

Inclusive Design in IT Offices: The Indian Perspective

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Abstract: Office spaces need to use inclusive design in order to provide equitable and accessible work conditions. In India, it is becoming more and more crucial to satisfy the needs of a varied workforce, which includes individuals with impairments, women and people from various cultural backgrounds and of different age groups. This study looks at physical accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and workplace inclusion in relation to inclusive design in Indian offices. We examine important elements like breastfeeding areas, accessible restrooms, and flexible work schedules that accommodate a range of employee requirements. Case studies from Indian businesses illustrate effective inclusive design strategies as well as typical implementation issues.

The article ends with suggestions for companies looking to design more inclusive work environments. These include adhering to accessibility guidelines, promoting inclusion, and modifying workspaces to allow a wide range of users.

Keywords: Inclusive design (Barrier free design) accessibility, office spaces, India, workspace culture.

Introduction

Diversity, equity, and inclusion play a more and more important role in today's dynamic workplace. Regardless of ability, age, gender, or cultural background, inclusive design, usually referred to as universal design, is a paradigm for designing environments that are usable by all people (Steinfeld & Maisel, 2012). Increasingly, inclusive design is becoming important in India as companies understand the benefits of having varied teams and equal workspaces. The present study investigates the distinctive features of inclusive design in Indian office environments, encompassing legislative frameworks, cultural subtleties, and optimal methodologies.

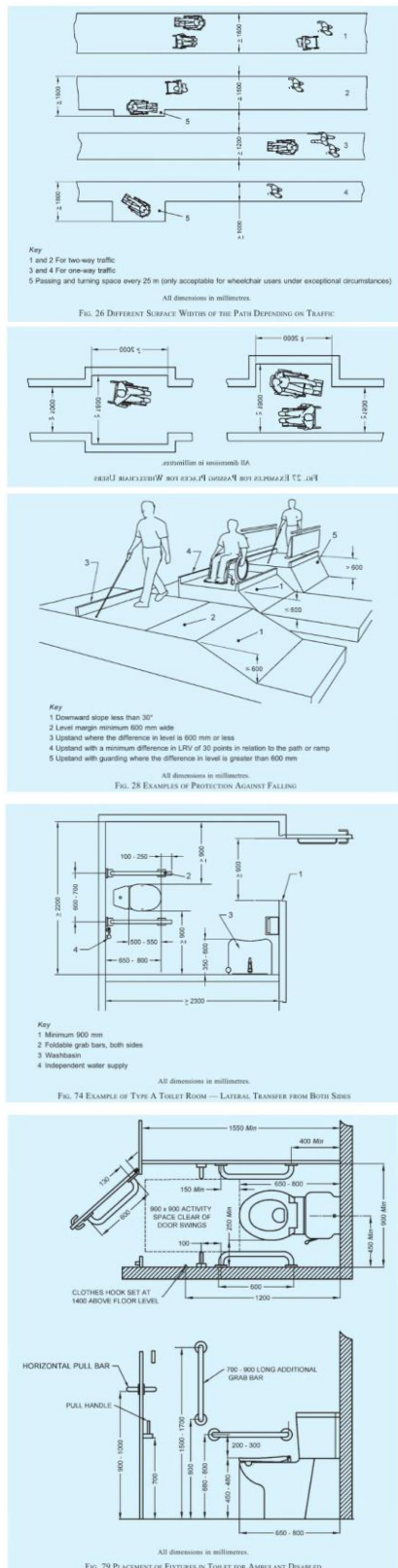
1. Inclusive Design: Principles and Importance

Inclusive Design is based on several core principles that guide the creation of accessible and equitable environments. These principles, outlined by the Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access (IDEO), are fair use, flexibility, simple and intuitive design, traceable information, error tolerance, low physical burden, and size and space for approach and use (Center for Inclusive). Design and Environmental Approach for, 2020). The objective is to design work environments that cater to a varied workforce, which includes women, people with disabilities, and individuals from a range of cultural backgrounds.

2. Government Regulations and Standards in India

India is encouraging inclusive design in office environments through a number of legislation and guidelines. Principal rules consist of:

- The 2016 RPwD Act, or the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Accessibility for individuals with impairments is a legal requirement for both public and private institutions. The guidelines outline the needs for facilities that are accessible, including ramps, elevators, and accessible restrooms (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2016).
- The 2017 Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act mandates that businesses with fifty or more workers offer creche facilities and permit female employees to visit them during business hours. This law emphasises the value of breastfeeding areas and childcare assistance in offices (Ministry of Labour and Employment, 2017).
- India's 2016 National Building Code: The Bureau of Indian Standards (2016) states that this code establishes building design standards that include specifications for accessible restrooms, paths, and other infrastructure to enable accessibility for everyone.



Source:

<https://archive.org/details/nationalbuilding01/in.gov.nbc.2016.vol1.digital/page/n171/mode/2up?view=theater&q=ramps>

4 Best Practices for Inclusive Design in Indian Office Spaces

4.1 Private Rooms:

- Establish safe, private areas with outlets, comfortable seats, and refrigerators for nursing or expressing milk (Ministry of Labor and Employment, 2017).
- Employee Awareness: To guarantee usage, let your staff know that these areas are available.

4.2 Fostering Inclusivity and Cultural Variety

- **Instruction in Cultural Diversity and Inclusion:** Consistent training sessions on these topics (Gupta & Joshi, 2017).
- Celebrate cultural variety with inclusive events that foster harmony and mutual respect.
- Create groups for workers from different cultural backgrounds to promote inclusivity and support through employee resource groups.

4.3 Ramps and Disabled Persons' Accessible Bathrooms



Source:

<https://www.interaction.uk.com/insight/articles/inclusive-office-design/>

- Universal Design for Restrooms: According to the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (2016), restrooms ought to feature grab bars, accessible sinks, and bigger stalls.
- A lift and a ramp with visual and audio alerts, as well as ramps with the appropriate slopes.
- According to Anand and Kaul (2020), assistive technology offers devices such as keyboards with adjustments and screen readers.

4.4 Barrier-free washrooms and ramps for the disabled

- General toilet design: toilets should have wider shelves, grab bars and barrier-free sinks (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2016).
- Ramps and lifts: Install ramps and lifts with audio and visual indicators.

- Assistive technology: Provide tools such as screen readers and adaptive keyboards (Anand and Kaul, 2020).

5 Case Studies

5.1 Case Study 1 : Infosys

- Location: Bengaluru, Karnataka
- The Infosys campus in Bengaluru, an established supplier of IT services in India, has incorporated various inclusive design features. The firm values diversity and the well-being of its employees, which is why the campus was planned with accessibility and inclusivity in mind.
- Physical Accessibility: Infosys workplaces give people with disabilities (PWD) unrestricted mobility throughout the workspace by installing ramps, accessible restrooms, and elevators. Moreover, flexible desks are a feature of workplace designs that cater to various requirements (Infosys, 2019).
- Technological Inclusivity: Infosys has integrated modifiable keyboards, speech recognition software, and screen readers, among other accessible technologies. This guarantees unequal access to office technology for workers with disabilities (Infosys, 2020).
- Spaces Dedicated to Breastfeeding: Infosys offers comfortable, private areas for moms who are nursing. These areas have handwashing stations, cosy seating, and refrigerators for storing breast milk (Infosys, 2019).
- Workplace Culture: Employees can receive training to promote an inclusive culture as part of the company's extensive diversity and inclusion programme. (Infosys, 2021).
- Takeaways and Consolidations: Infosys' inclusive design methodology highlights the significance of developing work environments that are easily accessible to accommodate a heterogeneous workforce. The company promotes a welcoming environment for women by providing nursing areas and flexible work regulations. People with impairments can easily travel the campus thanks to the physical accessibility elements.

5.2 Case Study 2 : Tata Consultancy Services (TCS)

- Location: Maharashtra, Mumbai
- Some of the design concepts are carried out in Mumbai by the Tata Consultancy Services (TCS). The recruiting practices and office layout

of the company demonstrate its dedication to diversity and inclusion.

- Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), another well-known Indian IT behemoth, incorporates inclusive design into its workplace environments. The following are the key elements of TCS association:
- Infrastructure for accessibility: The TCS headquarters have accessible hallways, lifts and ramps. TCS (2018) states that wheelchair-accessible restrooms feature roomy cabinets and bars.
- Technical Fixes: Through the integration of accessible technologies into its workflows, TCS facilitates the successful performance of employees with varying skill levels. Screen magnifiers, speech-to-speech software, and other assistive technologies fall under this category (TCS, 2019).
- Women's Assistance: TCS offers amenities, such as comfortable, private rooms specifically designed for nursing moms. To further accommodate working mothers, the company provides flexible work practices (TCS, 2018).
- Initiatives for Diversity and Inclusion: TCS has an extensive program for diversity and inclusion that encourages cultural awareness, gender equality, and accessibility. (TCS, 2019).
- Acquired Knowledge and Perspectives: The significance of cultural sensitivity in the workplace is underscored by TCS's inclusive design methodology. With respect to workforce diversity and accommodations for different cultural practices, the company fosters an inclusive environment. Regardless of ability, all employees may walk about the office with ease because to its accessible design.

6 Challenges and Opportunities in Applying Inclusive Design

There are opportunities as well as problems in implementing inclusive design in Indian offices. Cultural dynamics, organizational structures, and legislative requirements can all give rise to these. In order to create a fairer workplace, inclusive design offers opportunities that are outlined in this section along with the main challenges that organizations are facing.

6.1 Challenges

- **Violating the Rules in Different Ways**
The RPwD Act and other regulations require offices to be accessible, although there can be variations in how these rules are implemented. Older infrastructure, financial restraints, and a lack of knowledge about regulatory obligations are common problems for businesses (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2016).
- **Culture's Opposition to Change**
Hierarchical and change-resistant traditional workplace cultures can be seen in India. Adopting new techniques may be impeded by employees' and management's limited comprehension of the advantages of inclusive design (Gupta & Joshi, 2017). Company policies regarding transgender equality and gender-neutral restrooms may be impacted by cultural resistance.
- **Low Level of Knowledge and Comprehension**
Inclusionary design principles and their effects on worker well-being are not well-known to many organizations. The adoption of inclusive practices may be delayed or incomplete as a result of this, which may lead to a lack of urgency to make changes (Anand & Kaul, 2020).
- **Finance and Logistical Restrictions**
Significant financial and logistical effort are frequently needed to make office premises accessible. Businesses could find it difficult to afford the costs associated with updating outdated infrastructure or acquiring new equipment to support inclusive design (Singh & Verma, 2018).

6.2 Opportunities

- **Enhanced Workplace Engagement and Contentment**
An encouraging work atmosphere where workers feel appreciated and respected is fostered by inclusive design. Higher morale, reduced turnover rates, and greater employee involvement follow from this (Banerjee & Bedi, 2016).
- **Availability of a Greater Talent Pool**
Businesses may draw in a wider pool of talent by designing inclusive and accessible work environments, which include individuals with impairments and people from various cultural backgrounds. A more inventive and diversified

workforce may result from this (Rock & Grant, 2016).

- **Observance of Legal Requirements**
Companies that use inclusive design make sure that all legal requirements are met, which lowers the possibility of legal problems and improves their company's reputation (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 2016). Additionally, this can assist businesses stay out of trouble and promote goodwill among neighbours.
- **Increased Originality and Imagination**
It is well known that diverse teams are more imaginative and creative. Businesses may leverage diverse viewpoints and ideas to solve problems more creatively and effectively by encouraging inclusive design (Rock & Grant, 2016).
- **Enhanced Organizational Image**
Businesses that place a high priority on inclusive design frequently benefit from improved public perception and company reputation. Stronger ties with clients, associates, and stakeholders may result from this (Forbes, 2018).

Conclusion

To create fair and effective work environments, inclusive design is crucial in Indian offices. Despite ongoing difficulties, there are several advantages to implementing inclusive practices.

These initiatives not only fulfil legal obligations but also foster a more cooperative workplace, more productivity, and happier workers. To draw and keep talent as India's workforce grows more diverse, inclusive design will be essential.

For designers looking to include inclusive design to their design, this research paper offers guidance. By putting these ideas into practice, companies may have barrier free work cultures where all employees feel valued and empowered, which will support long-term success.

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