

# INTRODUCING ARTREPRENEURSHIP SKILLS- A ROADWAY TO CREATE POSSIBLE FUTURE EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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## **Abstract**

*Art and entrepreneurship, individually, are not new area of investigation, but are far from constituting consolidated topic 'Artrepreneurship', especially in start-up India and Skill India. Despite the perceptible similarities in processes, as they unfold in the business context, the two areas remained ramified in terms of research and in practice as well. Unemployment, especially among the Indian artists, has become exigency of Indian Government and Education System, to focus on 'Artrepreneurship Skill' development among 'Artists'.*

*This research paper sheds light on the present scenario of raising unemployment among Indian Artists, its adverse effect on economy and developing artrepreneurship skills as possible solution. The results of pilot investigation from artists in selected cities of Maharashtra outlines the field of research. Possible other forms of introducing artrepreneurial thinking, behavior, skills in education system with special reference to Skill India is also discussed. The article ends by outlining the areas of further research.*

**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurship, Employment, Skill India, Education System*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

*Skills and knowledge are the foundation to the economic growth and social development of any country<sup>1</sup>. Recognizing this need of 'Skill Development' among the youths, Government of India provided a framework by setting up 'The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship'. Predominant motive of this ministry is to coordinate all the skill development efforts across the country. At the one hand Skill India helped to groom up the labour market, but on another hand, the traditionally difficult labour market for artist has become even more limited and the recommendations for an entrepreneurial approach for arts graduates have been recently voiced more often<sup>2</sup>.*

Available art literature, highlights the art related phenomena and occasionally deals with dynamism of art industry. Entrepreneurship research, on another hand, has always been focusing on economic activities, such as creation of new firm and nature of the start-up process. Therefore, many times artists are fundamentally sceptical of anything that has to do

<sup>1</sup>(Dr. Jagdish Prasad, 2017)

<sup>2</sup>(Gajare, 2019)

with commerce and business. This paper is an attempt to open up the burning issue faced by todays artists, bydeciphering the need of introducing *Artrepreneurship Skills* among young artists, as a future roadway to employment creation and nation's economic development, therefore.

## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study is conducted with the following objectives-

- to study the unemployment challenge faced by today's Indian artist.
- to study the concept of art, entrepreneurship and therefore 'Artrepreneurship'
- to study the need of introducing 'Artrepreneurship Skill' among the young Indian artists and possible opportunities of employment as result thereof.
- to provide suggestions for introducing 'Artrepreneurship' among youths.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The primary data for the present pilot investigation is collected through questionnaire and interviews of 54renowned artist(namely classical dancers, Folk Dancers, Fine artists, Musicians, Drama Artist etc.),randomly selectedfrom Mumbai, Jalgaon and Pune.The secondary data is collected through journal articles, periodicals, Ministry Reports, Lok Sabha Question Answer reports, websites and Newspapers.

## 4. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to business dictionary, 'Entrepreneurship' is capacity and willingness to develop, organize and manage a business venture considering any risk to earn profit.

The Macmillan English Dictionary offers the most general definition as, "Entrepreneur is someone who uses money to start businesses and make business deals".Whereas, Oxford English Dictionary's definition is - an entrepreneur is "a person who organizes and operates a business or businesses, considering above normal financial risks." This summarizes that, entrepreneur is a creative person with set of skills to start up new venture, to respond and deal in market to sale the product. Thus, *he is self-employed, who is engaged in creating employment opportunities for other*.

In present days 'Artist' is a person engaged in an activity deemed to be an art, who express him/her self though particular medium of art. Artist is a person creative, innovative and well adapted in his artistic practice of high cultural activities such as drawing, painting, acting, dancing, music, writing, photography etc. and people of great imagination, talent, or skill to create aesthetic value works<sup>3</sup>.Historically, there has always been an edgy relationship between art, artists and the money required to produce art. And therefore, traditionally artists were taken cared by auspices of the king court, government grants and corporate sponsorships. But in today's era artists have to opportunity to change this typical mindset by channelizing their creativeideasskills to upgrade from 'Artist' to 'Art Entrepreneurs'<sup>4</sup>. This transformation can help to bring social as well as economic upliftment of the country.

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<sup>3</sup>(Wilson, 1993)

<sup>4</sup>(Farrar, 2019)

The terms- entrepreneurship, cultural entrepreneurship, and Artrepreneurship have never been clearly defined, and therefore, to answer the question, 'how they behave?' is similar to the efforts to describe what managers do<sup>5</sup>. This failure to get a good definition of art entrepreneurship may be because artist's refusal; sometimes, politically or methodologically to the tag of 'Entrepreneurship'<sup>6-7</sup>, especially in the country like India where, from ancient period of time, art is a form of expressing pure devotion, an instrument of worshiping to the supreme being or divine consciousness.

However, looking at the need of time, many scholars attempted to conceptualize the broader sense and concretize it in words, of 'Art Entrepreneurs'. James David Hart defines art entrepreneurship as "the creation of opportunity and value with intent to profit financially, socially or otherwise through the assumption of risk and effort." And in case of arts entrepreneurship, the value created is art<sup>8</sup>. Thus, from above discussions and definitions, it is clear that, the term Artrepreneurship is portmanteau of two words 'Arts' and 'Entrepreneurship' creating new spectrum for employment opportunities.

Artrepreneurs are galvanized by raw creativity and passion that can potentially curb their ability to think entrepreneurially<sup>9</sup>. Therefore, there is need to introduce entrepreneurial skills among the artists. Kenneth Foster, the head of USC's innovative Arts Leadership program says, "*Arts entrepreneurship doesn't mean artists becoming businesspeople, It means applying the creative process that is at the heart of your art-making to the challenges blocking to transform your artistic idea into reality*<sup>10</sup>." Thus, 'Artrepreneurship' is a broader concept than just entrepreneurship. Therefore, to develop successful 'Artrepreneurs' in near future, education system has to develop *artistic yet commercial and professional skills* among the young artists.

## 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Data from the latest labor force survey reveals that the total workforce reduced by 9.1 million people between 2011-12 and 2017-18<sup>11</sup>. According to an estimate, in India, Agriculture employs 37-40 % of the total workforce, Culture & Creative Industries employs 45-48% and all other industries together employ around 17-20% of the total workforce. But main challenge in the growth and promotion of cultural industries lies in developing a revenue-generation model which could be self-sustainable<sup>12</sup>. One of the reasons behind this is, from prolonged period, study of creative industries is ignored by social scientists, because these industries do not fit neatly into the neoclassical economic model, that is the predominate perspective in economics<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup>(Sternal, 2014)

<sup>6</sup>(Mulcahy, 2003)

<sup>7</sup>(G, 2004)

<sup>8</sup>(Hart, 2019)

<sup>9</sup>(Hall, 2018)

<sup>10</sup>(Farrar, 2019)

<sup>11</sup>(Ghosh, 2019)

<sup>12</sup>(Mission Document)

<sup>13</sup>(Caves, 2000)

Therefore, traditionally, society also have never tried to put on the examples of successful art entrepreneurs. Even our education system has never focused on offering art entrepreneurship courses and skills. Young artists are always been mentored for improving their art skills and rarely for Art entrepreneurship skills. Rarely they were motivated to establish their own firm to sell out their art service.

Teaching and forwarding the true essence of art heritage and culture, along with its pure science has always been an axis for traditional and modern schools of arts in India. Very less attention is given to develop 'art entrepreneurship' skills in youth artists. Artists with ancestral art heritage, therefore, were able to settle down themselves in art market very easily as compared to those who lack it. Many outstanding artists left their art form in search of bread and butter, because they found earning out of their art is very difficult. Art education is compulsory for school students; however, students were rarely told about the art career opportunities or how to earn from the particular art form. Students were rarely given an examples of successful art entrepreneurs who created job opportunities for society and have contributed to nation's economic development as compared to other entrepreneurs and other career options like engineers and doctors.

Pilot study also reveals, only 25.24% respondents wants to establish their own firm and majority of artists. Sadly, rest of the people, who have invested their years for learning their art form and still prefer to have settled job rather than looking for some opportunities in their art field. Majority of respondents agreed that, present art education model (Gurukul System and College/University) have helped them to develop their creativity, dignity for labour, flexibility, high self-esteem, initiative taking ability, which are also known as 'Qualities of good Art entrepreneur', but they said, present system failed to develop knowledge for commercial and legal aspect of business, need for power, problem solving attitude, risk taking ability etc, which are very essential skills for being 'Successful Art entrepreneur'. Almost 66.67% respondents agreed to this statement. This outcome highlights the raising need to develop Art entrepreneurship skills among young Indian artists.

One of the artist respondents said, "being a male dancer, handsome money does matter a lot to our family. From ancient time art has been considered as worship to god, so many times people expect us to perform in Festivals as charity." He added "we are very good in our art form but not in selling the same." One of the artists respondents even added that, "because of this, he feels like a failure." According to economic theory, accepting to be an art entrepreneur when one can earn more working as salesman in superstore is irrational, because one has to agree for lower income<sup>14</sup>. Therefore, many young and talented artists are dropping their art forms in search for bread butter. Often the art itself is simply taken for granted, or, ironically, is considered only as an afterthought and not as central to the question of organizational mission, identity<sup>15</sup>, and therefore a product to sell out. Like entrepreneurs, artists also have product or idea to sell out, but to do so, artists need some business skills and a willingness to approach selling art, as same as any entrepreneur would need<sup>16</sup>. Even though

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<sup>14</sup>(Phillips, 2010)

<sup>15</sup>(Nytch, 2012)

<sup>16</sup>( ADC, Art Design Consultants, 2019)

present Indian art education system developed approach of selling art among young and talented artists, melancholy, but it failed to develop 'basic business skills' among them.

In India, among the people of age 15 years and above, 97.3 per cent had no technical education. The percentage of persons of age 15 -59 years who received non-formal vocational/ technical training was 6.1 per cent in both rural and urban areas<sup>17</sup>. In addition to this calamity, it is revealed that, India's unemployment rate rose to 6.1% in the 2017-18 fiscal year, the highest level in at least 45 years<sup>18</sup>. Indian government launched many skill developmental programs and courses under Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, covering many industries and sectors. These courses are helping many youth resources to develop practical knowledge and technical expertise so that they are ready for their day one job and industrialist don't have to invest training, time and effort into training them for particular job profile. These are shaping up tomorrow's employees and not the employers. Therefore, the question for skilled labour is solved up to certain limit, but not the question of creating more employment opportunities.

Many art forms in India including performing art and fine arts are still taught in Gurukul Education System, where students learn not only the art but also all aspects of life. However, with world's pace this system has changed a lot and lost many of its true essence. Except few Gurukul and Gharana Paddhati of art, many have failed to develop artrepreneurial skills among youth artists.

With the objective of attracting more innovation, entrepreneurs, job creation, to boost make in India initiative and offer hand-holding funding support and incentive, "Start-up India Scheme" was launched by Indian Government, on the 16th of January, 2016. According to recent Tweet by the Minister of Commerce and Industry in India, Suresh Prabhu, "till Jan 2019, 15667 start-ups were recognised by the movement<sup>19</sup>". The scheme has boosted a lot by giving more entrepreneurs to the country, however, it failed to promote and develop artrepreneurship skills.

Acknowledging the demand, many universities in foreign country started artrepreneurship programs to shape up and skill up young artists professionally. Those who have started, are in dilemma – how to design and structure, which topics should be included and which methods shall be adopted to induce this skill among youth artists. In India, Government provides grants for artists, but the process is based on the application called or proposal received and lacks rational approach<sup>20</sup>. Centre for Cultural Resources and Training (CCRT), Indian Cultural Heritage Centre and many organizations established under Ministry of Culture emphasizes to create awareness of the regional variations and richness of cultural expressions of our country, but they too failed to induce artrepreneurship skills among artists.

This overall scenario raises the call, to do further research in the field, to come up with methods and pertinent as well as adoptable framework to induce the artrepreneurship

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<sup>17</sup>(Government of India, 2019)

<sup>18</sup>(India's Unemployment Rate at 45-Year High as Govt Confirms 6.1% Figure Leaked in January, 2019)

<sup>19</sup>(Sharma, 2019)

<sup>20</sup>(Mission Document)

skills among young artists. This will not only create the opportunities for employment, but will also bring paradigm change in education system.

## 6. SUGGESTIONS

This pilot study come up with the following suggestions to promote Artrepreneurship and related courses

- Restructuring traditional and modern 'Art Academic Programs' with focus on artrepreneurship.
- Introducing artrepreneurship skill-based courses through skill India centers.
- Establishing separate body to perform further research work regarding the same.

## 7. OPPORTUNITIES

Culmination of 'Skill India' movement are not restricted to domestic economy and market, but is slowly appealing countries across the world, creating more opportunities in international market. If developed accordingly, then India is a young artist nation and skilled workforce will be able to certainly cater to not only the market demand within the country but also the global market demands<sup>21</sup>. Further, very less research study is done in regards to the artrepreneurship. Government of India have not even published any statistical data related to artists entrepreneurship.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Higher education institutions and system, are required to respond the social and economic needs of society. It includes enhancing graduate employability to contribute to national economic growth and local development for short and long term<sup>22</sup>. However, this is not so in the present Indian education system. Therefore, as rightly said by Gary D. Beckman, the time has come to question ourselves, what we actually want with them to be? to 'start a business' or become agents of audience development, arts leaders, arts practitioners, or simply emotionally fulfil individuals who 'do' art as their livelihood?<sup>23</sup>"

It is clear, that present art higher education system is not focusing to develop artrepreneurial technical and professional skills among students. In India over the last several years, courses on management, social communication and marketing have been introduced as compulsory or elective in every academy of almost all faculties, but not in fine arts and performing arts schools<sup>24</sup>. This fact opens up ground for further research regarding - which topics shall be included into course? which methods of teachings shall be adopted? etc., which are controversies for foreign countries (for e.g. US) also. Therefore, it is sure; simply adding one more course to the existing academic curricula will not achieve our mission.

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<sup>21</sup>(Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship, 2019)

<sup>22</sup>(Allan Gibb, 2018)

<sup>23</sup>(Beckman, 2011)

<sup>24</sup>(Gajare, 2019)

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## What Makes an Artrepreneur?

### An Exploratory Study of Artrepreneurial Passion, Personality and Artistry

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#### Abstract

We present an exploratory study to examine the antecedents of artrepreneurship, the decision of artists to commercialise the fruits of their practice. We hypothesise and test the influence of three key drivers using a questionnaire-based study with 93 practicing artists. While a number of factors from individual difference psychology are significant explainers, objective characteristics associated with several aspects of artistic practice (such as career stage, income, recognition and time intensity) provide little evidence to explain what makes an artist become an artrepreneur. We also measure the concept of *artrepreneurial passion* adapted from the business entrepreneurship literature but find no evidence that this drives artrepreneurship. Overall the results, while tentative based on a modest sample size, support a disconnect between artistic identity and business venturing as suggested in the previous work. Instead, individual difference characteristics associated more generally with business entrepreneurship seem to make the artrepreneur.

**Keywords** Artists · Entrepreneurship · Artrepreneur · Personality · Passion

**JEL Classification** B40 · C90 · D90 · Z10

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## 1 Introduction

As a response to the perpetually challenging funding environment in the arts and cultural sector, arts entrepreneurship, or *artrepreneurship*, has been proposed as an alternative funding source allowing an independent living from creative practice (e.g. Beckman 2007; Bridgstock 2013; Brown 2005; Henry 2007). Artrepreneurship is defined as the process of bringing the fruits of artists' creative endeavours to the market for commercial gain. It results from the blending of artists' aesthetic and economic logics (Eikhof and Haunschild 2007) and encourages a more businesslike approach to creative production (Engelmann et al. 2012) to "translate creativity into money" (Brink 2011, p. 75).

Artrepreneurship has been advocated by governments as a career path for artists that educational institutions should promote (Carey and Naudin 2006; Pollard 2013): Successful commercialisation of creative ideas and practice requires particular skills and competencies that may, to an extent, be acquired. In response, entrepreneurial training as part of fine arts education aims to raise the professional prospects of artists by developing artists' "more intangible, behavioral aspects of entrepreneurship" (Pollard 2013). Two approaches to artrepreneurship education exist, one aimed at the artist's new venture creation, and the other at professional employment (Beckman 2007; Bridgstock 2013).

Artrepreneurship can benefit both the economic viability of the individual artist and the cultural industries more generally (Roberts 2012). For many artists wishing to make a living from their creative practice, entrepreneurship presents new opportunities that can sustain their creative careers. (Lingo and Tepper 2013, p. 337) describe artists as "masters of navigating across historically disparate domains" who increasingly must embrace "self-directed entrepreneurialism".

Moreover, beyond the individual artist, the economic importance of the creative economy, i.e. goods and services based on creative intellectual capital, is considerable and rising. In the UK, for example, cultural industries contribute around 8% of GDP, employ around 6% of the workforce (Carey and Naudin 2006) and are rising faster than any other economic sector (Brown 2005; Henry 2007; Bridgstock 2013). According to evidence from United Nations (2019), the global market for creative goods has more than doubled between 2002 and 2015 to over \$500 billion. The importance from this sector comes from "the fact that creativity, knowledge and access to information are increasingly recognised as powerful engines driving economic growth and promoting development in a globalizing world" (United Nations 2019). As an alternative funding source, artrepreneurship can help stimulate the cultural economy.

The potential importance of artrepreneurship both for individuals and the economy more generally highlights the need to understand the drivers of artists' business venturing behaviours. This issue mirrors an equivalent, long-standing debate in the business discipline of entrepreneurship. The identification of the antecedents of entrepreneurship allows policymakers to target and/or develop individuals in order to raise entrepreneurship, and to create suitable institutions and policies to support their activities. This literature has identified an array of antecedent factors including

## ENCOURAGING NEURODIVERSITY IN THE EVOLVING WORKFORCE – THE NEXT FRONTIER TO A DIVERSE WORKPLACE

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**Abstract:** Nowadays, organizations tend to focus on diversity in the workplace, aiming for true inclusion, and in this context, they cannot overlook a significant demographic as neurodiverse people tends to become. The human brain has no less than 86 billion neurons, this number unequivocally demonstrating that we are all different, and the genetic structure and environmental conditions predispose us to unique behaviors compared to our peers. Neurodiversity is a relatively recent term that covers multiple conditions, such as Autism, ADHD and dyslexia, which tend to affect the cognitive function of the brain. The purpose of this paper is to analyse the literature in the field of neurodiversity generally and the inclusion of neurodiversity in the workplace, particularly, and to identify a series of best practices of the various companies in this field. In order to achieve this goal, the secondary study started from defining the neurodiversity and presenting its various forms, continuing with pointing out the many benefits that the inclusion of neurodiverse people in certain positions can bring and the adjustments that should be made to allow these people to prosper in their work. The premise behind the study is that, once neurodiversity is understood as a reality of the natural variation of human neurocognition, organizations need to identify the ways to attract, to adapt themselves and to harness this potential, since neurodiversity inclusion is an area where "doing well" can also prove to be a good business, given that, although neurodiverse people may face specific challenges in the workplace or in performing certain tasks, with the right adaptations, they can become valuable and unique strengths for the company.

**Keywords:** Neurodiversity, Diverse workplace, Inclusion, Adaptations.

**JEL Classification Codes:** J24, J70.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

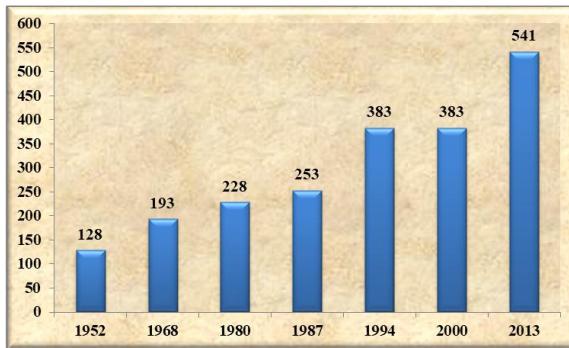
The number of psychiatric disorders has reported an accelerated increase over the past years. If the first edition of The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, published by The American Psychiatric Association in 1952, listed a number of 128 disease categories, their number had already reached 541 in 2013 (Blashfield et al., 2014) (figure 1). Thus, the medical vocabulary now has terms defining conditions we knew nothing about 50 years ago, such as "learning disabilities", ADHD, "Asperger syndrome" and others.

The human brain has no less than 86 billion neurons (Herculano-Houzel, 2012), this figure unequivocally demonstrating that we are all different. The genetic structure, but also environmental conditions are the ones to makes us prone to singular behaviors as compared to our fellow human beings.

Also, the concept of neurodiversity, coined by the Australian Sociologist Judy Singer, recognizes the fact that some people can be introverted, extroverted, dyslexic or even autistic and they remain essential to the human species, just like as biodiversity is essential to the planet.



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**Figure 1 The evolution of the number of mental disorders identified through the years**

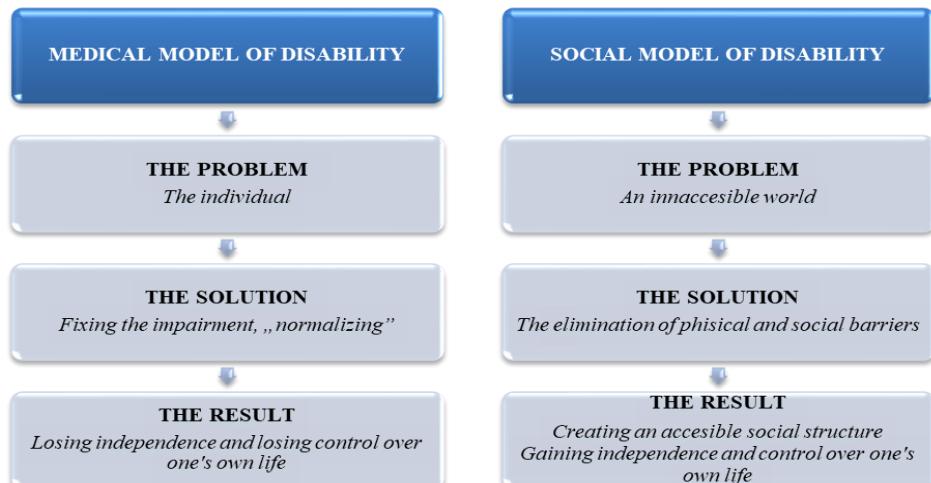
Source: Blashfield Roger K., et al., 2014

Taking this aspect into account and considering the fact that approximately 10% of the population is neurodivergent in a way, employers cannot disregard this category of persons, as neurodiversity is beginning to gradually be part of the vocabulary used by the Human Resources department (Faragher, 2018).

## 2. PERCEPTIONS TOWARD DISABILITY

### 2.1 Rethinking disability

Disability- physical or other, such as mental or learning-related, can be characterized as a lack of ability to function according to personal and/or other norms (Rudnick, 2017). According to the so-called medical model of disability, such a lack is caused by one or more health impairments of persons; these impairments have to be remedied using medical treatments. According to the so-called social model of disability, created by persons with disabilities as a manner of seeing the world, disability is caused by the way in which society is organized, rather than by the impairment of a person. Barriers can be physical or they can be caused by people's attitudes towards these differences, such as the assumption that people with disabilities cannot do certain things. Thus, the social model helps identify the barriers impeding the life of people with disabilities and analyses the ways in which they can be removed, as such those individuals become more independent and gain control over their own lives. At the other end, the medical model identifies what is "wrong" with the respective person and not what they need, leading to loss of independence and reduction of control over their own lives (Haegele and Hodge, 2016) (figure2).



**Figure 2 The medical social model of disability vs. the social model of disability**

Source: Haegeleand Hodge, 2016.

## 2.2 EU citizens' perception toward disability

Special Eurobarometer no. 493 - “*Discrimination in the EU in 2019*” (European Commission, 2019) comes to bring a clear image of how the citizens of the European Union Member States view discrimination in general and its various forms in particular. Thus, according to this study, 44% of the European citizens believe that discrimination based on disability criteria is still widely spread, while in Romania, half of the respondents claim the same.

With regard to matters related to the place of work, an overwhelming rate of 84% of the people interviewed within the study among the EU citizens claim they would have no problem feeling at ease with a colleague with disabilities. In this chapter, Romania reported the lowest percentage of people who would feel comfortable working with a person with disabilities (60%) and the highest percentage in people to whom teamwork with such a person would cause discomfort (18%).

In the same work-related context, disability is perceived by the EU citizens, alongside general physical appearance (41%), as the third source factor of disadvantage upon employment, as incidence, after the applicants' look (48% and their age (47%). In such a circumstance, 28% of the Romanian respondents consider disability as a factor disadvantaging the candidate for a position.

In light of the above, a percentage of 57% of the European Union citizens believe that sufficient effort is made to promote diversity at the workplace with regard to disability, while 43% of the Romanian respondents agree to this matter. (table1)

**Table 1. Perceptions about disability in the EU countries**

PERCEPTIONS ABOUT DISABILITY					
	Discrimination based on disability is still widespread	The disability - a criteria of putting at a disadvantage a job candidate with equal skills and qualifications as the other applicants	The feeling working with a disabled colleague		Enough efforts to promote diversity in terms of disability in the workplace
			Comfortable	Uncomfortable	
UE average	44%	41%	44%	4%	57%
Maximum percent	Finland – 64%	France – 63%	UK, Netherlands, Sweden – 95%	UK, Spain, Sweden, Ireland, France – 1%	UK – 75%
Romania	Romania – 50%	Romania – 28%	Romania – 60%	Romania – 18%	Romania – 43%
Minimum percent	Malta - 27%	Luxembourg - 19%			Portugal – 20%

Source: European Commission, „*Special Eurobarometer 493 - Discrimination in the EU in 2019*”

Although there are still residual perceptions toward disability among citizens, we may postulate that people with disabilities can perform nearly any type of work and, if the necessary adaptations were to be made available at the workplace, most persons with disabilities would be productive. However, their employment rates are lower than those of non-disabled persons (World Health Organization, The World Bank, 2011).

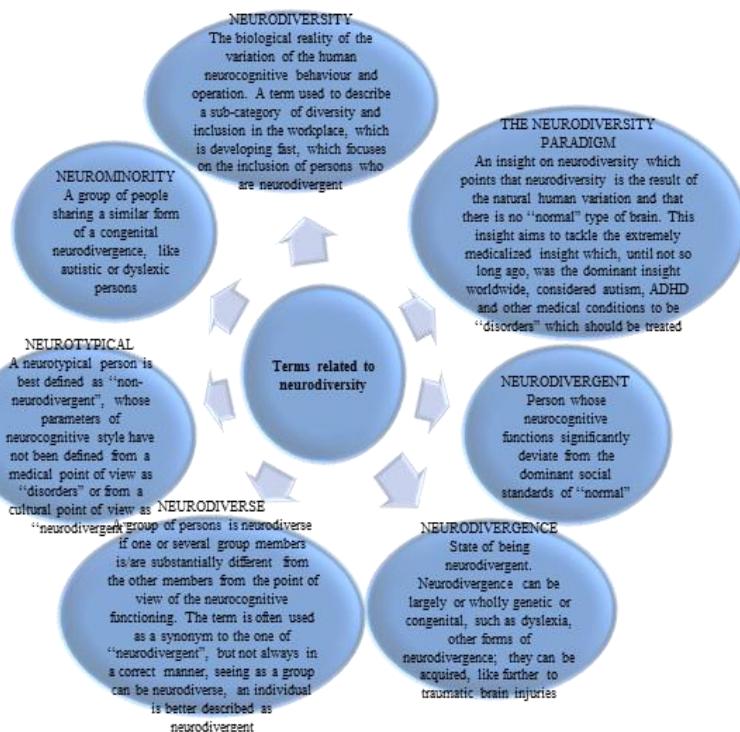
## 3. NEURODIVERSITY- CONCEPTUAL ROOTS

The term Neurodiversity is relatively recent, first used in the end of the '90s, as a result of some exchanges between Judy Singer, an Australian anthropology student and the American journalist, Harvey Blume, who published an article on this topic in the 1998 issue of The Atlantic.

Harvey Blume stated in that article that neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. He was asking rhetorically: “Who can say what form of wiring will prove best at any given moment? Cybernetics and computer culture, for example, may favor a somewhat autistic cast of mind” (Blume, 1998).

Singer' work on autism and neurodiversity became widely known as a result of her chapter “Why Can't You be Normal for Once in Your Life?” based on her thesis which was published in the UK in 1999 (Corker and French -Eds., 1999). In this chapter, Judy Singer stated that the key significance of the Autism Spectrum lies in its call for and anticipation of a politics of neurological diversity, or “neurodiversity”. The term “neurologically different” represents, in Singer's belief, a new addition to the familiar political categories of class/gender/race and will augment the insights of the social model of disability.

In order to fully understand neurodiversity, the literature refers to numerous terms connected to this, such as: neurodiversity, neodiversity paradigm, neurodivergent, neurodivergence, neurodiverse, neurotypical, neurotypical, neurominority, whose definition can be found in figure 3.



**Figure 3 Terms related to neurodiversity**

Source:Walker, 2014; CIPD, 2018

Nowadays, the notion of neurodiversity is used more often for a militant purpose, aiming to have the “neuro-atypical persons” recognized as a minority and, as such, accepted by society or even endowed with rights. Although the word was first used to describe and protect people with autism, it has since then expanded to comprise today, apart from the persons with autism-spectrum disorders, persons with other learning and behavioral disabilities, such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD, dyscalculia and Tourette syndrome.

➤ **Autism Spectrum Disorders(ASD)** includes Autism, Asperger Syndrome and Pervasive Development Disorder. Autism Spectrum Disorders are neurodiverse conditions that affect the way people communicate and interact with other people being characterized by rigid thinking, restrictive and repetitive behaviors, and social communication challenges. People with ASD may be overly dependent on routines, highly sensitive to changes in their environment, to

bright lights, noises, smells, textures or tastes, may display inappropriate behavior, for example, interrupting conversation and limited imagination.

➤ **Dyslexia** causes difficulties with reading, writing and spelling, with working memory and short term memory, with rapid naming, concentration and time management and organization. (Cochran)

➤ **Dyspraxia** is a form of Developmental Co-ordination Disorder (DCD). The disorder affects fine motor skills – the co-ordination of small muscles, such as the hands and fingers – and gross motor skills – the co-ordination of large muscles, such as the arms, legs and torso. People with dyspraxia experience difficulties with large and/or small movements which may affect balance, fatigue levels, hand-eye coordination, rhythm, hand movements or manipulation skills; reading and writing difficulties; over sensitive to taste, light, touch or noise; poor sense of time, speed, distance, weight, or sense of direction; organizational or planning difficulties; difficulties with accuracy, concentration or following instruction; slowly adaptation to new or unpredictable situations. (Barr, 2019)

➤ **Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders of childhood lasting often into adulthood, it involves the part of the brain that controls impulses, self-regulation and inhibition and it is characterized by a persistent pattern of inattention (that makes it difficult for people to finish tasks) and/or hyperactivity and impulsivity (leading people to speak and act without thinking, to interrupt others and to have difficulty waiting their turn). Poor concentration may lead people with ADHD to become absent-minded, easily distracted and easily bored or having poor organizational skills. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019)

➤ **Dyscalculia** is a neurological condition that causes a specific and persistent difficulty in understanding numbers which can lead to a diverse range of difficulties with mathematics such as sizing, ordering, and reading and writing numbers. It can occur singly but often co-occurs with other specific learning difficulties, such dyslexia and/or dyspraxia. (British Dyslexia Association)

➤ **Tourette Syndrome** is a type of Tic Disorder, that causes a person to make involuntary, repetitive movements and vocalizations called tics. Individuals with Tourette Syndrome (TS) have had at least two motor tics (ex: blinking, eye rolling, grimacing, shoulder shrugging, jumping etc.) and at least one vocal/ phonic tic (whistling, coughing, tongue clicking, animal sounds, saying random words and phrases, swearing (NHS, 2018) in some combination (Tourette Association of America).

Neurodiversity is thus today a standard to fight against the stigma associated to these persons, especially insisting on the richness their view on the world may bring to a company.

## 4. THE NEURODIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE

### 4.1 The benefits of the neurodiversity in the workplace

Along history, there are numerous examples of neurodivergent persons who, albeit having faced with unusual challenges for neurotypical persons, knew how to take advantage of their unique abilities and excelled in a certain field of activity: British Physicist Paul Dirac (autism and Asperger), Austrian composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart and Shakespeare (ADHD), physicist Albert Einstein (dyslexia), actor Peter Sellers (Asperger) (Kleiner, 2014), Steve Jobs (dyslexia), the Virgin Group founder, Richard Branson (dyslexia), the founder of Jet Blue Airways, David Neeleman, Canadian actor Dan Aykroyd (Asperger), Jim Carrey (ADHD) (State of Mind). Thus, using the neurodiversity concept to take account of individual neurological differences, a neurodivergent person's potential is meant to be highlighted, in terms of their

strengths, which could contribute to getting a competitive advantage when adequately appreciated and harnessed by employers.

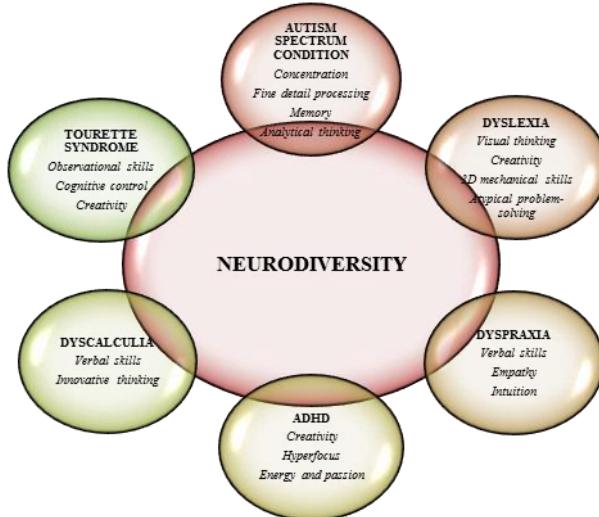
Dyslexic persons, for instance, can be regarded in terms of their capacity to think visually and their skills in the entrepreneurship field, related to creativity and their ability to see the whole picture. Dyslexia is accompanied by high visual-spatial abilities, confirming the hypothesis according to which impairments of the left hemisphere of the brain accompany the right hemisphere's strengths. A series of studies conducted has identified an association of dyslexia to the speed of recognizing impossible figures, which suggests dyslexia is associated to a type of enhanced ability to process the visual-spatial information globally (holistically) rather than locally (part by part) (Károlyi et al., 2003); this ability can prove quite beneficial for workplaces requiring three-dimensional thinking, such as astrophysics, molecular biology, genetics and engineering (Armstrong, 2015). The Facebook Vice-President for Northern Europe states that dyslexics are often capable of seeing connections that others cannot and create narrations which can simplify complex tasks or products. The global head of human resources for retail banking and wealth management at HSBC points out that the abilities that companies need are evolving fast, with an accent laid more and more now on empathy, creative thinking, innovative problem-solving and the possibility to communicate and build relationships in more networks, all these representing fields in which dyslexics thrive (Taylor, 2019).

People with ADHD can be regarded as possessing a talent for new learning opportunities; they can easily perform multi-tasking, working better under stressful situations, with numerous inputs. Also, they are more susceptible for creativity and, given the right incentive, they can "hyperfocus".

People with autism spectrum disorders have an inclination toward working with computer systems, and they can be regarded in light of their ease in adapting to mathematical computation systems or programming activities. Autistic people and those with Asperger are more prone to get higher scores in musical intelligence, as they are better detail-oriented and they have enhanced visual-spatial skills than other people. According to a data analyst of the SAP SuccessFactors Company, diagnosed with autism, people on the autism spectrum have a various set of skills and they prove to be very skilled in a whole range of fields (Elias, 2017), apart from all these, turning out to be punctual, dedicated and loyal employees. The benefits from hiring an autistic person can be among the most varied, going from the possibility to cover some jobs that are hard to fill in among the neurotypicals (such as software testing, customer support); they register less products and services' flaws rate and their corporate communication is more direct and more effective, taking account of the fact that the neuroatypicals do not understand heavy, nuanced language and complicated speech (Kișescu, 2017) (figure4).

Nowadays, an increase in the weight of employers who are morefriendly toward neurodivergent persons is noticed, precisely because they are starting to see the advantages of this approach. For example, Auticon is an IT consulting company who exclusively hire people in the autism-spectrum; the company strongly believes autistic adults often have extraordinary cognitive skills, but many of them have trouble finding or holding on to a normal job.

This approach of the company had led to a significant growth both of its profit, and also of the work force, setting a major recruitment action in Great Britain as its high priority (Munn, 2019).



**Figure 4**Neurodiversity in terms of strengths

Sources: Genius Within, *What is Neurodiversity?*; CIPD, 2018

## 4.2 Ways of creating a supportive and inclusive work environment for neurodiverse employees

Having regard to the fact that any employee wants to enjoy a workplace where there is a clear communication, a quiet space where to be able to focus and an inclusive management style who consider every person's needs, we may say that the adjustments made by organizations to support neurodivergent employees turn out to be beneficial for all employees (Morgan, 2018).

When talking about neurodiversity and neurodiverse work force, it is essential that, apart from taking into consideration potential benefits they can bring, the related challenges are also considered. Thus, when talking about recruitment, hiring, training and development of neurodivergent persons we have to start from the understanding of the fact that each person is different and, as such, various accommodations to the workplace may be needed.

The literature in the field and examples of good practices of companies involved in hiring neurodivergent persons show that there are numerous ways of ensuring a supportive and inclusive work environment for them:

### a) Rethinking recruitment

If employers tend to be too rigid in homogenizing the descriptions of competency-based places of work, there is the risk of excluding neurodivergent applicants which can excel in certain fields, but who show low performance in others. This is why it is essential that, when recruiting, companies ensure descriptions as clear and concise as possible of the roles to fulfil, ensuring a clear demarcation between skills and experience the applicant should possess or would be preferable to possess, facilitating easy identification of the basic competences the job requires from the applicant (CIPD, 2018). Another problematic matter may turn out to be the fact that conventional face-to-face job interview is often a test involving "social skills" (Lindzon, 2019). Such an assessment type may be a disadvantage for neurodivergent persons, making it more difficult for them to show their skills, and in fact excluding them from the roles they could have had. An eloquent example of this situation is the fact that candidates with Asperger can have difficulties looking the interviewer in the eye, and numerous autistic persons have an unusual tone of voice or peculiar cadence as compared to the rest of the world and all these things can be misinterpreted (Morgan, 2018; Love, 2019).

A way by which the company declares itself open to accept candidates with different styles of thinking is by including a statement of diversity and inclusion in the job description, by which it declares it is open to discuss reasonable workplace adjustments (CIPD, 2018).

An example of rethinking the way of recruiting comes from the SAP Company (2017) which replaced formal job interviews with recruitment discovery workshops. Starting from the idea that using traditional methods renders the evaluation of people on the autism spectrum difficult, the company requires applicants to fill out a questionnaire in which to enter their interests and experience outside work, instead of submitting CVs and participating in standard job interviews. After examining applications, candidates meeting the job description are invited to a discovery workshop within the company, consisting in completing as many tasks as possible, all the activities being designed with the purpose of creating a comfort zone around each individual, as such that their strengths may be determined. Thus, the focus switches from general communication and socialization skills to specific attributes and competences, needed to accomplish the work. This process enables the company to sell the way in which potential candidates initiate, solve problems and communicate in the job's context. Hiring managers are not present during recruitment workshops, which allows applicants to spend a day working on a project without any pressure, but at the end of a workshop, they are handed over a profile for each candidate before meeting any of the applicants.

**b) Increasing awareness on neurodiversity**

When managers are unaware of an employee's neurological state or when neurodivergent employees are not fully aware of the ways in which these states could affect their thinking capacity in fulfilling certain tasks at the workplace, a series of problems related to their low performance can arise. A solution to prevent performance-related problems which could turn out to be effective is ensuring an awareness about this state, since the key to success is ensuring a work environment where employees are accepted and are given the opportunity to assert their strengths. Employers should be proactive, providing information about neurodiversity to both employees with neurological conditions and those without such conditions (Morgan, 2018). In that regard, managers need training sessions, as such as to get acquainted with the support sources to neurodivergent employees, helping them recognize, facilitate and show their strengths in order to achieve greater individual productivity (Orduña, 2019). Also, such training sessions, various campaigns and workshops, as well as internal communication in the company may be of help to employees as well, making them better understand what to expect from new colleagues, in terms of differentiation or need to make workplace accommodations, thus leading to finding new ways to support and better work with them (Austin and Pisano, 2017).

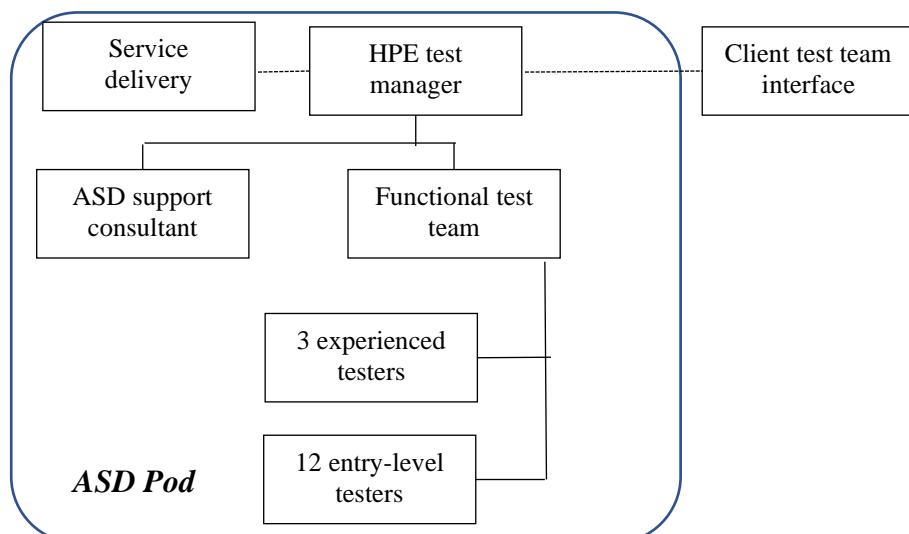
**c) Ensuring a supportive environment and workplace adjustments**

Employers are bound by law to provide reasonable adjustments in the workplace to people with disabilities; however, having regard to the fact that the key to success for any company is securing a flexible workplace to enable each employee to assert their strengths, we can say that these adjustments need to be ensured to all employees, regardless of disability or neurodiversity status (Munn, 2019). In order to make the most of the neurodivergent employees' trumps and increase their productivity, it is essential to know that they have special needs to be considered, sometimes requiring individual accommodations. Once a neurodivergent person has been hired, organizations have to think about how work duties are assigned. Clear communication is essential and it has to concentrate both on the employee's strengths, and on their neuralgic areas. For instance, it can prove to be useful for an autism spectrum person to receive instructions in a clear, concise, simple speech, to utter what is necessary and when. Also, in order to avoid

unexpected asking of challenging questions for them, which could cause them discomfort, the company may deem it beneficial to convey questions in advance (Burnett, 2019).

Having regard to the fact that not everybody works best in the same conditions, the company may learn a great deal about an employee by observing them where they would rather work. As a consequence, enhanced attention should be paid to employees' sensory preferences and sensory environments which could turn out to be adverse, such as the example of open-space offices, involving a lot of background noise, strong lighting and congestion. A potential accommodation to these conditions could be the use of office compartments and low lighting, telephones that light when there is a caller and noise cancellation headphones. Persons with ADHD may require minor adjustments to the work environment with regard to the fact that they need quiet spaces to work and flexibility in working hours. According to an autistic employee's testimony, breaks to talk to someone, which occurs quite often in an office, appear to be stressful while they are highly concentrated on a certain project; this could be solved using a series of specific equipment, such as headphones to reduce auditory overstimulation. An autistic employee managed to solve this inconvenience, creating a signaling system for their colleagues who stopped to talk, by placing a three-color sign on the outer side of his office: Red-to indicate that he is concentrating and is not to be disturbed; Yellow-to indicate that he is working, but they can stop to talk to her; Green-to indicate that he is not busy (Orduña, 2019; Love, 2019).

A series of companies is designing and using simple support systems for their new neurodivergent employees. For example, SAP defines two “support circles”, one out of which is for the employee's workplace. The support circle for the workplace includes a team manager, a team friend, a life and work skills coach, a work mentor and a “business partner in the human resources field” to oversee a group of participants in the program. Team friends are staff members of the same team who provide support for daily tasks, work volume management and prioritization of actions. Life and work skills coaches usually come from social organizationspartners. Hewlett Packard Enterprise adopts a different approach, the company having developed the Dandelion program, in which they place new neurodivergent employees into groups of approximately 15 persons each, where they work alongside neurotypical colleagues in an approximate percent, while two managers and a consultant are tasked with addressing neurodiversity-related issues (Austin and Pisano, 2017). (figure5)



**Figure 5 Structure of a ASD Pod at Hewlett Packard Enterprise**

Source: Fieldhouse, 2015.

#### **d) Customizing the opportunities for career development**

Neurodivergent employees may feel that promotions are denied to them or that they are underestimated when it comes to undertaking greater responsibilities. (Burnett, 2019) Neurodivergent employees, like the other employees, need long-term career paths and it is crucial that the organization ensures equal development opportunities to the entire staff. This requires an approach of continuous assessment and development to take account of the special circumstances of neurodivergent persons' hiring, by objectively identifying all strengths and limitations of employees. For example, neurodivergent persons in companies embracing neurodiversity are submitted to the performance evaluations as the other employees, managers working, however, within these processes to determine specific objectives and even if some objectives may refer to the special conditions of participants, dissatisfactory performances are not accepted (Austin and Pisano, 2017).

#### **4.2.1 Examples of programs developed by companies to support neurodiverse workforce**

Neuroatypical persons, like the ones with autism, dyspraxia or dyslexia, have begun showing up on the lists of employers in companies; there are now companies like SAP, Microsoft, IBM, JPMorgan Chase & Co., Hewlett Packard Enterprise and others which sponsor programs to bring the autistic talent to the workforces.

JPMorgan Chase&Co, an American multinational investment bank and financial services holding company, after analyzing the permanent need for gifted employees – especially in fields related to technology, has focused on employing autistic persons, considering them to be an untapped talent pool.

Starting from this idea, the company launched an initiative called Autism at the workplace, a program focused on hiring autism spectrum persons and it hired more than 30 persons with autistic spectrum disorders, anticipating the hiring of several hundreds of such persons over the next years.

The company aims to look beyond the traditional interview process, by numerous partnerships with organizations which are more experienced in working with persons with autistic spectrum disorders, in order to find high qualification employees. Also, it works together with senior managers in the company to identify the jobs best suited to adults with autistic spectrum disorders and to be certain that they provide an inclusive work environment for these employees, helping them to excel. In this regard, the company's analyst who deals with quality assurance declares that their major attribute is to assess situations and come up with the best possible solutions in order to help these persons be more organized and more efficient.

Studies carried out by the company show that autistic persons' performance in certain jobs exceeds their co-workers' without autism; thus, the company demonstrated that including this untapped workforce enabled it to enjoy a unique mix of talents provided by these persons oriented toward details, rules, logic and with an independent thinking (Mahoney, 2017)

In 2013, the SAP Company started the Autism at the workplace program, which focuses on hiring persons on the autism spectrum. By this program, the company succeeded to incorporate over 175 employees on the autism spectrum in its organization and its objective for the future is to hire 650 other such persons.

In order to encourage a more inclusive workplace, the company has had to carefully examine its employment and management practices and see where neurodivergent candidates and employees could face difficulties. The company is aware that hiring a person on the autism spectrum is the just the first step in the process of creating a welcoming work environment for neurodivergent employees, as managers may need to have to adjust some of their practices to have an employee on the spectrum feel more comfortable in the work environment, also

assuming that team members should pay more attention to the way in which they communicate to one another (Woo, 2019).

SAP's Autism at the workplace program recorded a 90% retention rate of the hiring in the autism spectrum, further to creating a support system around these employees, which materializes by the presence of mentors, whenever they are needed, by the possibilities of the program's members to connect and share experiences.

To conclude, we may say that there is a series of practices which can apply to all employees in general, not just the ones with neurological conditions, as such that both sides benefit from it: providing clear instructions, management assurance that the staff is not overloaded, ensuring a beneficial work environment, free from distractions, allowing employees to channel on duties where they can excel, rather than mandating the continuous carry out of duties for which they are less suitable (Morgan, 2018).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, both the neurodiversity term, and potential benefits from including it in the workplace are still at an early stage, of tapping and understanding; however, it becomes more and more clear that they should not be overlooked, and in this context, more and more companies are beginning to recognize that a neurodiverse workforce may bring a different perspective, coming with positive attributes such as creativity, lateral thinking, turning the workplace into one where persons with a series of strengths, different backgrounds and points of view contribute to their success, which could constitute a competitive advantage. However, like Munn (2019) says, the unique talents that neurodivergent persons can put to use at the workplace may be nipped by neurotypical ways of recruitment, communication and design of workplaces, aiming to identify the ways in which any weakness areas can be minimized.

This paper shows that adjustments made to enable neurodivergent persons to excel at the workplace may make a significant difference in a person's life at work, considerably increasing their potential to contribute to the company's success and build a long-lasting career.

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