

Job markets which needlessly limit access to talent are inefficient and unfair

Susan Scott-Parker OBE

DRAFT



Introducing Job Market Re-design & Digital in Demand

GIZ, The ILO Global Business Disability Network (ILOGBDN) and Scott-Parker International are developing a systemic change programme — “Job Market Re-design” — designed to get a much better balance between ‘the supply of disabled talent’ and the ‘demand for talent’ in any labour market.

Continued reliance on segregated, uncoordinated, often competing disability employment projects, job boards and campaigns, all isolated from labour market realities — and which position both employers and disabled people as ‘inadequate’ - needlessly excludes the substantial numbers of persons with disabilities who would find employment if they could move naturally into the mainstream programmes and talent pipelines that employers value.

Re-framing the reason so many disabled people remain excluded, decade after decade, as the Job Market itself, *not* those trying to use it, is extremely helpful. We open the door to true innovation and to sustainable systemic change as we ask:

‘Who must do what differently across this job market if we are to move systematically from traditional, fragmented, low impact interventions, towards the more efficient and integrated job markets which routinely get a better match between the ‘demand for talent’ and the ‘supply of talented people with disabilities?’

We are taking a whole systems approach, as we learn from:

- > Business Education Compacts and Education Business Partnerships
- > Best practice in Talent Acquisition, Talent Pipeline Management and Talent Pipeline Collaboratives
- > Supply chain management, customer journey mapping
- > Socio-technical systems theory
- > Three Talents Bridge Academies
- > The ILO Global Business Disability Network (ILOGBDN), Valuable 500, and National Business Disability Networks
- > The ILOGBDN’s Digital in Demand initiative, which shapes more demand led job markets as it becomes much easier to employ disabled people with in-demand digital skills

Our aim:

- > to provide a system design framework that helps to shape more efficient and fair labour markets, particularly in low-income countries,
- > while building the disability confidence of employers and mainstream training providers,
- > so as to transform the life chances of hundreds of millions by also meeting the needs and expectations of business.

We fail persons with disabilities when we fail to meet the legitimate needs and expectations of employers.

Digital in Demand

This systematic approach to re-designing job markets focuses initially on digital skills, as they are universally 'in demand' – however the principles presented below apply no matter which skills are in demand.

In 2022, five National Business Disability Networks** in Asia were commissioned by The ILO Global Business Disability Network, supported by GIZ and Scott-Parker International, to map the digital skills most 'in demand' by local employers - as a first step towards building the capacity of job markets to better match the 'supply and demand' of talent with these specified skills.

(**Bangladesh, China, India, Philippines, Indonesia)

The ultimate goal is to achieve a much better balance in any job market between **supply** and **demand** – that is between those interventions that **PUSH job seekers** at the world of work in general– and those which **help employers to PULL the right candidates**, with the right skills, at the right time, from the widest possible pool of talent - to fill particular vacancies.

Employment initiatives for disabled people typically achieve no such balance: they are expected – and indeed funded - *only* to **PUSH** individuals *at* the job market. They limit their interaction with employers to ad hoc 'sensitisation' efforts and typically fail to provide even well-intentioned employers with suitable candidates who have disabilities.

Yet it is the employer who ultimately determines the success or failure of such programmes, as only the employer can say: 'Yes I will hire you'.

Coordinating more demand led & more disability confident job markets

- > Job market re-design is a coordinated set of practical, employment focused, demand-led interventions across a given job market that drive more efficient job markets as they achieve a much better balance between the **supply of disabled talent** and the **demand for talent**.
- > The Digital in Demand initiative, soon to be piloted in China and the Philippines, aims to shape job markets which routinely enable people with disabilities to acquire the digital qualifications that local employers require,
- > in a structured partnership between employers and mainstream digital training providers
- > which brings significant numbers of disabled job seekers into the Talent Pipelines that routinely bring people into jobs requiring in-demand digital skills.

Making it easier for employers makes it easier for job seekers with disabilities.

Job Market Re-design is powered by employer and job seeker demand

Connecting employers to pre-screened trainees with disabilities - bringing these job seekers into their Talent Pipelines - is much more likely to lead to jobs than traditional segregated training, which is usually dis-connected from recruiters and hiring managers. This 'talent pipeline strategy' also builds the disability confidence of employers interacting with trainees with disabilities.

A 'Talent Pipeline' is a ready pool of potential candidates- who are known by the employer, who are suitable and/or qualified, and who are interested -and who are prepared to step up to fill relevant roles in the company as soon as they fall vacant.

A job market that makes it much easier to recruit 'job ready' persons with disabilities will find it much easier to partner with employers willing to invest in the employability of individuals who are not yet job ready, and who will require additional time, training and support from the employer.

Employers know that they need more efficient job markets

- > **Disabled talent is routinely and needlessly excluded** from the mainstream programmes that provides candidates with the skills and certifications that employers require and value.
- > **Employers struggle to find suitable candidates with disabilities, who remain a significant untapped pool of talent.**
- > **Many recruiters are moving** from reliance on often arbitrary educational requirements, and unreliable automated processes, to looking for more accurate predictors of future performance, such as individual aptitude, skills, and potential. And many express the need to look for 'non-standard' candidates.
- > **Talent pipeline management enables proactive recruitment:** recruiters are moving away from reactively rushing to fill current live vacancies; instead, many are planning to quickly fill future vacancies with known, interested and quality candidates.
- > **We see higher retention rates among new hires** when employers nurture relationships with potential candidates and carefully match their skills and aspirations to the role, while making the reasonable adjustments that enable their contribution on an equal basis.
- > **The cost of upskilling new hires will reduce** as employers collectively help the Learning & Skills sector to become more demand led, i.e., as Compacts communicate their skills requirements more effectively.

People with disabilities also need more efficient job markets.

Disabled people using traditional segregated disability employment services can rarely hope for even a "50-50 chance" of getting a job: while employers willing to hire people with disabilities struggle to find suitable candidates.

- > **People with disabilities are typically relegated to segregated, uncoordinated, ad hoc training/employment projects, disconnected from labour market realities, including which skills are most in demand** – such segregation, and the provision of skills *not* in demand by local employers, is widely regarded as natural and/or unavoidable.

- > **These frequently competing disability programmes explain their ongoing failure not by their own performance, but by pointing to the inadequacies of their 'customers' or potential 'users'.** e.g. the employer's ignorance, prejudice, insensitivity... and the job seeker's disability, skill deficit, self-stigma.... (Noting however, that many see employers as targets to be educated not valued service users or clients: and many job seekers are sent to programmes which do not in the slightest match their aptitudes, interests, aspirations.)
- > **These disability organisations typically have little if any experience or understanding of people in the private sector and their lived reality.** They see little or no need to also meet the needs of employers; and/or they do not know how; and/or they explain they are neither funded nor mandated to do so.
- > **The mainstream learning & skills sector is not expected to deliver even equal opportunities to trainees/students/ learners with disabilities** – reflecting the deep-rooted assumption that 'these people' somehow belong in the segregated disability system.
- > **Disability organisations are not funded to systematically build the capacity of mainstream training providers to also serve persons with disabilities.**
- > **Employers rarely meet people they know to have a disability** – a communication and experiential gap that reinforces influential negative stereotypes and low expectations of both people in business and people with disabilities.
- > **Disability organisations needlessly limit the disabled talent readily available to employers to those job seekers already known to the sector,** even when these job seekers are neither suitable for, nor interested in, the jobs on offer. They very rarely if ever advertise to attract a much wider pool of suitable candidates to present to an employer who is open to recruiting people with disabilities.
- > **Funders share these low expectations of both job seekers and employers.** The success of the initiatives they fund is measured by the numbers trained or even contacted (input) – not by the numbers who find meaningful employment (outcome).

Making it easier for well-intentioned employers makes it harder for others to say 'No'.

Efficient job markets enable access to the widest pool of talent as they achieve a much better balance of "PUSH & PULL"

- > **PUSH** interventions enable persons with disabilities to prepare for and enter the world of work and employers in general
- > **PULL** interventions help particular employers to 'pull' suitable disabled candidates at the right time to fill specific vacancies
- > **PUSH & PULL** balanced interventions help employers to move from reactive vacancy filling to proactive, disability confident, Talent Pipeline Management

We start by mapping the job market data & processes that need to change

- > **Identify the skills that are in demand by local employers** – and the training providers and qualifications that these employers value.
- > **Audit the typical journey** taken by anyone seeking to gain these specified skills as they seek to find training – apply – qualify to enter – cover costs -learn – pass tests - gain certification- access internships - and jobs. Where are the obstacles disabled individuals would encounter?
- > **Audit the core processes local recruiters and hiring managers** manage as they seek to attract, assess, appoint, and onboard talent with these specified skills. What obstacles triggered by employer processes could disadvantage job seekers with disabilities?
- > **Audit the core process that selected mainstream trainers manage** as they set out to attract trainees- let them apply -deem suitable – teach – test – certify - transition into jobs; What obstacles would potential trainees with disabilities encounter?

The **6+1 Steps to job market re-design** is designed to match 'employer demand' for people with particular skills i.e. digital skills, with the 'supply' of suitably trained and interested disabled job seekers. Our 6 +1 model leverages the collective influence of employers with shared digital skill shortages on the mainstream Learning & Skills sector and the job market more generally.

The Missing Connector!

Coordinating the 6 Steps to Market Re-design

A named organisation – ideally a Business Talent Compact - must coordinate this 6-step process, and take responsibility for ensuring that someone upskills mainstream training providers AND employers AND enables disability organisations to become more ‘business & job market confident’ AND brings employers and trainees together – to bring disabled talent routinely into the Talent Pipelines that lead to meaningful jobs and careers.

What is a Business Talent Compact?

- > **A resourced, coordinated collaboration of employers**, motivated by enlightened self-interest, which leverages the collective influence of its business members to create more efficient and more equitable job markets,
- > **And which bring significant numbers of disabled job seekers with 'in-demand' skills into the talent pipelines** managed by its members.
- > **Members nurture relationships with disabled trainees/students** as ‘employers of choice’ and gain privileged access to disabled talent,
- > **which makes it easier to fill ‘hard to fill’ vacancies** from this untapped labour pool,



- > **while enabling the Learning & Skills sector and job markets more generally** to deliver greater economic, commercial, and societal impact.

Employers have a vested interest in shaping more efficient job markets

The Talent Compact Membership Commitment

Compact companies commit to offering guaranteed interviews, plus a menu of internships, mentoring, apprenticeships, job shadowing, on the job training, or similar opportunities.

- > to those students or trainees with disabilities who qualify for the Talent Compact
- > by meeting the performance standards formally agreed between the Compact and its training provider partners.

In addition, Talent Compact members will:

- > Share information regarding their anticipated need for digital and other in-demand skills.
- > Share experience as they improve their Talent Pipeline Management processes to include a wider range of future candidates.
- > Encourage and enable mainstream training providers to also meet the needs and aspirations of learners with disabilities.
- > Empower their Compact management team to negotiate on their behalf with designated training providers.
- > Ensure senior management as well as colleagues interacting with disabled trainees build their personal and professional disability confidence.
- > Make reasonable adjustments for trainees/students as needed – at interviews, internships, on boarding, on the job training and career development.
- > Proactively help the Compact to maximise its impact to the benefit of business, people with disabilities and the local economy.

Talent Compacts enable the Learning & Skills sector to better meet the needs of employers - creating a better balance in the 'supply & demand' of talent

Compacts help member employers to better describe and predict both their immediate and their ongoing 'skill and critical competency' requirements and to determine where they see and/or anticipate shared skill shortages.

The Compact management team negotiate with selected training providers, on behalf of their membership:

- > to ensure these training organisations and/or universities provide the skills that Compact members truly require.
- > to agree the standards of performance which qualify a disabled trainee for the guaranteed interviews and the additional menu of opportunities offered by Compact companies.
- > to help match trainees with these internships, mentoring, apprenticeship etc. opportunities.
- > to ensure training providers, job seekers and employers with 'disability confident' can access the support they require.

Trainers become better trainers as they move from: "**The problem is you have a disability**" to: "**Ah, I see, the real problem is I need to be more flexible in how I teach**".

The Learning & Skills Sector needs to understand that systems and programmes that work for extreme users, work better for everyone.

Talent Compacts will encourage mainstream education and training providers to deliver at least equal opportunities for persons with disabilities as they:

- > learn how to provide a much wider population with the skills and qualifications that they, local employers, require.
- > quickly modify their training curriculum to meet the changing skill requirements of local employers.

- > enhance the employability of needlessly disadvantaged populations, including disabled talent.
- > are seen by their funders and public policy makers to maximise Return on Investment, as they amplify their economic and societal impact on the local economy by enabling access to a much wider pool of talent.

The Added Value of Business Talent Compacts

Compact members gain:

- > **Stronger employer brand recognition** – joining a Talent Compact can improve your visibility to talent, training providers, student bodies, employees, public policy makers and other key stakeholders.
- > **Privileged access to 'Compact Pre-Qualified' disabled talent.**
- > **Greater leverage on the job market** - Working collectively, businesses are better equipped to influence training providers and public partners to better meet the needs of business, with clear positive messages
- > **Clearer communications regarding talent needs** - as collaborating employers share their job projections and talent requirements- including competencies and certifications – with trusted provider partners and wider audiences.
- > **Shared capacity building** as employers cost effectively become more disability confident and begin to access this untapped pool of talent.
- > **Exclusive access to the Compact's expert 'business & disability' support service, networking events and resources**, tailored to facilitate relationships with potential applicants while expediting the best corporate practice called 'disability confidence'- in partnership with people with disabilities.
- > **A better balance of talent 'supply and demand' in the local labour market** that benefits individual Compact members, as well as the wider economy.
- > **Easier access to diverse candidates with in-demand skills, as the Compact encourages and enables the Learning and Skills sector to become more inclusive and equitable and aligned with market needs.**

- > **Brand reputation as responsible thought leaders** collaborating to the benefit of business and the communities in which you operate.
- > **Potential influence on public policy that benefits business and persons with disabilities,** as the Compact promotes those essential job market reforms which are in the control of the public sector.
- > **Greater Return on Investment from your ESG or CSR related donor, and/or community investment strategies** as you encourage mainstream community programmes to make it easier to recruit people with the skills you require, from the widest possible talent pool.

Every player – not just the employer - needs to think and do things differently.

Imagine the impact if every organisation that funds, delivers, or advocates for the economic empowerment of people with disabilities were to:

1. Require a shift from segregated training isolated from employers– to encouraging, enabling, requiring mainstream training providers to also serve persons with disabilities– and to do so in partnership with employers.
2. Position employers as valued stakeholders, service users and potential partners.
3. Measure the success of services helping disabled people prepare for work by the numbers who get jobs- insisting that job seekers have a better than 60-40 chance of finding meaningful employment
4. Measure the success of disability employment programmes by the quality of business relevant services offered to employers - and by the business take up and satisfaction with that service offering.
5. Require ‘employment and economic empowerment’ initiatives to start with employer demand for skills, to explicitly address specified job market dysfunctions and to work towards delivering the ‘6 plus One’ job market reforms.’

Who has the influence to drive this new approach to economic empowerment?

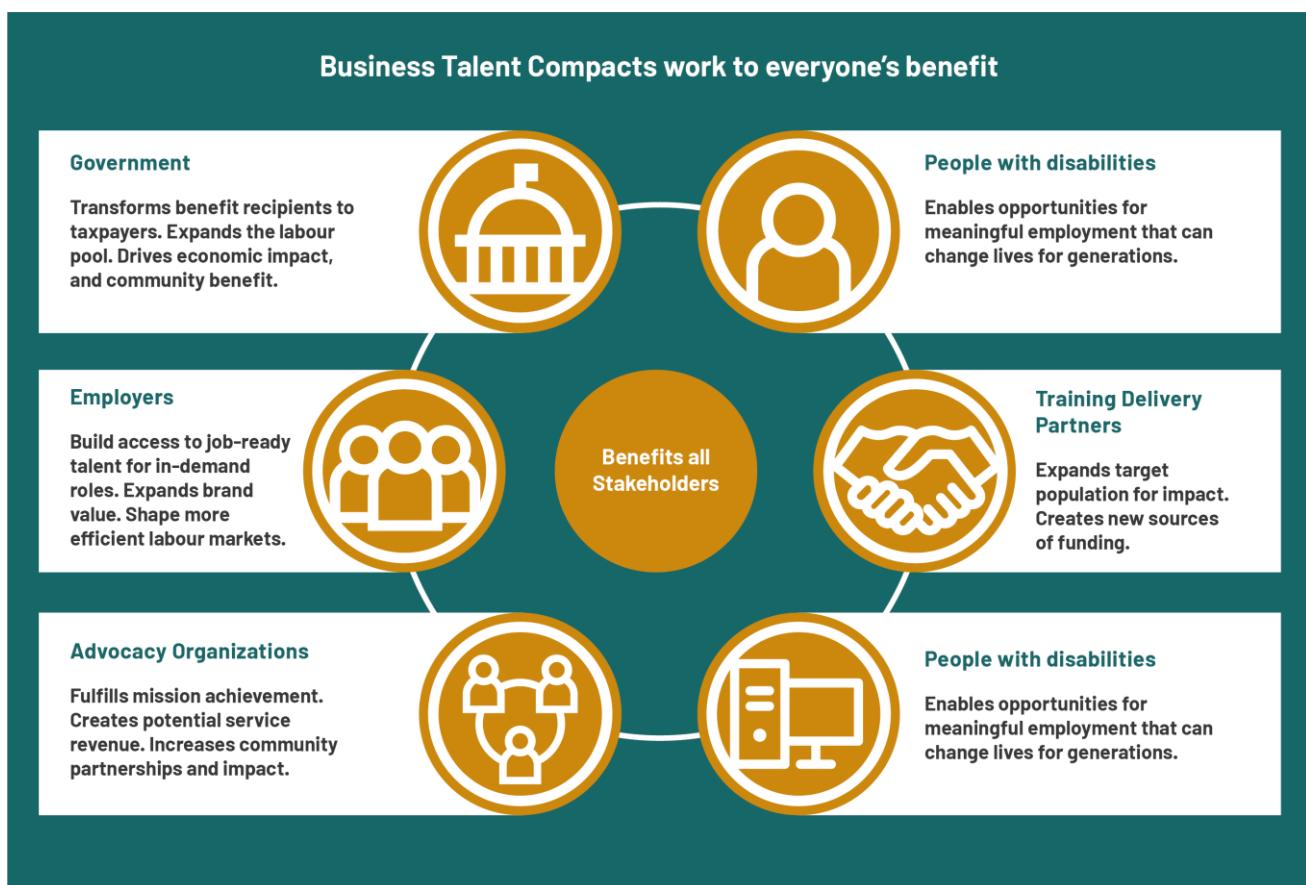
A Funders Job Market Transformation Charter

As funders or commissioning agents we will set a baseline expectation that disabled people must have at least a '60-40' chance of employment when accepted into any of our employment related programmes while aiming to support programmes that deliver at least a 65% success rate, measured by those finding paid internships or jobs. We will encourage other funders and public policymakers to join us in taking a whole systems approach to creating more efficient and more disability confident job markets.

We will require and enable the disability 'training & employment' services we fund or otherwise support:

- To 'engage employers behind the economic and ethical rational for the corporate best practice called Disability Confidence - and for leveraging their collective influence to improve their local job market.'
- To ensure they meet the needs and expectations of *both* job seekers with disabilities and employers as valued service users and to monitor *both* employer and job seeker satisfaction with this range of enabling products and services.
- To identify the skills and certifications that are strongly in demand by local employers.
- To map the processes and pipelines local employers typically use to fill vacancies requiring these skills.
- To identify – and seek to partner with -the mainstream training providers employers value, and which routinely feed suitable candidates into these Talent Pipelines. To only support specialist segregated provision designed to challenge- and build the capacity of - the mainstream to also serve persons with disabilities
- To help *both* training providers and employers to do the gap analysis, to become more disability confident, and to provide ongoing support for providers, employers, and job seekers/trainees.
- To establish, where possible, a resourced Business Talent Compact that makes it easier to recruit disabled talent by bringing significant numbers into the Talent Pipelines leading to meaningful jobs and careers. Or to work with individual employers towards these goals.

- To encourage the start-up of sustainable National Business Disability Networks to either build on the success of Talent Compacts or to coordinate the Job Market Re-design which in turn facilitate the start up of Business Talent Compacts
- To build their business confidence as disability specialists and advocates and to be open to resourcing the development of business relevant enabling products and services
- To invite employers to invest in individuals who are not yet 'job ready' by offering work experience, on the job training, mentoring etc as employers come to trust the advice and services that help them to recruit job ready candidates with disabilities



Case Study: Three Talents Bridge Academies

Disability Specialist Training addressing systemic market failures

Founded in the USA by Pat Romzek, a former senior Cisco executive, the 'not-traditional' Bridge Academy programme now has academies in America, Europe and recently in Kenya. They enable people with disabilities to gain the mainstream Cisco qualifications that are highly in demand by employers, everywhere.

While these digital training academies are exclusively for persons with disabilities, the design addresses significant labour market obstacles, as it starts with 'Demand' i.e., the imperative to help employers recruit disabled people into jobs requiring Cisco qualifications.

Bridge Academies get better job outcomes because, in contrast to traditional disability training and employment programmes

- 94% of students with disabilities who enter graduate
- 91% of graduates gain formal Cisco certification
- 96% of those certified get paid internships and/or jobs

The difference: Academies address typical specific job market failures

- Students gain skills and certifications which are much in demand by employers and achieve the same performance standards set by mainstream Cisco Academies.
- Individual employers are actively involved as valued partners throughout.
- Academies have high expectations of persons with disabilities and employers.
- The talent pool of disabled people available to employers expands to include individuals not known to disability organisations, as Academies advertise on social & other media rather than rely on disability organisations for referrals.
- Students are accepted on the basis of attitude, aspiration, commitment, aptitude: having a disability does not in itself warrant participation.
- Academies remove barriers systematically at every step of the journeys taken by people with disabilities as they attempt to find such an opportunity, try to apply and qualify to enter, cover their costs, learn, gain qualifications and certifications, and move into

internships and jobs.

- Success is measured by numbers in quality paid internships and jobs, not just the numbers trained.
- Trainers are disability competent and connected to employers.
- Individual employers bring disabled trainees into their Talent Pipelines as managers and trainees interact throughout the training and the transition to internships and/or jobs.
- Students and employers gain confidence as they learn directly from each other.
- The model is grounded in structured, coordinated, multistakeholder collaboration, as employers, leaders with disabilities, Organisations of Persons with Disabilities, training providers, NGOs, the public sector, learn from each other and drive continuous improvement across the job market.

We need to systematically leverage the success and experience of these Bridge Academies:

- to challenge widely held low expectations of both persons with disabilities and employers and the assumption that disabled people belong in segregated provision.
- to evidence the necessity of starting every job market re-design with 'employer demand': i.e., "which skills are most in demand by local employers?"
- to evidence the impact of bringing disabled people into 'Talent Pipelines', rather than waiting until job seekers reach the open competition of 'job search.'
- to evidence the 'game changing' potential impact were mainstream training providers to deliver at least equal opportunities to disabled people.
- to share learning on how to adapt any mainstream training programme so that significantly more persons with disabilities succeed.
- to evidence the benefits of positioning employers as critically important service users/potential partners from the start of any market re-design.
- to leverage the positive experience of individual business leaders as they begin to support structured B2B collaboration that goes beyond particular academies to national business disability networks and/or Talent Compacts.

For further information contact:

Susan Scott-Parker OBE

Scott-Parker International

ssp@scottparker.org



**SCOTT-PARKER
INTERNATIONAL**