

A study on the effectiveness of Vocational Training to Students with Disabilities- A case study from Kerala, India.

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ABSTRACT

Human Resource Development can only be sustainable when it is equitable, inclusive and accessible for all. Persons with disabilities need therefore to be included at all stages of development processes. It becomes more critical for India, as its demographic dividend can only be realised with rapid creation of employment and opportunities for generating income. Improving employment prospects for the disabled will be critical for their development. According to UNDP report (2012), in India, the skills and potential of most people living with disabilities remain untapped, underutilized or under developed. Vocational training is one of the potential determinants of employment among People with differently abled. They should get proper vocational training after a full assessment of training needs and suitability, carried out by a multidisciplinary team of doctors, therapists, social workers, counsellors and other professionals. Once course is selected, these children need effective special training even within the inclusive education and it is the most important requirement in the process of their rehabilitation.

Proper skill training should start from the initial vocational education itself. This paper aims to examine both the process of selection of courses and the effectiveness of skill training for differently abled students in initial vocational education of Kerala i.e., Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE). The paper emphasises the need of occupational therapy in our school system. Training area should be selected according to the nature, type and extent of disability. The teachers should get special training in this area and their support is necessary for the child during the training process. Infrastructure requirements are still needed in most of the schools. Thus it is possible to skill this human resource pool to industry needs and thus can contribute the country's economy. Conclusions and recommended actions are included in the paper.

Key words: Vocational training, disability, Kerala

1. Introduction

Employment is a vital element of independent living for disabled people. Access of persons with disabilities to a decent work is important both as an essential right and in terms of the economic advantages it brings (ILO, 2015). The report says that developing countries lose up to 7 per cent of their gross domestic product due to the exclusion of persons with disabilities from the labour market. Persons with disabilities are among the poorest in the population. If they are not getting employment, their condition will become much worse. According to World Bank Report (2011), there is evidence in key areas like employment that disabled people are falling further behind the rest of the population, risking and deepening their already significant poverty and social marginalization. Also it becomes more critical for India, as its demographic dividend can only be realised with rapid creation of employment and opportunities to them. Thus improving employment opportunities for people with disability is very significant for enhancing quality of their life and substantial gains for country's economy.

2. Vocational training to Differently abled children

High quality skill development is one of the pathways that lead to decent work for differently abled children and it makes them independent living in their future life. United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees the right of people with disabilities to mainstream vocational training,

employment and social protection. The vocational training is an essential tool for integrating the special people in society and making them productive member of community (Adeela Razzak, 2012). Mainstream vocational training is acknowledged in literature as one of the strategies to enable human capabilities development of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) (Josephine Kaserera, 2012, WHO 2011). These people need to be provided with training to develop their unique capabilities to facilitate access to work and participate in the wider society.

According to UNDP report(2012), people with disabilities require improved access to basic education, vocational training relevant to labour market needs and jobs suited to their skills, interests and abilities. Any vocational training is not suited to them rather it may create much more problems for their rehabilitation. They need skill training based on their capabilities. A disabled person can function well as anybody else provided he/she is given appropriate training, alternative techniques and assistive devices (Subhash Meena, 2015).

Proper and efficient vocational training develops capabilities of PWDs and they can compete in the labour market with other persons.

The National Skills Mission has been set up by the Government of India and aims to help the country reap the demographic dividend of becoming the youngest nation by 2020. It becomes more critical for India, as its demographic dividend can only be realised with rapid creation of employment and opportunities for generating income. So it is the responsibility of Indian society for making suitable and quality vocational education and training more accessible to people with disabilities.

3. Vocational Higher Secondary Education in Kerala

After completing compulsory education up to 15 years of general school, these children enter into the vocational education. Here their vocational career starts. At this stage, apart from textual information the students should be encouraged to be taught in a vocational stream. So the career selection is a vital one in learners' future prospects; especially for such differently abled children.

The study focuses on initial vocational education of Kerala given in formal education and training systems. The levels of education considered, correspond to higher secondary vocational education. Vocational education in the State starts after secondary school level, and is offered at school level in 11th and 12th standards. i.e., Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE). It is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on vocationalisation of education which falls under the purview of the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), Government of India. There are 42 courses covering eight major disciplines: engineering and technology, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, paramedical, home science, business & commerce and humanities. Now the curriculum is shifting and there are 33 courses in the first year.

There are 389 VHS schools imparting vocational education at higher secondary level in the state. Among them, four schools are special schools meant for deaf students and the others have integrated education for children with special needs. Govt. VHSS & THS for Deaf, Jagathy, CSI VHSS for Deaf, Thiruvalla, Kunnankulam Govt. Deaf VHSS, Kunnankulam and Govt. VHSS for Deaf, Ottapalam are the special VHS Schools in the State. Even in the special schools, the same curriculum is being followed.

4. Related reviews and Significance of the Study:

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), Disability is "...an umbrella term, covering impairments, activity limitations, and participation restrictions. Impairment is a problem in body function or structure; an activity limitation is a difficulty encountered by an individual in executing a task or action; while a participation restriction is a problem experienced by an individual in involvement in life situations". As per the U N convention of the rights of the persons with disabilities, Article 1 states "Person with Disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others". State of disability is only one or other form of sensor and-or motor and-or intellectual limitation /impairment. Therefore the concept of disability is still beyond a precise definition to be determined clinically and functionally on a case to case basis. (Kerala state policy for persons with disabilities -2014)

Eight forms of disability data was collected in the 2011 census. They are-In Seeing, In Hearing, In Speech, In Movement, Mental Retardation, Mental Illness, Any other, and Multiple Disability. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Department of Disability Affairs, GoI ,define; "**person with disability**" means a person suffering from not less than forty per cent of any disability as certified by a medical authority;

1. "**mental illness**" means any mental disorder other than mental retardation;
2. "**mental retardation**" means a condition of arrested or incomplete development of mind of a person which is specially characterized by sub normality of intelligence;

3. "**locomotor disability**" means disability of the bones, joints or muscles leading to substantial restriction of the movement of the limbs or any form of cerebral palsy;
4. "**hearing impairment**" means loss of sixty decibels or more in the better ear in the conversational range of frequencies;
5. "**speech and language impairments** as "a communication disorder such as stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance."
6. "**blindness**" refers to a condition where a person suffers from any of the following conditions, namely:- (i) total absence of sight; or (ii) visual acuity not exceeding 6/60 or 20/200 (snellen) in the better eye with correcting lenses; or (iii) limitation of the field of vision subtending an angle of 20 degree or worse;

As per UNDP(2012) report, there are an estimated 650 million people with disabilities in the world (maybe 12 percent of the global population) and 80 percent of these (520 million) are concentrated in developing countries. Government of India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) in October 2007. Article (1) of the Convention states that, 'Persons with disabilities include those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others'. The Convention requests ratifying states to set out a policy on vocational rehabilitation and employment of disabled persons in the open labour market.

Persons with Disability (PWD) act 1995 attempts to ensure equal opportunities for the people with disabilities and their full participation in nation-building. For the first time in India, a separate law was formulated which talked about the multiple needs of disabled people. This Act provides for education, employment, creation of barrier free environment, social security, etc. According to this Act, the appropriate Governments and the local authorities shall;

- Undertake or cause to be undertaken surveys, investigations and research concerning the cause of occurrence of disabilities within the limits of their economic capacity and development, with a view to preventing the occurrence of disabilities.
- Ensure that every child with a disability has access to free education in an appropriate environment till he attains the age of eighteen years.
- Endeavour to equip the special schools for children with disabilities with vocational training facilities.
- Make provision for the removal of architectural barriers from schools, colleges or other institution, imparting vocational and professional training.

The PWD act 1995, National Policy 2006, United Nations convention on rights of PWDs 2008 are the main instruments guiding the **Kerala State Disabled Policy 2014** in the direction of ensuring the rights of PWDs. It says that considering Kerala State as a wholesome unit with inbuilt local specific factors and components together, the State needs to ensure that PWDs are included in the process of building a society for all, where citizens regardless of their wide ranging origins and abilities are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities. Some of the instructions are;

- o Curriculum development in regular schools to ensure flexibility, addition and adaptation according to the needs of individual learners, regardless of the category to which they seem to belong.
- o Training for ongoing pre-service and in service teachers and other school staff.
- o Home based and special institution based education for severely disabled persons.
- o Parent empowerment programmes to encourage parent involvement in assessment and decision making concerning their children.
- o Appropriate technology development in education and training.
- o Adequate and appropriate education support services to all learners.
- o Earlier access to education for all learners, but in particular for learners with special education needs.
- o Links between education and the world of work need to be strengthened
- o Effective and relevant research
- o Measures towards 100% enrolment of all children with disabilities in inclusive/ special schools in a time bound manner.
- o Appropriate methods to assess and identify children with disabilities.

- o Transport systems to ensure that children with disabilities reach educational institutions.
- o All the existing regular schools will be suitably adapted for inclusive education.

Disabled Population

As per the world disability report 2011, about 15% of the population in the world has disability and among them 2 to 4 % is suffering from severe disabilities (Disability Census, 2014-15). In India, according to census 2011 by National Sample Survey Organisation, there are 2.681 Crore Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).

Disability Census-2011

Type of Disability	Total	Males	Females
In Seeing	50,32,463	26,38,516	23,93,947
In Hearing	50,71,007	26,77,544	23,93,463
In Speech	19,98,535	11,22,896	8,75,639
In Movement	54,36,604	33,70,374	20,66,230
Mental Retardation	15,05,624	8,70,708	6,34,916
Mental Illness	7,22,826	4,15,732	3,07,094
Any Other	49,27,011	27,27,828	21,99,183
Multiple Disability	21,16,487	11,62,604	9,53,883
Total Persons	2,68,10,557	1,49,86,202	1,18,24,355

Source: NSSO report.

Among them, there are 1.498 crores male and 1.182 crores female PwDs. About 1.34 crores persons with disabilities are in the employable age of 15 to 59 years. About 99 lakh persons with disabilities in the employable age group were non-workers or are marginal workers. The above figures show that in India a considerable number of population are having disabilities.

In Kerala the total Differently Abled Persons are declined from 8.61 lakh in 2001 to are 7.62 lakh in 2011, which comes to 2.84% of the total Disabled Persons in India.

Disability Census (Kerala) - 2011

Type of Disability	Total	Males	Females
In Seeing	115513	53167	62346
In Hearing	105366	48087	57279
In Speech	41346	22319	19027
In Movement	171630	100894	70736
Mental Retardation	65709	35614	30095
Mental Illness	66915	33819	33096
Any Other	96131	49498	46633
Multiple Disability	99233	51308	47925
Total Disabled Persons	761843	394706	367137
Total Population	33406061	16027412	17378649

Source:NSSO report.

Out of the total Disabled Persons in Kerala, 3.95 lakh (51.8%) are males and 3.67 (48.2%) are females. The State has less number of disabled persons in urban areas than in the rural areas. Their distribution in urban and rural areas was 3.47 lakh (45.5%) and 4.15lakh (54.5%) respectively. Persons having disability in movement (22.53%), in seeing (15.16%) and in hearing (13.83%) are more compared to other disability persons in the State.

2011 Census report evidence a demographic share of PWDs is 2.7% of the population in Kerala. Inadequacy of training of Census enumerators is considered to be a factor in not identifying a person with a specific disability and hence Census estimate regarding PWDs is to be relooked into (Kerala State Disability Policy, 2014).



The number of disabled students studied in the last three academic years in Kerala VHSE is given below.



Sl.No.	Academic Year	Number of disabled students
1	2011-2013	876 (3.6%)
2	2012-2014	928 (3.9%)
3	2013-2015	889 (3.7%)

Source: Data from DVHSE, Kerala.

The table shows that there are more than 3.5% of the total VHSS students in the state are disabled. These numbers include the children in the special schools also. They are considerable in numbers and their number is increasing gradually in vocational higher secondary education. The persons with disabilities deserve proper care, protection, training, employment and rehabilitation. Accurate and dependable data relating to the disabled population, type of disabilities, onset of disability, possible causes of disabilities, rural and urban population, their economics status, etc. are highly essential for proper planning, framing of policies, and developing programmes in a focused manner at National, State and Local level (Kerala State Disability Policy,2014).

Across the world these people have lesser economic participation and higher rate of poverty than people without disabilities. This is because many people with disabilities do not have equal access to health, education and employment opportunities (WHO,2011).These difficulties makes them more poorer. In order to ensure their economic participation, the persons with disabilities are to be included at all stages of development processes. It can only be realised with rapid creation of employment and opportunities to them for generating income. When persons with disabilities have access to decent work, it brings considerable economic advantages (ILO, 2015). The ILO report promotes inclusive mainstream skills and entrepreneurship development to make sure persons with disabilities are well trained when entering the world of work. According to World Bank report, better educated (those with post graduate education or vocational training) have relatively better prospects of employment when related to other disabled people. Training ensures capability development and makes PWDs (Persons with Disabilities) more eligible for productive employment which is also secure and protected. Excluding them from educational and employment opportunities has high social and economic costs. Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities gives direction to enable persons with disabilities to have effective access to general technical and vocational guidance programmes, placement services and vocational and continuing training. In their report, Adeela Razzak, Muhammad Zahid Khaki, 2015 pointed out that different vocational models/programs implemented in different countries emphasized that proper vocational training is the most important requirement in the process of rehabilitation of PWD world-wide.

The above report emphasis proper vocational training rather than any vocational training. Each disabled person is different according to their type and degree of disability. So, the area of training needed to each of them should be carefully selected. Vocational rehabilitation is getting more popular across the world and the country is still not in right track in this area. According to NCERT, Students with SEN at the secondary and senior secondary level of schooling can be properly guided for a particular vocation in accordance with their abilities, aptitudes, and interest. Adeela Razzak, Muhammad Zahid Khaki, 2015 recommends that the Vocational training model on various jobs for specific disabilities may be developed. It was found out that the model should have been proposed disability-wise. Their report suggests disability-suitable and market oriented vocational training, job related training, job placement or self employment opportunity and reasonable accommodation in work place is very much successful package in the world which has really supported to enhance the economic life of PWDs' in many places.

Mst. Reshma Parvin Nuri, Md. Tohidul Hoque, Md. Mustafa Kamal Akand, Samuel M Waldron (2012) presented a good case study in their paper titled "*Impact Assessment of a Vocational Training Programme for Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh.*" The Madhab Memorial Vocational Training Institute (MMVTI), part of the NGO Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, specialises in the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities through specifically designed vocational training and job placements. Individuals are carefully matched to courses after a full assessment of training needs and suitability, carried out by a multidisciplinary team of doctors, therapists, social workers, counsellors and other professionals, who take into consideration the trainee's physical and financial condition, education, family support, interests, mobility aids, home environment and individual needs. They reported that the institute is successful in case of

60% participants. Remaining 40% of the participants failed to find employment after the training programme, implies that there is still room for improvement. Some of the qualitative data suggests that a number of participants were sent to training courses that did not suit their needs. Their results suggest



that the carefully and scientifically selected vocational training programme improved the (re)entry of persons with disabilities into employment, which in turn aided their rehabilitation.

Providing vocational training to PWDs is a bit different and complicated than other people since their functional limitations and essential supports needed varies according to disability category and level of severity, Adeel Rezeek (2015). The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995 mandates that the central and the state government are required to develop new assistive devices, teaching aids, special teaching materials to give a child with disability equal opportunities in education. Comprehensive education schemes such as transport facilities to children with disabilities, removal of architectural barriers in educational institutions and amanuensis to students with visual impairments are promised by the Act. (Priya.R, 2014).

National Curriculum for School Education recommended inclusive education and the State is implementing it with the help of SSA (Sarva Siksha Abhiyan) in a better way. The curriculum should be accessible to all and care has to be exercised to ensure that the learners with special education need (SEN) are not segregated from the mainstream by providing special support (NCERT, 2006). According to UNICEF report (2003) for inclusive education, there are good practices of inclusive education in Kerala. But in Higher Secondary level, the implementation of inclusive education is not good as primary level. This is due to lack of an effective agency like SSA. UNDP report (2012) depict that with government of India programs like SSA, which focuses on inclusive education, the number of educated persons with disability is gradually rising. Moreover, with technological advances and assistive devices, it is possible to skill this human resource pool to industry needs.

Availability of requisite teaching/learning material for the disabled is vital for the effective participation of these children in learning process. The requirement of such materials is bound to increase with the increased coverage of disabled children. ICT implementation in vocational training of PWDs is considered as another strategy for their effective participation. While being flexible in the timetable and delivery of the curriculum, the school should also provide for the resource support needed in the form of special educators, assistive devices, and teaching-learning material (NCERT, 2006).

According to Titus Kiptoo Murgor, John Kosgei Changa'ch and Julius Kipkogei Keter (2014), the teachers lack appropriate preparation and support in teaching children with disabilities in regular schools, and this contributes to their stated unwillingness in many countries to support the inclusion of children with disabilities in their classes. Our teachers in general schools are not familiar with the complexities in the problems of disabled children and their effect on the progress of education (Jagannath Mohanthy & Susandhya Mohanty, 2011). So both pre-service and in-service training should be provided to these teachers of general schools too. Assistance of special teachers should be provided if needed.

Supporting systems should be given to such learners for effective vocational education. According to WHO Report, 2011, Governments in 41 of 114 countries did not provide funding for assistive devices in 2005. Depending on the type of disability, a child may need an assistive device (a prosthesis, for example) or service (such as a sign language interpreter) to function fully in various aspects of life (UNICEF, 2003). Kerala State Policy for persons with disabilities (2014) suggests the collaboration with the education sector in provision of assistive devices and services for inclusive education in the state.

Significance of the study

Still a lot of children in the Country do not have any access to vocational education. Only 2-3 per cent of disabled in urban and rural India have received any kind of vocational training (M. Velusamy, 2010). Kerala Disability Policy (2014) suggested that the Government shall create conducive conditions assuring that the existing vocational education initiatives in Kerala are accessible to people with disabilities, again through assuring minimum levels of participation by Children with Special Needs. The State policy suggests detailed survey needs to be conducted to collect accurate data regarding PWDs in the State of Kerala, for facilitating better policy formulation and action planning.

There are very rare studies conducted in the State about these people especially in their skill development. This may be the first study in vocational higher secondary education in the state.

Objectives of the study:

1. To study the efficacy of selection procedure for differently abled children in VHSE Kerala.
2. To analyse the effectiveness of vocational training to differently abled children in

VHSE Kerala.

Methodology

The paper is mainly based on an analytical review of the rich literature from books, journals, magazines, internet, etc. as secondary data on Vocational Higher Secondary Education. Primary data is collected through interviews, which is specifically designed with an intention of getting responses towards vocational training to disabled children in vocational higher secondary education and through direct observation. The sample is collected from the disabled children in VHSE schools, their parents, teachers and administrators of Kerala State Vocational Higher Secondary Education system.

Findings of the study

- 85% of the parents participated in this study are unaware of different other courses of VHSE and they said that they took admission in the course because the school is nearby. They are ignorant about the importance of vocational rehabilitation for their children's future. They didn't get any such information even from the medical camp they attended during the admission.
- Most of the parents reported that their children are getting a personal attention like that of a general child (not that of a special child) because there are around 25 students in a class. More than 65% of the parents and their children want to complete higher secondary course rather than a vocational training for their future prospects.
- Most of the disabled children are not getting even average level of skill development. There is a feeling among teacher that these children may pass the public examination even in vocational practical.
- Learners of these VHSS schools (other than special schools) are not getting any supporting systems or equipments. Even in the special schools, they are not sufficient.
- According to teachers and administrators, almost all disabled children cleared the VHSE examination. But they are not acquiring skill even up to the level of the children without disabilities. Teachers reported that these children are not getting any help in their vocational practical classes and vocational practical examination.
- Even in special VHS schools, the teachers are not qualified in special education. Majority of the schools are not getting even the support of the resource teachers.
- Some of the parents have the feeling that their child is not suited for the particular course they already selected, rather it would have been better to select other course in VHSE.
- 89% of the teachers reported that the curriculum lacks the required flexibility to cater to the needs of children with disabilities. There are limited developmentally appropriate teaching-learning materials for children both with and without disabilities.
- Almost all the teachers have the opinion that the implementation of a programme of inclusive education would also involve curricular modifications and the use of human (special teacher and or special training) and technological support, including the use of ICT. Even a single teacher or other staff of the department who participated in this study didn't get any special training both pre-service and in-service.
- There are problems in the On-the-Job training programme of these children where they are not getting any special assistance.

Suggestions:

- There should be proper vocational guidance to these children. They should be exposed to various pre-vocational skills early in secondary school itself and then be directed to a particular skill according to their interest and industry need.
- The selection procedure of VHSE for these children should be changed to a more scientific way. Separate medical camp for students having same disability in each district is better than the present one.
- A Four-member assessment team, comprising a doctor, a psychologist, vocational teacher and a special educator will be formed for the selection of students in VHSE.
- Adapted Curriculum should be formed. An action research in this field is very urgent.
- Vocational training model on various jobs for specific disabilities may be developed.
- ICT implementation in vocational training of PWDs is considered remarkably beneficial and the department should take necessary steps towards this.

- These children should provide learning support in their vocational practical classes and vocational practical examination.
- Make the special training a mandatory at least in special schools. The training of general teachers at pre-service and in-service levels should address the issue of education of children with disabilities, so that teachers are better equipped to work in an inclusive environment. Some of the issues in



training that need to be addressed include the methodology to be adopted for identifying children with disabilities; classroom management; use of appropriate teaching methodologies; skills for adapting the curriculum; development of teaching–learning materials that are multi-sensory in nature; evaluation of learning; etc.

- Resource rooms with appropriate and wide range of teaching and learning materials and therapy equipment should be provided in all schools. This includes therapy equipments, cause & effect toys, play & activity- based- learning materials, etc. Inclusive education will be a failure if there are not enough supporting systems in all schools.
- Frequent Parent training should be conducted and it empowers parents through sharing knowledge in a range of topics relevant to vocational rehabilitation, disability management and inclusion.
- Identify specific services, type of support and assistive devices required for the individual child and should take the necessary steps to provide them.
- Basic training of educational administrators would also be necessary in order to ensure that teachers are encouraged to use their disability specific skills
- Intermittent intervention in the learning process of each of these children by occupational therapists/ resource teachers is necessary. All schools should be in a position to get the help of resource teachers whenever needed.
- Good research should be conducted in the area of skill assessment for differently abled children.
- Ensure that enough support is getting to these children during their OJT(On- the-Job Training).

Conclusion

We must have a scientific selection system for the selection of vocational training area to differently abled children. Individuals are to be carefully matched to courses after a full assessment of training needs and suitability, carried out by a multidisciplinary team of doctors, therapists, social workers, counsellors and other professionals, who take into consideration the trainee’s physical and financial condition, education, family support, interests, mobility aids, home environment and individual needs. There must be parental awareness about the importance of vocational rehabilitation especially from primary level itself. While being flexible in the timetable and delivery of the curriculum, the school should also provide for the resource support needed in the form of in-service training to teachers, special educators, assistive devices, and teaching–learning material. More practical based training (less vocational theory and other academic subjects) and supportive mechanisms based on disability in vocational practical classes are needed. There should have proper instructions to parents, teachers and administrators that the quality skill training is necessary for such children rather than mere passing of examination.

Thus, we must empower people with disabilities by removing the barriers which are preventing them for getting a quality education and thus finding a decent career in their future. All these efforts are in the direction of fulfilling our dream of a society where the disabled will have employment, financial security, set up their own family and lead an independent life.

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