



## **IMPLEMENTATION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROGRAM TO SPREAD INCLUSION AWARENESS IN SOCIETY**

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### **Abstract**

*To modify or to change or to innovate the behavior, the learning experiences are essential. Creating a more inclusive workplace is necessary for many reasons. The way forward in hiring people with disabilities is to judge them on their ability to meet the job requirements, and then to design the workspace and workflow accordingly to maximize their ability to deliver results. For that to happen, there must be an awareness of the need for diversity and inclusion within the organisation and, more importantly, among colleagues and management. . When we think about making a difference to the disabled, we usually think about their education, jobs and career, which is great. But a different approach that has thought about it from the emotional front, they should not feel isolated or excluded. Thus providing an experiential learning based program that would strengthen their feeling of inclusion to counter stress and increase the productivity is an essential need. The purpose of this study is primarily to study the impact of experiential learning activities to spread inclusion awareness in workplace.*



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### **Introduction:**

“Education is that reconstruction or reorganization of experience , which adds to the meaning of experience, & which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experiences.” - John Dewey

Education refers to any act or experience that has a formative effect on the personality of an individual. Throughout most of human history, people with disabilities were segregated from the rest of society. Initially, because the thinking at the time was that they could not contribute to society or worse, were a burden to society. In more recent times attitudes changed about how productive people with disabilities could be. Unfortunately, the change did not go far enough and the belief was that people with disabilities could only achieve a level of productivity by staying with people like themselves in a “sheltered” environment doing menial tasks. “Positive changes can be made through collaborative efforts. The work

environment has to be designed in a way that enhances the employability of people with disabilities.” The quality life of any person is depending upon the Physical health and the mental status but one hardly spends any valuable time for maintaining sound mental health. Such as in the context of health and social events like human relationships, learning about social influences on behavior and learning about rights and responsibilities, as well as being taught in the context of inclusion problems.

### **Need and Importance:**

Interpersonal relationship skills help us to relate in positive ways with the people we interact with. This may mean being able to make and keep friendly relationships, which can be of great importance to everyone’s mental and social well-being. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively. The experiential learning is an educational orientation which aims at integrating theoretical and practical elements of learning for a whole-person approach, emphasizing the significance of experience for learning. The approach is well-known in various settings of informal learning, such as workplace, service organizations, work and study assignments, clinical experience and volunteer programmes, etc. Quality relationships, trust, keeping commitments and sharing resources help to produce socially fit individuals to live as we are. If you have hired a person with an obvious disability or the person has disclosed a disability, being inclusive would mean orienting the employee to the facility and equipment while assessing what is and what is not accessible, orienting the person to the emergency evacuation procedures, and respecting the privacy by not making office small talk about the person's disability. As mentioned in GiftAble tactile project video **fact and figures** about the disabilities are as follow:

- There are 500million people with disabilities in the world.
- 42 million visually impaired in the world.
- 9 million visually impaired in India.

Nationwide disability awareness programmers about the potentials of people with disabilities are fostering greater understanding and acceptance of persons with disabilities. NGO- Gift Able is also one of them. When more people become enlightened about the potentials of people with disabilities, their employment opportunities will improve.

### **Myths about differently-Abled**

- People with disabilities are brave and courageous
- All persons with hearing disabilities can read lips

- People who are blind acquire a “sixth sense”
- People with disabilities are more comfortable with “their own kind”

Problem solving enables us to deal constructively with problems in our lives. Significant problems that are left unresolved can cause mental stress and give rise to accompanying physical strain and restlessness. Attitude of colleagues Participants reported that they have experienced both positive and mixed attitudes from their colleagues and managers. One participant runs a company that educates the public about sign language and the employees are mostly people who are deaf or hard of hearing so the attitude towards employees with disabilities is generally positive. 14 Another participant said that his managers are good, but his co-workers are not comfortable around him. There is no sensitivity training in place for his colleagues to alleviate that tension. In order to have a fully inclusive workplace, the work environment must be physically, technologically and attitudinally accessible, including accessibility in structure, system and services provided. An accessible workplace will maximise productivity as it eliminates barriers, allowing people with disabilities to reach their full potential at work

**Social inclusion audit:** Social inclusion audits focus on employment barriers and examine the social inclusiveness of the workplace. As an incentive, organisations that perform well in such an audit could be rewarded by the Government with tax breaks, grants or some other form of incentive. This system will encourage companies to build an inclusive workplace.

### **Review of literature**

**Effectiveness of Role play technique in enhancing the achievement of XI std. students in Economic Zoology.:** By Sr. P Amutha

Investigator concludes that role play is a useful tool to enhance the teaching and learning process and states that the advantages provided by this innovative method of instruction should be explored by educators as it can prove to be very beneficial to our students.

**Research Statement: To Study the effectiveness of Experiential learning Program to spread inclusion awareness at workplace.**

### **Definition of Keywords**

**Experiential learning programme** – It include various Interactive sessions with various activities like Role play, Demonstration, Group activity and first -hand experience.

**Awareness** : knowledge or perception of a situation or fact

**Society** : A **society** is a group of individuals involved in persistent social interaction, or a large social group sharing the same geographical or social territory with similar cultural expectations.

**Inclusive workplace** : Harmonious work environment which help to facilitate positive interaction and understanding between colleagues with and without disabilities.

**Effectiveness**: To generate empathy and spread awareness among corporate company employees about their disable coworkers as a prime social responsibility.

**Objectives:**

- To orient the participants about inclusiveness.
- To instruct the participants to indulge in a set of experiential learning Activities.
- To conduct a set of Experiential learning activities
- To Study the effectiveness of this programme

**A disability-friendly workplace** is an inclusive culture that involves the full and successful integration of diverse people. Inclusive cultures extend beyond basic or token presence of workers who have disabilities. They encompass both formal and informal policies and practices, and involve several core values:

**Representation**: The presence of people with disabilities across a range of employee roles, and leadership positions

**Receptivity**: Respect for differences in working styles, and flexibility in tailoring positions to the strengths and abilities of employees

**Fairness**: Equitable access to all resources, opportunities, networks, and decision-making processes

**Research Methodology**: The total sample of the study taken was 140 participants from Accenture, Hinjewadi, Pune. They were engaged in experiential learning activities through workshop. Workshop was organized by NGO GiftAble. Investigator was served as volunteer in the workshop. For this awareness the generic life skill, which need to be taught at the work place especially to adults, are as follows.

**Action Plan: STEP IN...EXPERIENCE**

**Following Experiential learning Program conducted to spread inclusion awareness in the workplace**

**Activity 1: WALKING WITHOUT SIGHT**

This activity is planned to experience first-hand what it feels like to navigate without relying on your vision. Learn to help the visually impaired while walking and familiarize yourself with Braille and other equipment used by the visually impaired. After the activity the participant were asked the following:

- What happened in the blind fold walk?
- How did it feel to walk with stick?
- How did you feel on your first few steps?
- What would you do if this happened?
- Who can suggest a way to get to know blind coworker?

**Reflection:**

All participants liked this role-play. They learned that whenever there is a blind co worker in the workplace they should make an effort to include him. It is important to act out again the possible ways of welcoming a blind individual. Instruction was given for not to hold visually impairer's cane. Let visually impaired hold your elbow gently but firmly. So this is the correct way to help them.

**Activity 2: MOVING IN A WHEELCHAIR**

Several participants were asked to experience this role-play by moving in a wheelchair once pushing it with both the hands and second time with only left hand; whereby the investigator asks a question to the participants. This activity helps to understand the challenges faced by persons with orthopedic impairments and accessibility issues.

How would you feel while moving in a wheelchair?

What is the feeling to move wheelchair only with left hand?

**Reflection:**

All participants expressed that they felt it was easy. They felt they participated and thought it a useful activity because they learned that it is challenging. This may show that they were able to consider themselves in the position of the disable person.

**Activity 3: LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE**

**An appeal was made while conducting this activity , “A,B, C learn but in sign language. Get a crash course and put your new knowledge into practice during the session”**

One of the hearing impaired girl has given orientation of sign language to the participants. It was very easy version of sign language in which hand movements are very much parallel to shape of the English alphabet and general expression. Within 2 drills and practices participants were able to reply in sign language. It was ensured by question answer session of

2 minutes after each orientation. Participants feel much enlightened as they are now able to greet and express their gratitude by saying “Thank You” to their disable coworker. We found them in Introspection phase. ( **sign language poster attached**)

**Reflection:** This will increase the productivity among employees with disabilities as their talents are recognized and utilized at work

#### **Activity 4: ROLE PLAY**

Ask all the members of a group to hold each others hands and stand on one leg only. There must be no support except for the teammate's hand. Even if once a team player puts the leg down, he or she is out of the game. The team member that stays till the last is the winner.

#### **Reflection:**

All participants were happy with the exercise and learned that they should respect each other. Responses of the participants about the action plan were collected as written feedback on the chart papers. It was empathy generating towards disable.

#### **Activity 5: KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF TECHNOLOGY**

A demo by person with visual impairment on how technology helps them and how they use technology in their daily life also activity include orientation by an expert on ,”How to make websites accessible to people with disability.”

An appeal was there-**KNOW ABOUT QUADRAPLEGIA:** Learn how persons with paralysis in all their limbs can work with a computer . Participate in a live demo.

**Reflection:** This 15 minutes walk is an absolute eye opening experience. It ia a unique way to spread awareness by getting into the shoes of differently able. Bottom line is “INCLUSION MATTERS”

**Inclusive practices at work :** Participants shared examples of the inclusive practices at their workplaces. One participant who is hard of hearing shared that her colleagues communicated to her by writing to her and there was interaction and sharing of deaf culture during lunch breaks. The organization where another participant works hires people with disabilities and offers sign language classes after work. Colleagues used to help one participant to buy food and other daily stuff, and they included him in their recreational activities as well.

**Discussion:** Expected behavioral changes were observed through such activities and Role play during interactive Sessions which lead them towards developing problem solving, positive communication, Interpersonal skills as well. It provides good practice examples of spreading inclusion awareness at the workplace. Working with employers who are willing to make reasonable accommodations will increase the confidence and independence of their

employees with disabilities. This will in turn enable the employee with a disability to enjoy his or her work and personal life like everybody else. The Government, employers, private and public sectors, and committed individuals must work together to promote employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

**Conclusion:** As mentioned in the action plan all experiential learning activities contributed in creating inclusion awareness. Participants gave their positive feedback about experiential learning program. It was eye opener, empathy generating event for them. Employment is the most effective means of escaping the vicious circle of marginalization, poverty and social exclusion. Some persons with disabilities may be trapped in this vicious circle. To break it, positive action is required. This includes removing the barriers faced by people with disabilities through a variety of policy measures, regulations, programmes, and services. It is important that persons with disabilities are valued and recognized for the talents they bring to the workplace and society. Experiential learning program was found effective to generate empathy and spread awareness among corporate company employees about their disabled coworkers as a prime social responsibility. This in turn is expected to improve work culture of the organization to live more constructively and productively.

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