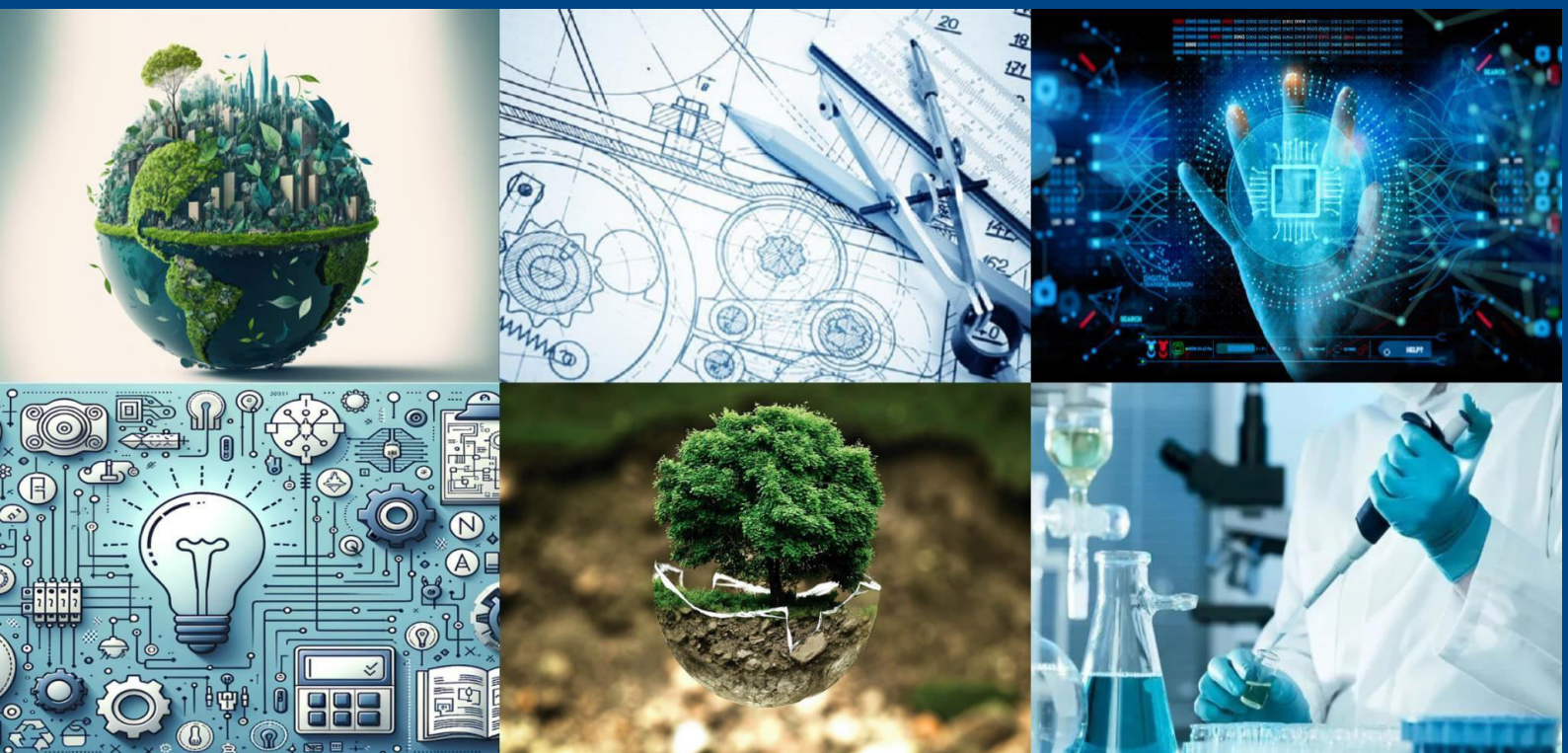




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Evaluating the Impact of Structured Vocational Training Programs on Skill Development among Intellectually Disabled Young Adults in Kollam District, Kerala

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ABSTRACT: The objective of this study is to evaluate the extent to which structured vocational training programs in the Kollam region of Kerala have assisted young people with intellectual impairments in acquiring new skills. On the other hand, human resource development that is fair, inclusive, and accessible is essential to the achievement of sustainable development, especially for persons who have impairments. It is essential, given the context of India's demographic dividend, to increase the number of employment possibilities available to individuals with disabilities. The purpose of this study is to investigate the Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE) system in Kerala. More specifically, it investigates the processes that are followed when selecting vocational courses and the effectiveness of skill training programs that are established for students who have intellectual impairments. It places a strong emphasis on the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach, which includes educators, social workers, doctors, and therapists, in order to guarantee that the training is effective and appropriate. The role of occupational therapy, the need of support from instructors, and the criteria for efficient skill development is all brought to light in this article. By aligning vocational training with the requirements of companies, programs such as this one have the potential to improve employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual impairments as well as the economy as a whole. Additionally included are recommendations for improving not just the exercise itself but also the outcomes of the activity.

KEYWORDS: Vocational Training, Skill, Intellectually Disable , Kerala

I. INTRODUCTION

A goal for children with disabilities is to eventually become independent and to get respectable job. One way to assist these children in achieving this goal is by providing them with opportunities to acquire skills of a high quality. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees that individuals with disabilities have the right to receive social safeguards, vocational training, and job opportunities. When it comes to assisting people with special needs in becoming participating members of society, vocational training is an essential resource. According to the findings of study, mainstream vocational training is one method that may assist individuals with disabilities (PWDs) in developing their human skills more effectively. It is of the utmost importance to offer these folks with training so that they may improve their overall abilities and get access to work opportunities and society in general.

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), individuals who have disabilities need improved access to basic education, vocational training that is relevant to the demands of the labor market, and employment that is a good match for their interests, talents, and skills. The vocational training they get would not be beneficial to them and may perhaps make the process of their rehabilitation more difficult. They need instruction that is based on their capabilities. It is possible for persons with disabilities to do the same amount of work as everyone else so long as they have access to resources that are easily accessible, such as information, tools, and procedures. After getting comprehensive vocational training that enhances their capabilities, individuals with disabilities are able to compete successfully in the employment market. Through the implementation of the National Skills Mission, the government of India aimed to maximize the benefits of its demographic dividend, which is to become the youngest country in the world by the year 2020. As a result of the fact that India's demographic dividend will not be realized until the not too distant future, there



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is an increasing need for the development of jobs and the production of income opportunities very quickly. As a result, India need to make it a societal responsibility to provide vocational education and training that is not only easily available but also of very high quality.

Vocational Higher Secondary Education in Kerala

Following completion of the mandated general education curriculum, which normally lasts for fifteen years, students engage in vocational programs to further their formal education. At this point in their chosen career, they have taken the first step. Students should be instructed in a vocational stream in addition to being taught textual information, since this is the recommendation that is now in place. The decision of which career route to pursue is very important for the future chances of kids, especially for children who have impairments. This study focuses on the formal education and training systems in Kerala, specifically the first vocational education that is provided to students. An occupational training program at the secondary level is comparable to each and every one of the educational levels that are taken into consideration. An educational program called as Vocational Higher Secondary Education (VHSE) is available to students in the state who are in the eleventh and twelfth grades. This program gives pupils the chance to pursue vocational education. This Centrally Sponsored Scheme for the vocationalization of education is managed by the Ministry of Human Resources and Development (MHRD), which is part of the Indian government.

The 42 classes include a wide range of topics, the most important of which are farming, animal husbandry, fishing, home science, engineering and technology, business and commerce, and the arts and humanities. As a result of recent modifications to the course of study, the first year will consist of a total of 33 courses. There are 389 vocational high schools in the state that provide post-secondary vocational training available to students. Four of the remaining schools are specifically designed to meet the educational requirements of deaf children, while the remaining schools provide integrated education to children who have special needs. This includes Jagathy, CSI VHSS for the Deaf, Thiruvalla, and Kunnankulam, all of which are included in the vocational health services that the government provides for those who are hearing impaired. The state is home to two specialized vocational high schools: one is located in Kunnankulam and caters to the deaf, while the other is located in Ottapalam and serves the hearing handicapped. As with the regular schools, the special schools follow the same curriculum.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate the effectiveness of VHSE Kerala's selecting process for children with disabilities.
2. To evaluate the success of vocational education for children with disabilities at VHSE Kerala.

II. METHODOLOGY

The core body of the study is a critical examination of secondary data on Vocational Higher Secondary Education. This data was gathered from a wide variety of sources, such as books, journals, magazines, the internet, and so on. It was with the specific intention of eliciting perspectives on the subject of vocational higher secondary education for children with disabilities that the interviews and observations that were utilized to create the core data set were designed. Participants in the research include students with disabilities who are engaged in vocational high school education programs, as well as parents, guardians, instructors, and administrators from the Kerala State Vocational Higher Secondary Education system.

Disabled Population

It was projected by the World Disability Report 2023 in 20 that fifteen percent of the world's population was impaired, with two percent to four percent of those disabled having severe impairments (Disability Census, 2023-2024). Based on the results of the census conducted by the National Sample Survey Organisation in 2011, it was determined that there are 2.681,000 persons in India who are disabled.



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Table1. Disability Census-2016

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

Table2. Disability Census (Kerala) – 2016

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

The handicapped population in Kerala is comprised of 3.95 lakh males, which accounts for 51.8% of the total, and 3.67 lakh females, which accounts for 48.2% of the total. When compared to urban areas, the number of persons who are disabled is much lower in rural areas of the state. The distribution of these individuals in urban areas was 3.47 lakh, which is 45.5%, while in rural areas, it was 4.15 lakh, which is 54.5, percent. On the other hand, there is a disproportionate number of persons who have difficulty moving (22.53%), seeing (15.16%), and hearing (13.83%) among the impaired population in the state. According to the Census completed in 2011, individuals with disabilities constitute 2.7% of the total population in Kerala. Due to the fact that it is thought that inadequate training of census enumerators is a contributing factor to the underreporting of this demographic, the estimate for individuals with disabilities in the census has to be reevaluated.

The information shown here pertains to the number of students with disabilities that attended Kerala VHSE throughout the course of the previous three academic years.



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Table3. Number of students with disabilities that attended Kerala VHSE

Sl. No.	Academic Year	Number of disabled students
1	2016-2018	876 (3.6%)
2	2019-2021	928 (3.9%)
3	2022-2024	889 (3.7%)

The statistic shows that over 3.5 percent of state VHSS students have disabilities. These numbers include special school kids. They are a large group and are growing in vocational upper secondary education. Help with care, protection, education, employment, and rehabilitation is a right for disabled persons. Reliable and accurate data on the disabled population, disability types, onset, potential causes, rural vs. urban population, economic status, etc., is essential for planning, policymaking, and program development at the national, state, and local levels.

People with impairments are more likely to be poor and less economically active. Because many handicapped people encounter prejudice in healthcare, education, and jobs. They get poorer due to these obstacles. People with disabilities must be included in all development initiatives to ensure their economic participation. It can only succeed if they have immediate work and income opportunities. Good occupations for disabled individuals are financially beneficial. To prepare disabled persons for the workforce, the ILO report recommends inclusive mainstream skill development and entrepreneurial assistance. A World Bank research found that disabled people with bachelor's degrees had higher work chances. PWDs gain skills and improve their chances of obtaining steady, satisfying job via training. Exclusion from career and educational opportunities has serious social and economic effects. Article 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities guarantees disabled people effective access to placement services, vocational and continuous training, general technical and vocational guidance programs, and more. According to Adeela Razzak and Muhammad Zahid Khaki (2019), vocational models and programs worldwide suggest that vocational training is the most important part of PWD rehabilitation.

The research focuses on right vocational training, not merely vocational training. Uniqueness depends on disability kind and severity. Thus, choosing the correct training facility for everyone is crucial. Although vocational rehabilitation is becoming more popular worldwide, the country still lags behind. National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) claims that secondary and senior secondary school children with special needs may be guided towards a vocation based on their interests, aptitudes, and abilities. It was eventually revealed that the model should have considered limitations. Their findings show that disability-appropriate and market-oriented vocational training, job-related training, job placement or self-employment opportunities, and reasonable workplace accommodations have greatly improved the economic lives of people with disabilities worldwide.

In 2016 "Impact Assessment of a Vocational Training Programme for Persons with Disabilities in Bangladesh," Mst. Reshma Parvin Nuri, Md. Tohidul Hoque, Md. Mustafa Kamal Akand, and Samuel M. Waldron provided a good case study. The Madhab Memorial Vocational Training Institute (MMVTI), linked with the non-governmental Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralyzed, offers vocational training and jobs to disabled people. Before carefully matching each person to courses that best meet their training needs, a multidisciplinary team of doctors, therapists, social workers, counselors, and others evaluates their physical and financial condition, level of education, family support, interests, mobility aids, home environment, and individual needs. They say the institution is successful if 60% of people participate. 40% of training participants were unemployed thereafter, suggesting things may improve. According to qualitative evidence, some people may have been enrolled in unsuitable training programs. They discovered that vocational training helped disabled persons (re)enter the workforce and recover.

PWDs have different functional constraints and crucial support needs depending on disability type and severity, making vocational training more complex and distinctive. The Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of



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Rights, and Full Participation) Act, 1995 requires the federal and state governments to develop new assistive devices, teaching aids, and special educational materials for disabled children. The State is using SSA to administer the National Curriculum for School Education's comprehensive education initiatives. These initiatives eliminate architectural obstacles in schools, offer accessible transportation for disabled children, and provide amanuensis to visually impaired pupils. All students should have easy access to the curriculum, and special education children should get additional help. Kerala has inclusive education methods, according to a 2019 UNICEF research. Secondary schools execute inclusive education policies poorly compared to primary schools. Because there is no robust agency like SSA. Due to inclusive education programs like India's Social Security Administration (SSA), more handicapped persons are earning degrees, according to a 2012 UNDP research. This pool of workers may be trained to match industrial needs using innovative technology and assistive equipment.

Impaired youngsters need instruction and learning resources to actively learn. These resources will be needed as the number of disabled children rises. ICT is another way to involve PWDs in vocational training. Schedule and curriculum delivery should be flexible, and special educators, assistive technology, and instructional materials should be available. Teachers in certain nations reluctance to include children with disabilities stems from inadequate training and assistance in mainstream schools. Our mainstream school teachers cannot manage the complex challenges confronted by pupils with disabilities and their influence on educational development. Pre-service and in-service training should be available to general education teachers. Special education teachers should be accessible to pupils. Students need help for vocational education to succeed. In 2020, 41 of 114 governments underfunded assistive technology. Unless they have a prosthesis or sign language interpreter, a kid may be unable to fully engage in many aspects of life. The 2016 Kerala State Policy for Persons with Disabilities recommends state-education collaboration to offer assistive equipment and services for inclusive education.

III. RESULT

It was reported by eighty-five percent of the parents who took part in the study that the primary reason they enrolled their children in this specific VHSE class was because the school was located in close proximity to their residence. They have no concept how important it is for their children to get vocational rehabilitation in order to ensure their future. It was not even at the medical camp that they went to once they were admitted that they were given any information of this kind. Rather than getting the specialized care that is intended for extraordinarily brilliant students, the majority of parents have seen that their children are receiving the same degree of individual attention as any other child. This is because the class sizes are very small, with around 25 children in each class. Rather than enrolling in a vocational training program, more than sixty-five percent of parents and their children choose to complete a higher secondary course in order to boost their prospects of success in the future. Even the most fundamental level of education is not being provided to a significant section of the juvenile population that is disabled.

The educators for these pupils have strong expectations that they would do well in the public examination, particularly in the vocational practical application. The students who are enrolled in these VHSS schools, with the exception of those who attend special schools, do not get any additional resources. Even in the field of special education, they are not sufficient. According to teachers and administrators at the school, almost all of the students who had disabilities were successful in passing the VHSE exam. Their pace of learning, on the other hand, is much slower than that of children who are growing normally. As far as the instructors are concerned, these students are not getting any kind of aid with their occupational practical sessions or the exam that goes along with them. Similar to the students, the teachers who teach special education classes at the VHS level lack the necessary qualifications. Not even the resource teachers are assisting the majority of the schools in their efforts. Considering that their child is not a suitable match for the VHSE course that they have selected, there are some parents who consider that their child would have been better served by selecting a different VHSE course all together.

The majority of teachers (89%) believe that there is not enough flexibility in the curriculum to accommodate pupils who have educational requirements that are not often met. It is difficult to find instructional materials that are suitable for children of all ages and stages, regardless of whether or not they have special needs. The majority of educators are of the opinion that in order to successfully integrate inclusive education into the curriculum that is now in place, it would be necessary to implement both human (in the form of specialist instructors and/or training) and technological (in the form of information and communication technology) help. There was not a single member of the department's staff, not even a single educator, who got any extra training for this study while they were there or before they started



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working there. Due to the fact that these children are not getting individualized care, problems have emerged in the On-the-Job training programs that they are participating in.

Significance of the study

There are still a lot of children in our nation who are unable to afford to get vocational training. There is a tiny fraction of the population in India, divided between rural and urban areas, that is comprised of disabled persons who have never received any kind of vocational training. Once again, the Kerala Disability Policy (2019) encouraged the government to ensure that the state's existing vocational education programs are accessible to those with disabilities. This was done by assuring that children with special needs would participate in the program to a minimum degree. In order to improve the process of formulating policies and planning actions, the State policy suggests that a thorough survey of individuals with disabilities in the state of Kerala be carried out. Within the state, research on these persons is quite unusual, especially in terms of how it relates to the advancement of their capabilities. It is conceivable that this study is the first assessment of vocational secondary education that has been conducted in the state..

IV. CONCLUSION

The implementation of a methodical selection process is necessary in order to provide assistance to children with disabilities in selecting a suitable sector of vocational training. Before carefully matching individuals to courses that are the most suitable for their training requirements, a multidisciplinary team consisting of medical doctors, therapists, social workers, counselors, and others will carefully evaluate each individual's physical and financial condition, level of education, family support, interests, mobility aids, home environment, and individual needs. At the primary school level, in particular, it is important to bring to the attention of parents the relevance of vocational rehabilitation activities. In addition to being flexible with regard to scheduling and the delivery of material, schools should provide students with disabilities with the tools they need. These resources include in-service training for teachers, assistive technology, and lesson plans. Vocational practical courses need to place a greater emphasis on practical experience and less on theoretical concepts and academic subjects, and they ought to include support systems that are tailored to the needs of individuals with disabilities. It is important that parents, teachers, and school administrators be aware that these children need more than simply exam preparation; they require skill training of the highest possible quality. As a consequence of this, it is imperative that we assist people with disabilities in gaining agency by removing the barriers that prevent them from gaining access to a quality education and, therefore, a job that is satisfying to them. We have high hopes that one day, regardless of whether or not a person has a handicap, they will all be able to find employment and provide for themselves financially, allowing them to have a family and live freely.

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