

# Conference on Managing Diversity in Singapore

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Ballroom 2, Level 3  
Orchard Hotel

PANEL 3  
Making Inclusion Possible

PRESENTATION BY

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# What Counts as Inclusion for People with Disabilities at Work?

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# Acknowledgements

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# Background

(Motivation for the project)

- Inclusion is often used as adjective to describe a wide range of policies and programmes
- However, when not done properly, 'inclusion' can be patronizing or even oppressive

# Objectives

1. To articulate what counts as ideal inclusion in context of employment ('vision')
2. Articulating guiding principles to achieve such inclusion ('how to get there')
3. Recommendations (service, policy & strategic level)

# Significance

(Why it is important do this)

- Without articulating a ‘vision’ of **what** counts as inclusion, there is no way to determine if ‘inclusive’ policies and services for people with disabilities are actually successful
  - Examples: What is ‘good death’, ‘meaningfully engaged youth’, ‘re-integrated ex-offenders’?
  - Have to determine what goals are worthy before determining what KPIs are even meaningful to measure
  - Challenges the ‘common sense’ view on PWDs and employment
- Without guiding principles, no way to determine how we should get there
  - E.g. go fast or go together? (As efficiently as possible, or slow down to get everyone on board and get it right?)

# Approach

## 1. Values Inquiry

- Multiple values at play – whose values get on the table?
- Tend to avoid value-based discussions – realm of politics or morality
- But important because values translate into concrete criteria for evaluation
- Better to be transparent about values than assume neutrality is possible
- ‘Prescriptive valuing’ – making a case about how the sector *should* behave

## 2. Articulate then Test

- Content analysis from existing codes & principles: EM, UNCRPD, TAFEP

## 3. Sampling

- PWDs (21), employers (10), service providers (12), caregivers (6)
- 6 focus groups
- 15 interviews
- Total of 47 people
- Data Collection: Aug – Dec 2015



# Defining Disability

- **Medical model** = due to individual functional impairments, therefore find a cure or treatment
- **Social model** = due to discrimination, therefore seek environmental and cultural change
- The definition we will use is dynamic & responsive to scientific & technological developments → **Disability by definition requires special social accommodation**
- “If we can just go and live a normal life, without needing any accommodation, then I don’t think it’s a disability right?”

# What is Ideal / Sensible Inclusion?

## 1. A social system where 'all-can-contribute'

- Not 'winner-takes-all' but 'all-can-contribute' through social accommodation
- Not a 'race', but 'jigsaw'

## 2. Inclusion should become unremarkable

- When social accommodations have become normal, natural and routine, therefore unworthy of special notice. (e.g. MRT reserved seats / no special mention in ads)
- A 'good mix' is representative of the larger population, and not forced or overly intentional

### 3. Different models of inclusion are suitable for different purposes

- The problem is not exclusion per se but problematic or unfair forms of exclusion; the goal is not a simplistic inclusion at-all-costs approach that seeks to mainstream everything.
- Enclaves by themselves do not necessarily lead to stigma, it is instead stigma that follows PWDs wherever they go

Mainstream  
(open employment)

**CSRs**

Uniqlo  
Hans

**Large Employers**

MNCs  
Government

**Work Villages**

Laksania  
Joan Bowen  
Sheltered Workshops

**Diversity Incubators/  
Showcases**

Dignity Kitchen  
Concept Stores

Enclave  
(protected environment)

Categorically  
Specialized

Categorically  
Diverse

## 4. Validity of the 'moral case' beyond the 'business case'

- Our common sense / prevailing paradigm is 'business case'
- When business case prevails, we have an 'industrial model' of vocational assessment & job placement that fits people to jobs
- Less obvious that alternative paradigm also valid: reasons of social justice.
- By definition, disability requires social accommodation. Therefore, there will always be need for the moral case.
- Moral case also indicates who should be responsible:
  - For-profit enterprises are exempt, except when large (and expected to be responsible when very large);
  - Government expected to do more, and lead by example.

Move from just business case to moral case?

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# Summary: So What?

Knowing what does successful inclusion looks like:

1. All-can-contribute

Productive labour that adds social value goes beyond paid employment

2. Unremarkable

Intentional & formalized programmes are less desirable, but they are ok as a stepping stone

3. Utilise different models of inclusion

Not 'mainstream good, enclave bad'; see what works for whom under what conditions

4. Recognising the validity of the moral case beyond the business case

Our common sense may be holding PWDs back

# Values & Guiding Principles

- Choice
- Knowledge/Communication
- Autonomy
- Equity
- Social Justice
- Respect

# Insights about 'Choice'

Volunteerism?  
Productive labour that  
adds value, whether  
paid or unpaid

- Choice matters not only for jobs, but in scope, flexibility, training & other aspects of work
- Choice extends to unpaid productive labour because one can still be meaningfully engaged. Not everyone *can* be, or *needs* to be employed
- Having mainstream and enclave options helps to meet the broad spectrum of needs
- Focusing on 'efficiency' or 'effectiveness' criteria can reduce choice, and earlier successes can create pathways to low paying jobs



# Choice

**There should be an adequate number of viable work opportunities that reasonably encompasses the diversity of the needs & aspirations of people with disabilities**

Change to  
'desirable' in the  
future ?

## Guiding Principles

- Policymakers and service providers should understand the potentially wide variety of PWD needs, interests and work aspirations before they determine what employment opportunities they should help identify or create.
- So far, the government has mainly used financial incentives to encourage employers to hire. They should complement the 'carrots' used to incentivize employers to hire people with disabilities with more 'sticks' to round out the policy instruments they have at their disposal, because incentives and encouragement alone are unlikely to move the needle significantly in the employment of people with disabilities.
- PWDs should also consider creating jobs for themselves or find self-employment, and even consider meaningful work beyond formal employment.
- Consider 'fitting jobs to people' rather than only 'fitting people to jobs'

Instead of jumping on specific interventions to increase choice, these principles provide guidance on how we might go about improving choice for PWDs


# Insights about 'Knowledge / Communication'

- **People with disabilities** lack exposure and are therefore unable to fully appreciate and evaluate options
- PWDs do not have adequate knowledge to calibrate work related expectations
- Relevant information goes beyond that which is useful for getting the job, but also for subsequent career development and planning
- **Employers** lack knowledge of capabilities & skills of PWDs
- **Policymakers** lack adequate understanding and even **VWOs** themselves have trouble representing the diverse needs of PWDs, and face problem of overgeneralization when it goes to policy recommendations

Draw your own implications for intervention or policy design:  
"Nothing about us without us"?  
Always involve the community to make decisions that affect them?

# Knowledge / Communication

**PWDs should understand the nature, requirements and implications of their desired jobs as comprehensively as possible, while policymakers, service providers and employers should understand the capability and skills of PWDs**



Interests,  
aspirations?

## Guiding Principles

- Employers and service providers should strive to communicate job requirements, work environment and longer-term career prospects for the jobs they offer.
- PWDs should proactively communicate their needs, requirements and capabilities to prospective employers and their colleagues.

# Insights about 'Autonomy'

## **It is easy to dismiss the work-related preferences of PWDs**

- Autonomy, which we take for granted is a luxury for them
- While autonomy has to be tempered by collective needs, and this may not be possible for those with intellectual disabilities or developmental delays, it is good to always try for it

## **By expanding their role over time, VWOs have become powerful brokers that act on behalf of PWDs**

- VWOs act as an important broker and filter of knowledge
- Such that PWDs may not know how to advocate for themselves or have the confidence to do so
- As a result, disability associations often advocate and negotiate on behalf of the PWD, expanding their role as required
- This expansive role can become dangerous if the PWD becomes merely an instrument for the VWO's own agenda

# Autonomy

**PWDs should make employment related decisions based on their own authentic preferences, but tempered by considerations of social responsibility**

## Guiding Principles

- PWDs should be actively involved in the decision process, especially those that directly affect them.
- Professionals, caregivers and policymakers should exercise due diligence to appreciate what the authentic preferences of the PWDs are, empower PWDs to make their own decisions.

# Insights about 'Equity'

## **Unequal treatment and discrimination is real, and these are often hard to detect or non-obvious**

- PWDs would like, simply, to see equal pay for equal work
- Discrimination is hard to detect because PWDs are either not aware of the exploitation or unwilling to voice concerns because they are grateful for even having a job
- Like other marginalized groups, PWDs feel obliged to demonstrate they can perform better than non-disabled

## **Balance rewards with some punishment for a more well-rounded ability to induce good behaviour**

- Carrots alone do not work, we need small sticks or sticks at the right places

# Equity

**PWDs should be given a chance like everyone else to become equipped for, get jobs, and rewarded fairly for those jobs, provided they are able to fulfil the requirements.**

## Guiding Principles

- Employers should recognize the unique capabilities and strengths of PWDs and not disqualify them without a proper consideration of their ability to work.
- Employers should provide reasonable accommodation at the workplace so that PWDs are enabled to work effectively and be socially integrated.
- Without legislation on workplace discrimination in Singapore, the burden is on job placement and employment support services to do more to ensure fair treatment. Given the tripartite partnership system built over the years, TAFEP or MOM can be brought in to help mediate workplace discrimination.

# Insights about 'Social Justice'

- Affirmative action is controversial because it can be perceived as giving an unfair (unearned) advantage
- Also controversial because there is no easy agreement on when accommodation is reasonable and when it becomes unfair (equity shades off into social justice at some point)
- There is validity in the moral case, beyond the business case (e.g. historical disadvantage...employers can use 'objective' criteria and end up hiring only able people)
- Those who have more means should do more: government and large companies have more absorptive capacity. People also expect the government to exercise moral leadership.



# Social Justice

Spells out the conditions under which the 'moral case' stands

**Society should provide an advantage or leg up for PWDs especially when they do not even meet some minimal quality of life, when providing the equality of opportunity is by itself insufficient, and especially when that support does not overly oppress others or when others willingly agree to provide it.**

## Guiding Principles

- For those who have been historically disadvantaged, equal opportunity may not be enough, so some forms of social justice or affirmative action will be useful. This is because employers who genuinely hire based on objective criteria will still lead to marginalized groups being less represented in better jobs. Private enterprises should be encouraged to do so voluntarily, so that employing PWDs does not become tokenistic and disempowering.
- Government agencies should hire a fair representation of people with disabilities because the constituency of the civil service should approximate the specific diversity of the society it is serving in order to better represent marginalized groups and understand how best to serve them.

# Insights about ‘Respect’

- Intangible and therefore challenging to get right
- PWDs tend to be treated using stark extremes of ‘hero vs zero’ instead of normal forms of respect
- Respect does not mean ignoring or whitewashing disability: “disabilities are a part of who they are, it is not all of who they are” (not disability blind)
- While natural or organic forms of inclusion are preferable, this is unlikely to happen...therefore, intentional interventions are necessary even if they are less desirable

# Respect

**Society should value diversity, consider differently abled people as an integral part of the community, and provide the same calibrated and conditional respect due to everyone.**

## Guiding Principles

- Valuing diversity means focusing on the strengths of PWDs, but at the same time not acting as if their disabilities do not exist or exert a significance influence on their lives.
- The public should be sympathetic, but not be patronizing and overly heroicize the mundane achievements of PWDs
- Employers should value PWDs for their abilities, and not provide disempowering forms of ‘pity help’ by creating jobs that they do not value.
- People with disabilities should earn their respect in ways that are no different from everyone else.

# SUMMARY

Disability by definition requires social accommodation; therefore scientific, technical or business solutions will not cover the residual moral case for accommodation, which society has to decide whether and how much to accept.

## Vision

All can contribute system where diverse models of inclusion are used for the right respective purposes, and so routinely done that it has become unremarkable

## Values / Guiding Principles

- Choice
- Knowledge
- Autonomy
- Equity
- Social Justice
- Respect

# Implications / Significance

## THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

- Interconnected values, and sense of priority.
- These abstract values apply across domains, but the specific articulations were spelled out for employment only. Lessons about inclusion in other domains, but also beyond disability.

## SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- Advocacy: The disability community can continue to refine and improve them—extending to other domains—to inform policy decisions that affect them.

## POLICY & PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS

- Values Inquiry is crucial step before Programme Evaluation. Important to determine what values and goals are worthwhile rather than jump to specific solutions or premature performance measurements.
- See service, industry and strategic level recommendations

# Recommendations

Caveat: research not designed as solutioning or feasibility study

## Service Level

- job creation, instead of just re-design (higher chance of fitting job to person)
- remove middleman and possible filtering to increase autonomy, where possible
- in centralizing job matching functions, disability associations may be been displaced, but they can continue to play a role in supporting their clients
- KPIs to match the values espoused here

# Recommendations

## Industry Level

- At the system level, all should be able to contribute, but flexibility should exist at the industry, occupation and firm level as to where PWDs should participate in productive activity.
- Possibly, different agencies to have oversight of inclusive employment at different levels (industry, occupation, firm levels)
- Big corporations should send staff to go through mandatory diversity training
- Increase the support for social enterprises who have double bottom lines

# Recommendations

## Strategic Level

- Mainstreaming is not the only solution...multiple models of inclusion possible
- Sequencing and pacing is important...slow down to ensure that we get it right, so that everyone is part of development
- Big corporations and public sector should lead by example: e.g. put in place disability-inclusive HR practices, target rate for hiring of PWDs



# Thank You!

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