging in regular institutions. Both job satisfaction and sense of belonging, without an axis of domination, can also contribute positively towards a repository constituting the Social Capital of a group or community. It is implicit therefore that an instrument be designed that can measure such social capital of a group of disabled persons (at work and in educational institutes). We will see here that the rhetoric of diversity coming both from the state parties and private concerns actually discourages diversity.

#### **A Typology of Employment**

The National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (2006) (NPD) and previous work in this domain (e.g., Mitra and Sambamoorthi, 2006) more or less identify the following five types of employment for disabled persons.

##### Government establishments

Reservation in various Ministries / Departments against identified posts in for Group A, B, C & D jobs is 3.07%, 4.41%, 3.76% and 3.18% respectively. In Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), the reservation status in Group A, B, C & D is 2.78%, 8.54%, 5.04% and 6.75%, respectively. The PWD Act, 1995 provides for 3% reservation in employment in the establishments of Government of India and PSUs against identified posts which stand at 1900 after the revision in 2001.

##### Private Sectors

‘Within the limits of their economic capacity and development’, Governments *shall* provide incentives to both public and private sectors for employment of disabled persons with a target of at least 5% of their workforce to be disabled persons. Pro-active measures like incentives, awards, tax exemptions etc. will be taken to encourage the employment of disabled persons in the private sector.

##### Self Employment

Given that only a small percentage of the workforce work in the organised sector, self-employment of persons with disabilities is promoted (as per the NPD 2006). This is done through vocational education and management training. Further, the existing system of providing loans at softer terms from the NHFDC (National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation) will be improved to make it easily accessible. The Government encourages self-employment by providing incentives, tax concessions, exemptions from duties, preferential treatment for procurement of goods and services by the Government from the enterprises of disabled persons, etc. Priority in financial support is given to Self Help Groups formed by the persons with disabilities.

#### **Vocational Training and Poverty Alleviation**

The Indian Government promised various forms of assistance for vocational training and schemes to provide employment through poverty alleviation over the years. Assistance (up to 90%) is provided through Government to organizations providing training to PwDs. Ministry of Labour through DGE&T (Directorate General of Employment and Training) runs 17 Vocational Rehabilitation Centres (VRC), free of cost with stipendary provisions wherever needed. Through various schemes of poverty alleviation like *Swarnjayanti Gramin Swarojgar Yojana* (SGSY), *Indira Awaas Yojana* (IAY), *Jawahar Gramin Samridhhi Yojana* (JGSY),



and *Swarn Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana* (SJSRY), the Governments undertakes to fulfil 3% reservation for disabled persons in both rural and urban areas. However, except for SJSRY, which is run at urban level and has achieved assistance for self-employment to 5% disabled persons, the others schemes (run in rural centres) have level of assistance varying from 0.02% to 0.96%, which is much lower than the targeted 3%.

### **Promises of the Private Sectors**

The International Labour Organisation (ILO), Geneva, published in 2010 CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) profiles of the following 25 companies which describes how companies address hiring and retention, products and services and CSR from the perspective of disability. Out of the 25 companies, at least 13 of them have India offices:

Accor, Cisco, Dow, Ernst & Young, Honda Motor, IBM, Marks & Spencer, Microsoft, MphasiS, Nokia, Samsung Electro-Mechanics, Sony and Wipro.

Here is an excerpt from the blurb of the company called MphasiS:

... We are committed to being an equal opportunity employer, and encourage employment of otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. We have recruited over 320 persons with disabilities in various capacities across BPO, Applications, ITO and Corporate Support towers. ...

Furthermore, the Government constituted a committee of experts including representatives from the corporate sector which identified 1065 jobs at various levels.

These figures produce a rosy background where Government, Public and Private sectors seem to be too willing to welcome disabled persons at workplace, but is it really so?

### **Census and Other Figures**

According to the 2001 census, the workforce participation rate of persons with disabilities is as low as 34.48% (constituting 26.72% of main workers and 7.76% of marginal workers), that is, a total of 75, 56,049 disabled persons are employed out of a total of 21,906,769 disabled persons. This figure does not compare too badly with the 39.10% rate of participation in the workforce among the general population. However, it constitutes only 1.87% of total workforce, which is a sad reflection since even by governmental estimates 3% of the total population of India is disabled, a low workforce rate of participation reflects higher levels of unemployment among disabled persons.

A well known survey conducted in 1999 by NCPEDP (National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People), exposes an even grimmer reality, namely, that the rate of workforce participation of disabled persons is as follows:

- (i) Public sector: 0.54%
- (ii) Private sector: 0.28%
- (iii) Multinationals: 0.05%

This is one way of viewing the state of employment among disabled persons. However, there is another way, which involves examining the various levels of work that employed disabled persons are engaged in.

### **Levels of Work**

As indicted earlier, the Government set up a Committee of Experts to identify private sector jobs at various levels. This Committee identified 120 executive/ management/ supervisor level jobs and 945 skilled/ semi-skilled/ un-skilled level jobs in the private sector; this indicates a 8-fold variation between the two broad levels.

This is similar to the study in Kaye (2009) which reported a 10-fold variation from 1.8% among advertising, promotion and PR managers to 19.7% among dishwashers in the US. In a more recent study (Ali, Schur and Blanck, 2011), this variation between the levels showed up even among the unemployed. It is reported that while 16.7% of unemployed non-disabled population worked as a professional in their most recent job, the figure is 7.74% across all disabilities for among the disabled population. However, in services, the respective figures are 21.5% and 34.9%, showing a clear difference in the level of the most recent job held by a (non)-disabled person.

Looking at governmental jobs, the levels of work is dictated by the National Classification of Occupation (NCO, 2004), which identifies the following four levels:

Level I	Up to 10 years of formal education and/or informal skills
Level II	11-13 years of formal education
Level III	14-15 years of formal education
Level IV	More than 15 years of formal education

**Table 1:** NCO 2004 classification of Levels of work and their associated qualifications

The NCO further associates types of work with these levels as follows:

Legislators, Senior Officials and Managers	NONE
Professionals	Level IV
Associate Professionals	Level III
Clerks	Level II
Service Workers and Shop & Market Sales Workers	Level II
Skilled Agricultural and Fishery Workers	Level II
Craft and Related Trades Workers	Level II
Plant and Machine Operators and Assemblers	Level II
Elementary Occupations	Level I

**Table 2.** NCO 2004 classification of types of work

If we take the first two as one group (Group I), namely, the executive level, and third as the second group (Group II) and the rest as the other (GROUP III), we obtain the following figures from Census 2001 where we see that most percentage of disabled people (52.94%) work in non-executive positions:

Groups	Types of work	Number of disabled persons	Percentage within disabled workforce
Group I	Managers and Professionals	33,72,242	44.62
Group II	Associate Professionals	1,83,247	2.42
Group III	Other	40,00,560	52.94

**Table 3.** Census 2001 figures for disabled workforce across levels

However, if we also look at the percentage of the total workforce in India, then a dismal picture emerges as only 0.83% disabled persons out of the total working population of India are employed at Group I, 0.04% at Group II and 0.99% at Group III. Thus a clear case can be made that disabled workers at the top level is still very less, constituting only 0.83% of the total working population. However, within the disabled working population, the percentage is high, namely, 44.62%, though the majority of disabled workers are employed at the lowest level, namely, Group III, as pointed out above.

### Characterization of Workers

We see above that both the census figures and level of work perspectives provide a dismal picture of the rate of participation of disabled persons in the workforce and their levels. There is yet another aspect to it, namely, the characterization of disabled workers as perceived by employers. Does that paint a dismal picture too?

Within the American tradition at least since Shafer *et al.* (1988), and most vocally in Kregel (1999), personal qualities such as being productive, dedicated, responsible, reliability, inclusion in workplace culture, attendance, arriving to work and returning from breaks on time, have been stressed positively with regards to disabled workers. Although speed, quality, independence are consistently rated as low but overall rating for work performance is quite high, that is, worker's performance in its entirety is considered satisfactory.

Even in the ILO (2010) report cited above, one business case for outlining the reason for hiring disabled persons is as follows:

People with disabilities make good, dependable employees. Many cases document comparable productivity, lower accident rates and higher job retention rates between employees with disabilities and a company's general workforce.

Further:

Hiring people with disabilities can contribute to the overall diversity, creativity and workplace morale and enhance a company's image among its staff, in the community and among customers.

However, against this rosy picture and good intentions, a close and careful reading of the existent literature reveals a world quite different, a world that in fact accounts for the massive fall (21.1%) in employment among disabled persons in the US in the period 1989-2000 – the high period of the ADA; for valid reasons, therefore, this trend is identified as the anti-ADA backlash (Burkhauser, Daly, and Houtenville 2001).

Even in Shafer *et al.* (1988) and other works, it was noted that among the positive qualities of disabled workers were included the following as well: willingness to respond to employer supervision, accepting authority, loyalty to the company, respect for authority. In other words, among the various other positive qualities, disabled workers were preferred because they are peaceful enough not to demand their rights or raise voice against mistreatment at workplace; though Parent, Kregel, and Johnson (1996) report that disabled workers demand better job, increased earnings, changes in schedules and duties, promotion, career advancement, like any other group of workers.

In an interesting study, Kaye, Jans and Jones (2011), using the method of structured projective questioning to remove social desirability bias, found over 80% respondents agreeing to assign cost of accommodations, lack of awareness, and fear of legal liability as the top three reasons for employers not hiring and retaining disabled persons. A careful reading of this study also reveals a stunning fact (though not noted in the paper) that whatever suggestions that are made in terms of practical or policy strategies for improving hiring and retention of disabled workers by employers and trainers (all non-disabled), are in fact, either external or systemic, absolving the employer of any accountability or responsibility in this regard. In short, the suggestions have been designed to *fit in* the disabled person rather than any attempt to change the ethos of the workplace.

In summary, in spite of the rhetoric from both the state and private concerns, the reality in the workplace and the difference in the levels of work and characterization of workers indicate that there is no true diversity; in other words, as far as workplace is concerned diversity is not welcome.

### ***Disability and Educational Institutions***

As per the census figures of 2001, the number of children across age groups and across disability attending school is not a major departure from the relevant figures with respect to the general population and are therefore comparable. For example, there is a steady increase in the number of children attending school from age 5 to age 12, a 507.7% increase compared to a 330.22% increase among the general population. Similarly as in the general case, there is a gradual fall from age 12 till age 17 which is 67.85% as compared to 68.57% in the

general case. Finally, a sudden increase at age 18 (33.98%) and a huge drop at age 19 (54.06%) is noticed, again, as in the case of general children where the trend is a 25.18% increase at age 18 followed by 52.80% drop at age 19. The somewhat erratic but nonetheless noticeable downward trend till age 17 is because the transition to upper primary and secondary is bad for all, especially wherever primary and upper primary classes are held in separate schools. Children with disabilities also have to face transition issues besides coping up with issues of the curriculum, etc.

In this regard, note that the final figures across disability show hardly any increase between age 5 to 19:

Age	Disability	Persons
05	Mental	3,473
19	Mental	3,410
05	In hearing	2,196
19	In hearing	2,487
05	In speech	5,876
19	In speech	5,085
05	In seeing	39,282
19	In seeing	33,516
05	In movement	11,046
19	In movement	29,875
05	General	5,210,610
19	General	4,163,063

**Table 4.** Comparison of enrolment numbers at age 5 and age 19 across disabilities

For various reasons, there is a greater number of identification, followed by labelling, for locomotor disability than any other, and a combined average of enrolled children at age 19 is a false reflection of a more optimistic picture than it actually is. A truer picture emerges if we look at the percentage of disabled children not attending schools which ranges from a high 71.74% for mental disability to a moderate 42.68% visual disability, which is still quite high as compared to the general class of children.

The percentage of total disabled and general population attending school at these ages (18/19) are 28.17/28.67% and 31.85/31.22% respectively for disabled and general children. However, it must be pointed out that exactly like in the case of rate of participation in the workforce (see section on 'Levels of Work'), on an average, disabled children constitute a mere 1.63% of general children going to school, which is way lower than the percentage of disabled population.

### **Special Education/ School**

In Bhattacharya (2010a), it was shown that with the more modern policies to do with education of disabled children, the rhetoric and the metaphor of special schools attains more significance. That is, although not an integral part of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1968, NPE 1986 onwards – for example, Programme of Action (POA) 1992, Person with Disabilities Act (PwD) 1995 – special education/ schools attains prominence, so much so that in POA 1992, the largest section is devoted to 'Education in Special Schools.'

In Bhattacharya (2010b) it was further shown that Segregation as a political practice was already well established and therefore lend itself readily when Special Education emerged out of Enlightenment in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Within the Indian context, this is shown by (i) Segregationist practices in Women's Education, 1948-49 University Education Commission, (ii) Consistent use of integration as the operative term, (iii) Emphasis on Special Education (e.g. B.Ed. (Special Education) of the Rehabilitation Council of India), (iv) Home-based education, Distance education, and (v) In directly encouraging the role of NGOs in imparting special education as a sign of evading State responsibilities.

The representation Education/ Schools in this context is highly significant as noted by Erevelles (2005), the change from *services* to *place* took place in order to send students who cannot or will not assimilate into general education's rigid 'demands for conformity and rationality.' Ferri (2008) expresses similar concerns when she comments that we label students rather than classroom practices (or teachers) as deficient, disordered, and disabled.

## Inclusion

Against this background of the segregationist view of special *education* (converted in practice to special *schools*), the idea of inclusion was posed as an antidote. Within the context of India, the only policy so far that actually mentions the word inclusion in the title of the policy is IECYD, or Inclusion in Education of Children and Youth with Disability, that was proposed by the Ministry of Human Resources and Development in 2005. This policy had successful a precursor IECD (Integrated Education for Disabled Children) launched in 1974. By the year 2002, the scheme had extended to 41,875 schools, benefitting more than 1,33,000 disabled children in 27 States and four Union Territories (Department of Education, MHRD, 2003). The total number of learners with SEN (Special Educational Needs) enrolled in regular schools under DPEP (District Primary Education Programme) was more than 5,60,000; this represents almost 70% of the nearly 8,10,000 learners with SEN identified under this programme (DPEP, 2003). The total number of disabled children enrolled is now more than 4,20,203 which represents almost 76 per cent of the nearly 5,53,844 disabled children identified in the DPEP States.

Out of 70% of disabled children and young adults aged 5-20 who ever attended school in their lives, 90% have attended a regular school. The figures for those attending school (in 2002) are very similar and are shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, with nearly all 5-18 year old disabled children who are in school attending regular schools. This indicates that inclusion has taken place.

	Currently attending regular schools	Currently attending special schools
5-14 years	94.3%	5.7%
5-18 years	94.8%	5.2%

**Table 5.** Share of disabled children attending regular and special schools, 2002

## The True Nature of Inclusion

In spite of the rosy picture above arguing in favour of inclusion, the reality at the ground level is rather different. Often, it is some form of integration that the school practices which goes by the name of inclusion. Even the Centre for the Study of Inclusive Education (CSIE), a pressure group well-known for its aggressive advocacy for inclusive education in the UK, accepts in its charter that some children with SEN can spend part of their time outside the ordinary classroom:

'Time spent out of the ordinary classroom for appropriate individual or group work on a part-time basis is not segregation. Neither is removal for therapy or because of disruption, provided it is time-limited, for a specified purpose . . . Any time-out from the ordinary classroom should not affect a student's right to full membership of the mainstream.'

Quoted in Norwich (2008)

Furthermore, as Norwich (2008) shows, based on an international study conducted across three countries, the most common resolution preferred by 132 policy makers and teachers for the placement dilemma for children with severe disabilities was a balance between included and separated provisions and a recognition of a reduced but persistent role of special schools.

Also, as noted in Bhattacharya (2010a), in terms of personal and social characteristics, experiences of deaf students in mainstream schools/ classes have been found to be less positive than in deaf schools or separate classes. Similar results were obtained for self-esteem, measured in the Piers-Harris self-esteem scale. In fact, one study (Murphy and Newlon 1987) found post-secondary deaf students to be significantly lonelier than

hearing students in mainstream classes. In general, for deaf students, social environment of special schools and separate classes appear to be more positive than mainstream or general education classes.

These points argue for a mixed mode model where difference is preferably neutralised to achieve a certain unwritten, tacit equilibrium in the classroom. Inclusion here becomes what Hodkinson (2012) terms, following Žižek (2009), 'part of a no-part'; in effect, it disfavours diversity and includes disabled persons merely as a spectacle since such inclusion is often restricted to the social.

### ***Conclusion: Diversity, not Inclusion, is the Key***

With respect to both participation in workforce and being included in regular schools, we have seen above that in spite of the rhetoric to the contrary, participation of disabled persons remains a mere Žižekian *part of a no-part*, that is, although they are included in ambit of the organization or institution, yet they are not really included in activities that *they* would like to participate in. Thus either disabled persons are not truly absorbed in an organization or are taken in through a school-within-school model.

In this connection, it is relevant to remember an important distinction that has been made between *inclusion* as the notion that everybody is the same regardless of race, gender, disability or sexual orientation, and *recognition*, that demands a change in the basic norms by which a society is governed. Inclusion, in this view leads to assimilation to the dominant culture at the cost of denial of other cultures<sup>4</sup>; exclusion and assimilation are two sides of the same story (Arneil 2006). Justice therefore requires the recognition of difference and protection of cultural diversity. Thus, striving for identity may involve advocacy for inclusion through equality of treatment or diversity and difference through preservation of difference, but it is only the latter that ensures preservation of rights of disabled persons.

The shift from service to advocacy that clearly marks the beginning of the disability rights movement both in India and elsewhere, is a change that indicates recognition of diversity that, according to the proposals made in this paper, is able to generate non-functional Social Capital, that can be 'measured' and 'quantified' for necessary interpretation through the lens of the disability experience. This instrumentalization of an interpretive discipline like disability will afford a better understanding of the true nature of diversity that can address current imbalances at workplace and in institutions for disabled persons.

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<sup>4</sup> However, in Bhattacharya (2014a, 2015a) I make claim for the notion of 'integrative difference' as the key to true inclusion, a position that accommodates, rather than contrasts, the present view.

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