

Research Paper

Exploring the effectiveness of Vocational Rehabilitation in Persons with Intellectually Challenged in Kerala

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ABSTRACT

Vocational Rehabilitation includes medical, psychological, social and occupational activities aiming to reestablish or develop a person with any kind of challenges. Special educators play a major role in vocational rehabilitation, and works with intellectual disabilities varies from person to person and school to school. The present study examined a total of 77 special educators of children with intellectual disabilities belongs to different special school across Kerala. Ten open ended questions were used to find out the needs of the special educators working in the field of adults with intellectual disabilities. Special educators have given the present status of vocational rehabilitation. Majority of schools in Kerala run vocational transition program which consist activities that include soap making to IT Assisted jobs. These programs are mainly affected due to financial constraints. The need for having a job for person with intellectual disability is perceived in different angle, varies from reduction in the burden of parents to social justice. A conflict exists in few special educators regarding finding a job for person with intellectual disabilities. This study helps for implementation of Government Policies and services model in the area of vocational rehabilitation of persons with intellectual disabilities.

Keywords: *Intellectual disabilities, Kerala, Special Educators, Vocational rehabilitation, Vocational transition*

Human beings are endowed with numerous abilities linguistic, emotional, social, intellectual and many more. Because of the lower intellectual capacity, persons with intellectual challenges are affected almost all the above mentioned abilities. Intellectual challenge is not only a biological, educational or psychological problem but also a multi-dimensional problem of a mixture of psychological, social, biological and educational factors. The American Association of Intellectual and Developmental Disability (AAIDD) provide a tri-dimensional definition of intellectual disability, which is currently the most widely accepted. Intellectual disability, which originates before the age of 18, is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning (reasoning, learning, problem solving) and in adaptive behavior (AAIDD, 2007). Adaptive behavior covers a range of everyday social and practical skills in communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics,

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leisure, and work (AACAP,1999). This categorization sub-classifies intellectual disability according to the intensity and nature of needed supports. In addition, it emphasizes the need for detailed assessment in all relevant domains, including psychological and emotional functioning (AACAP, 1999). In recent years, the American Association on Mental Retardation (AAIDD, 2007) have adopted the new terminology and replaced the term mental retardation with intellectual disability. Mental retardation is still used in many places. “In a rough estimate, about 2% of the Indian population constitutes persons with mental retardation” (Shalini, 1982). Children with intellectual disability (ID) are more and more dependent on their family caregivers and particularly on parents. Therefore, they require more support and help for various needs as per their requirement. The needs have been defined as the basic requirement expressed by an individual for survival such as food, shelter and clothes (Bailey & Simeonsson, 1988).

Vocational rehabilitation of the intellectually challenged is a serious and unresolved issue in India. Due to various awareness and sensitization program, school enrolment rate of intellectually challenged are increased, and many children with intellectual disability were passed their secondary school public examination by the assistance of a scribe. Because of their intellectual challenges, they are not able to continue their studies and undergone no training programmes. Hence the employability of the intellectually challenged is still a question to the parents, as well as to the authorities.

Even though Kerala has a good index in literacy and student enrollment rate, the state did not able to handle or tap the human resource of intellectually disabled. As per the report of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA, 2014) the enrolment of children with special needs is very high in Kerala when compared to other states. Kerala achieved hundred percent enrolment (SSA 2014) of children with special needs but the vocational rehabilitation of the intellectually challenged was not addressed properly.

The general education system of Kerala doesn't provide a structured curriculum for the vocational transition of children with intellectual disability. In special education system, the program named IEP (Individualized Education Program) ensure the holistic development of a student, and as a part of IEP, vocational rehabilitation program is mandatory, at the same time majority of special schools do not have a fully qualified full time vocational instructor. Out of 77 schools participated in the study, only 5 schools have qualified instructors, and the rest are patching the lack of human resource by the assistance of interested / assigned special educators. And because of the shortcoming of trained human resources, vocational transition program is not taking place in many special schools participated in the study (34 percent schools 27 out of 77 have no vocational rehab program)

Inclusive education program was promoted without proper training to the parents and teachers, especially in the area of vocational rehabilitation, vocational transition and career.

In general schooling, children with special needs are got admission under inclusive program. In the inclusive system persons with intellectual challenges were getting minimal assistance from special educators. At the end of education, children were given certificate to utilize scribe and most of the schools are utilizing this facility for the improvement of the school result. Without understanding the reality, the parents are demanding government job for the untrained educated intellectually challenged in public sector. By understanding these factors

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so far, no movement either from parents or educators was happened for curriculum revision or programs for vocational transition.

Parents, teachers, and resource teachers are not undergoing any training in vocational transition. So that, only after the completion of secondary or higher secondary education, parents start to think about the vocational program. As per the documents furnished by the SSA (Right to Information collected in 2017 by researcher) SSA spends millions of rupees in the field of rehabilitation, and not spends even a single rupee for the vocational transition program or training in the area of vocational transition.

Stigma in the society about the vocational ability of a person with intellectual disability also a serious challenge to those who are planning any innovative vocational rehabilitation programs for the ID. In many countries, intellectually disabled are employed successfully in different dimensions of work, ranging from activities purely based on motor abilities to semi-skilled and even skilled open employment (Barlev, 2014)

According to the disability census (2015) conducted by Kerala Social Security Mission (KSSM, 2015), 83 percent of disabled are not employed and 9 percent of total disability population is mentally challenged. Kerala ranked on the second last position based on the number of disabled workers corresponding to the total number of disabled population in the state (KSSM, 2015).

Need and significance

Vocational rehabilitation is very much important in the process of vocationalisation. Vocational rehabilitation is the ultimate aim of all kind of rehabilitation work. In India, there is no structured curriculum for vocational rehabilitation. Many of the school are doing vocational rehabilitation as a charity work and no scientific plan for promoting pre-vocational skill and vocational transition. Special educators are the grass root level workers in the field of rehabilitation of intellectually challenged. And special educators field level experience must be explored to draw a new draft for vocational rehabilitation. This study will explore the present condition of vocational rehabilitation in the state of Kerala.

Objectives

1. To explore the present scenario of vocational rehabilitation program in the special schools.
2. To understand how much the concept of vocational transition is implemented.
3. To find out the attitude of special educators towards the Job opportunities for intellectually challenged persons.
4. To find out the kind of skills are taught in special school as part of vocational rehabilitation
5. To find out the major obstacles for providing vocational rehabilitation.

METHOD

Participants

The participants of the study consist of 77 special educators; among them 50 (65%) were female and 27 (35%) male teachers and their age ranges from 25 to 48 years. The participants were hails from various districts of Kerala. Most of the special educators participated in the study are holding a diploma in special education (90%) and very few have

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graduation in special education. Out of 77 special educators only two are professionally qualified for doing vocational rehabilitation.

Instruments

- 1. Vocational Need Assessment Form:** A survey based vocational assessment questionnaire was prepared by the investigator for measuring the activities, suggestions and recommendation of special educators with regard to vocational rehabilitation of their students and in general. The survey form consists of 10 open ended questions which can be responded by the teachers.
- 2. Personal Data Sheet:** Personal data like sex, age, education, etc were collected using Personal data Sheet.

Procedure

Respondents were approached personally in their workplace with prior appointment. After discussing the need and significance of the study, the investigators requested the participants to complete the research instruments. Instructions were printed in the instruments, even then they were instructed how to mark their response on the instruments. Investigators also communicated to them that the responses furnished by them will be used only for research purposes. Participants took around 20-35 minutes to complete the instruments. After completion the instruments were collected back and checked for omission and incompleteness. Then the responses were coded and the descriptive items were analyzed by the method of content analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Vocational rehabilitation of intellectually challenged is highly challenging, because the skill, ability, interest, personality characteristics and the intellectual capacities of intellectually challenged individuals varies from one individual to another. Special educators are the primary professionals in vocational rehabilitation. Here the investigators collected basic information about the vocational rehabilitation process undergoing in each school, participated in this study. The questions asked were; what are the kind of rehabilitation work undergoing in each institution, what are the obstacles for a structured vocational rehabilitation training and the extended of vocational transition of intellectually challenged and this was enquired from 77 special educators. And each item (questions) in the survey was analyzed separately.

In this survey, the first question was about '*the number of students undergoing in the vocational rehabilitation units of schools*'. Almost all school have vocational rehabilitation unit and the number of students varies from five students to 78 students. Out of 77 schools surveyed, a total of 2134 individuals were undergoing vocational rehabilitation, ie on an average 28 students were undergoing training in vocational rehabilitation. Out of 77 special educators, 23 percent of teachers complained that parents are not expecting acquisition of any skill in their children during schooling and unfortunately they have no specific plan about their ward.

Investigators have asked '*whether the schools started any vocational transition program for children who are eligible for vocational transition*'. Out of 77 participants, 26 (34%) reported that at present they have no vocational transition plan in their schools. But 50 (65%) participants told that their schools having vocational transition plan and only one

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school not yet started any vocational transition plan and presently the school does not have vocational rehabilitation programs.

The investigators were also collected the details of vocational transition program from participants schools, and got a variety of areas which includes conventional vocational rehabilitation programs as well as modern programs. Already 34% of person were not started vocational transition program and out of the remaining 50 (66%) 8 schools (16%) were undergoing tailoring as their transition program, 10 schools (20%) were doing production of soap, 8 schools (16%) were exposed to different type of handicraft production, 7 schools (14%) were producing phenyl in their vocational rehabilitation unit. The interesting observation was only 4 schools (8%) of schools exposed in candle making (it was the most important vocational rehab activity for many decades), 6 schools (12%) were exposed in agriculture related activities, and 5 schools (10%) were giving training on general awareness for having a job, that include office attended to supplier, cleaner and helper work also. And 1 school (2%) each are exposed in LED bulb making and IT assisted work.

Table 1. List of jobs selected in various school and its percentage

Type of Job	Frequency	Percentage
Tailoring	8	16
Soap making	10	20
Handicraft	8	16
Phenyl making	7	14
Agriculture	6	12
Candle making	4	8
General awareness	5	10
IT	1	2
LED Bulb making	1	2

**Only 50 (66%) schools have vocational transition program*

In a detailed analysis, it is found that only two percentage to three percentage are engaged in works that are fit to the modern era. Now a day's Concept of market is different, but still our system following the traditional rehab work. Most interestingly candle making is comparatively less (8%) but soap making and phenyl are in a remarkable number, which was the major rehab work for decades. As reported by the special educators they are not able to market their product properly. Another interesting finding is vocational transition for a client is not decided on the basis of interest or aptitude of the person but based on the orientation of the special educator or the facilities in the school.

Fourth question was why they are not yet started a vocational transition program? Investigator got three kinds of answer i.e. financial, administrative issues and lack of human resource. 67 percent replied that due to financial problems school not started the vocational transition program, 18 percentage complained that they are not able to find human resources and 15 percentage complained about administrative issues are the reason for not starting a vocational rehabilitation program. Many persons with intellectual disability are going to the school still death. But 34 percentage of schools participated in study has no scheme for Vocational Transition. It is the lack of orientation, ie what is the aim of the schooling for an intellectually challenged? if we have a clear answer for this question we can overcome the financial issues, it's only a matter of prioritization, because many of the schools are getting

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grand for running the school, second thing the lack of physical space and administrative issues also should be managed at school level, because vocational rehabilitation is the final aim of education for intellectually challenged (Benz & Lindstrom, 1999).

Table 2. Reason for not yet having a vocational Rehabilitation unit

Financial issues	Administrative issue	Lack of Human resources
17 (67%)	5 (18%)	4 (15%)

Another issue raised as a reason for not starting the vocational transition is the lack of human resource, in the area of vocational rehabilitation. This matter must be considered very seriously, a state having around hundred percentage literacy with a huge population with intellectual challenge has only one institute, that producing human resource on vocational rehabilitation. Now the work of a vocational instructor is managed by special educators. In addition to this shocking facts the investigator collected some crucial information from Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) up to this time SSA spend more than 39 million rupees in the area of rehabilitation but even a single rupee is not spend in the area of vocational transition. It's a high time for a paradigm shift in the philosophy that we follow in vocational rehabilitation.

Whether intellectually challenged persons need a job or not? 100 % of the participants replied that persons with intellectual challenges need job. when the investigator ask why they need a job? Investigator got 10 different answer, it varies from reduction in the burden of parents to social justice.

Table 3. Answer to the questions of why intellectually challenged need a job ?

why intellectually challenged need a job	Frequency	Percentage
Future of the person	10	13.4
Social justice	10	13.4
Self esteem	6	8.4
Reduce the burden of parents	26	36
Relief to the parents	5	7.2
They become self sufficient	6	8.6
self development	3	3.5
learn the value of money	2	2.5
learn other things	2	2.5
Person with intellectually challenged can't continue in schooling after age of 18.	3	4.5

Sixth question was *why persons with intellectual disabilities need a job?* Four Participants not give answer for the question, It is around 5.2 percentage of total population. 10 special educators (13.4%) replied that it is very essential for the future of a person with intellectual disability. 6 special educators replied (8.4%) that vocational rehab will develop self esteem of persons with intellectual disabilities, at the same time 26 participants (36%) replied that vocational rehab will reduce the burden of parents of children with intellectual disability. 5(7.2%) replied that it's a relief for the parents, 3(3.5%) replied that person with intellectual challenge will become self sufficient in all matters. 2 person each replied that vocational rehab help for self development, to learn the value of money, learn other things too, they can't continue in schooling after age of 18. Another most prominent replay is

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social justice around 10 special educators (13.4%) think that job for intellectually challenged is a matter of social justice.

Career is a tool for self actualization of a person (Rapley, 2010) whether they are able or disable, every person wish to express his abilities in front of others even though the answer of respondents are different for the reason for job, hundred percent of participant are agreed that person with intellectual challenge are needed a job.

When the investigator asked to explain *the process of vocational rehabilitation*, 9 percentage of special educators have no answer for this question. At the same time 56 percentage of special educators are replied that they will do a detailed assessment first. 20 percentage replied that they will conduct an observation, and from that observation they will decide what is the most suitable job for their clients. 9 percent replied that they will plan first, then execute their plan according to the situation. 6 percentage of special educators replied that they will expose the clients in the real work place and they will be supervised and trained as on the job training.

Table 4. Process of vocational rehabilitation:

Process of vocational rehabilitation	Frequency	Percentage
Detailed assessment	39	56%
Observation	14	20%
Planning and execution	8	9%
Expose in real work place	7	6%
No idea	9	9%

Out of 77 participants, Only 2 special educators are completed courses on vocational Rehabilitation, (that is only just 3 percentage of total respondent) at the same time 56 percent of special educators has a clear vision about the process of vocational rehabilitation.

what respondents will do, for assisting an intellectually challenged person to find a job?

In the next question the investigator asked the special educators that what can they do to help a person to join in a job? 26 percentage of participant replied that they will motivate the client for joining in a job and also they motivate various entrepreneurs to give a job. 21percentage of special educators replied that they will help the client up to the joining in a work place. 8 percent replied that they will again do an assessment, whether the client is fit for job in a real work place and do liaison work with job providers. 27 percentage replied that they will work as scaffold up to finding a job.8 percentage of respondents replied that they have to give real job training in a training atmosphere. 4 percentage replied that it is a matter of social awareness and they will work for creating social awareness that intellectually challenged person can also work, in their own level. When awareness is created there is no risk to find a job for intellectually challenged. And finally, 14 percentage of special educators says that they have no idea from where to start work for a real life job placement.

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Table 5. Answer for the Question what the respondents do, for assisting a intellectually challenged person to find a job?

Action for finding a job	Frequency	Percentage
Motivate	20	26
Help	17	21
Scaffold	20	27
Find and help in the real work place	6	8
It's a matter of social justice	3	4
No idea	11	14
Total		100 %

CONCLUSION

It is high time for a Paradigm shift, in our vision and mission for vocational rehabilitation. Scientific assessment on vocational area should be conducted soon after the end of primary school or when an individual reach at the age of 13 to 15.

There is a need of a “move for inclusive job environment” inclusive schooling and universal enrolment are attained in our country, but there is no systematic and scientific plan for vocational transition and vocational rehabilitation, so that the state is wasting so many human resources without assisting their real talent.

To make a rapid shift, policy change also needed, compare to the earlier time now a day's many issues of intellectually challenged are is sensitized, intellectually challenged adults are now availing a nominal pension but they need job and consideration. To get a job, that promote the self of person with intellectual challenge our training program and policies should change.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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