

VOCATIONAL TRAINING OF THE DISABLED IN HONGKONG

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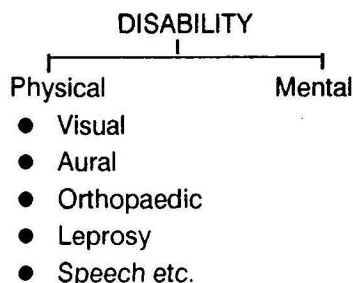
Introduction :

The job of rehabilitation of the handicapped in India is a stupendous task like other problems of the nation. While the employment of the able-bodied and educated is of vital importance it is equally important to provide equal opportunity for training and employment of the disabled.

The national policy on Education 1986 lays special emphasis on the removal of disparities and the need to integrate the physically and mentally handicapped with the general community as equal partners.

According to the National Sample survey of India there are about 13.6 million disabled in India and less than 3% of them are provided with rehabilitatory services like providing them with rehabilitation aids, training and employment. There are about 1,500 voluntary non-government organisations (NGOs) providing such services in the country. Out of these there are about 500 institutions catering to the educational training of the handicapped children. However, the vocational training centres are much less in number.

The disability of an individual can be broadly classified as follows :



Although the handicapped suffer from one or more kinds of the above disabilities and the concomitant handicap, they still possess a high degree of potential ability which should be developed and harnessed for the benefit of both the individual and the society of which he forms a part.

The harnessing of the residual abilities of the disabled forms the major part of rehabilitation. Rehabilitation of the handicapped is a multifaceted programme.

The facets of rehabilitation are as follows :-

1. Medical
2. Social
3. Special Education
4. Vocational

Medical Rehabilitation is concerned

with medical treatment of the disability and providing the necessary rehab-aids to overcome partially or fully the physical or mental disabilities.

Social Rehabilitation deals with reinstatement of the disabled individual in the society to enable him to be accepted as a responsible citizen and to lead a normal social life.

Special Education deals with the problems of educating various types of handicapped individuals and the development of special teaching methods and communication skills and to train the teachers in these skills to teach the handicapped.

Vocational Rehabilitation is a part of a continuous coordinated process involving the provision of vocational guidance, vocational training and selective placement.

Selective placement not only helps in assisting the disabled to take up employment to make the best possible use of their residual abilities, skills, qualifications and experience, but is also an effective vehicle for integrating the disabled into the community by providing meaningful participation, financial independence and for assisting them to lead a life of dignity and self-respect.

This paper deals only with vocational rehabilitation and makes an attempt to explain how technical training and selective placement programmes are implemented in Hongkong.

A visit to some of the vocational training centres for the disabled in Hongkong was undertaken in January 1990 by the author to study how the disabled are trained and rehabilitated in Hongkong. What follows is a brief summary of the report on that visit.

Hongkong, a bustling metropolis with

a high standard of living has not lagged behind in providing equal opportunities for training of the disabled and integrating them into the main stream of its social life.

There are 5 vocational skills centres for the disabled in Hongkong with a population of the disabled estimated to be around 1,00,000.

They are :

1. Kwun Tong Skills Centre for the disabled.
2. Aberdeen Skills Centre for the disabled.
3. Pinehill Village Advanced Training Centre.
4. Caritas Lok MO Vocational Training Centre.
5. Salvation Army Lai King Home Vocational Training Centre.

A visit to one of these centres is briefly described below :

Kwun tong skills centre for the disabled :

The main aim of this Centre is to provide vocational training for the disabled person over the age of 15. There are 18 well equipped training workshops offering a variety of full time and part time training courses. Training is imparted both by way of practical and theoretical instruction.

The Courses offered are :

1. Garment making/Sewing
2. Machine Knitting
3. Industrial Arts/Handicraft
4. Packing and Assembly
5. General Printing
6. Carpentry
7. Bench fitting and machining

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8. Sheet metal fabrication
 9. Electrical installation
 10. Electrical appliances servicing
 11. Electronics Servicing
 12. Office machine practice
 13. Office studies
 14. Office practical studies
 15. Copy type-writing
 16. Basic technical studies.

The Centre adopts what is known as 'Modules of Employables Skills' (MES) in training the disabled. In essence, the job profile in an industry or commercial establishment is ascertained. It is then broken down into essential learning elements. A sequential grouping of these elements forms a modular unit. The course consists of training in a certain number of modules to meet the specific requirements of the disabled person.

Modes of attendance :

Both Full Time (FT) and part-time (PT) training programmes are available for both mentally and physically handicapped persons.

Admission criteria :

The majority of the courses offered are at the semi-skilled and pre-craft level. The academic requirements vary from 4th standard to 8th standard education. For higher level courses such as office machine practice, office studies etc., the entry requirements are higher.

Apart from academic attainments, minimum requirements in manual dexterity, other specific requirements such as good hearing and vision and also the vocational aptitude of the applicants are taken into ac-

count for admission.

Procedure :

1. The disabled person makes an application for vocational training.
2. After verifying his documents and a general assessment, the applicant undergoes a preliminary vocational assessment.

This vocational assessment aims at identifying a disabled person's vocational strength and potential. Its objectives are :

- a. To test and assess a disabled person's physical, psychological and vocational capabilities, interests and limitations to work,
- b. To guide and assist a disabled person to formulate a realistic goal and the means of achieving this goal, and
- c. To assess the individual's need for special aids or adaptation.

The assessment is multi-disciplinary and is conducted by a team of professionals covering the fields of rehabilitation, medicine, social work, industrial psychology and work evaluation.

The candidate is then put on the MES (Module of Employable Skills) best suited to him for the duration which depends on the module. These modules are developed by the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

Under the MES system the skills required for a job are broken down into task units. Each unit is further divided into learning elements. The completion of all the units in a module means that the trainee has successfully mastered the skills required for a job in industry or commerce.

During the training the candidate is periodically assessed for his progress. At the

end of the training period he is finally assessed for acquisition of the relevant skills.

If at the end of training it is felt that the candidate needs some special training to suit his particular needs or that he requires some special facilities for training, he is sent to the Technical Aids and Resource Centre (TARC) for training of a short duration.

Technical Aids and Resources Centre (TARC) :

The main objectives of this centre are

1. To design and produce special technical aids and learning materials,
2. To adapt practical facilities in training or production workshops to meet the particular needs of the individuals,
3. To advise on the development of technical aids and machine adaptations,
4. To provide resource help to disabled students or trainees in schools, technical institutions and vocational training centres
5. To act as a venue for information exchange in the fields of vocational rehabilitation, and
6. To function as a job development laboratory.

TARC has a machine workshop where research is conducted and technical and special aids are made. It also possesses a studio where training programmes can be produced in audio/video media.

Commercially available technical aids and devices, reference books and documents are kept on display in TARC and some of these items may be loaned to interested parties.

The Centre also provides the following services to its students -

1. Counselling in training and work adjustment,
2. Case-work service,
3. Job placement,
4. Medical/para-medical service, and
5. Transportation service (for trainees having problems with public transport).

Placement of trainees :

There is a Special Placement Division (SPD) for the Disabled in the Labour Department of the Government of Hong Kong.

I. Introduction

This was established in 1980 with the responsibility for placing the blind, deaf and physically handicapped in open employment. Subsequently its services have been extended to the mentally handicapped also.

II. Organisational Set-up :

The Division is headed by a senior labour officer and has 3 branch offices. Each branch is manned by labour officers and assistant labour officers.

III. Source of Clients :

Apart from direct applications from disabled persons, the clients are referred from the following sources :

1. Family Service Centre of the Social Welfare Department,
2. Medical Social Service at hospitals and clinics,
3. Sheltered workshops,
4. Voluntary agencies,
5. Legal Aid Department.

IV. Assessment, Job Matching and Promotion Work :

Employment service for the disabled is very much client oriented. Placement offices spend a vast amount of time on each and every client in getting to know them, assessing their residual working abilities and work aptitudes, matching them with suitable vacancies, counselling them on performance at job interviews, accompanying them to selection interviews and following up the progress of their performance/adjustment at the workplace after placement.

Assessment :

The residual ability of the disabled is assessed in various ways by more than 12 systems. However, the three important systems being followed by the Department are :

1. MES
2. VITAS
3. VALPAR

The VALPAR system of Valpar International Corporation, P.O. Box 5767, Tucson, Arizona 85703-5767 is the latest system used in assessment.

The assessment is done with the help of one or more of the following agencies :-

1. Multi-disciplinary Vocational Assessment Centre (MDVAC)
A placement officer regular provides vocational counselling at the centres as well as participates in case-conferences to evaluate a disabled person's performance in assessment sessions.
2. Vocational training for Disabled Section of the Technical Educational and Industrial Training Department. Liaison is maintained with this section for training of the disabled and for participating in

selection of the disabled applicants for admission to ordinary technical institutes.

Vacancies :

The work of SPD in securing vacancies is carried out by one or more of the following ways :-

1. Press release
2. Advertising on the television and/or radio
3. Regular promotional visits to prospective employers to introduce SPD's services and to solicit vacancies.
4. Regular circular letters to employers' associations.

Promotion work :

In order to procure vacancies for the disabled, the following steps are taken by the SPD :

1. Publication of pamphlets, leaflets and posters on how to employ and work with disabled persons like mentally retarded, ex- mentally ill, the visually disabled, the physically disabled and the deaf.
2. Production of video series aiming at making the public aware of the working abilities of the disabled.
3. Annual presentation of souvenirs and certificates of appreciation to outstanding employers of disabled persons.
4. Exhibitions to publicize the working abilities of the disabled persons.
5. Presentation of awards to outstanding disabled employees.

Employaid fund :

This fund has been set up with the aim of promoting the employment of the disabled

by providing financial assistance to employers in the adaption to work premises and the purchase of equipment and aids for their disabled employees.

The fund is administered by the Hong-Kong Society for Rehabilitation. It is managed by representatives from the Government Department, the commercial sector and the social welfare sector.

As an example of the employaid, Ms Wong, a blind lady, works as a telephone operator in a large departmental store of HongKong with the help of blind operator-aid purchase and loaned from the employaid fund. Another example is Mr.Sin, a polio patient, and a jewellery designer works in a jewellery shop with the help of an adapted bellow loaned by the employaid fund.

Difficulties in placement of disabled persons into open employment.

There are briefly -

1. General entrenched prejudice of employers against the disabled, particularly the ex-mentally ill.
2. Transport difficulties.
3. Poor qualifications in terms of academic attainments and occupational skills of the disabled.

Performance of SPD :

Since July 1980 upto 31.12.1989, the statistic are as follows :- No. of registrations:16,488

No. of vacancies requested : 24,900

No. of placements : 7,667

Conclusion :

The advent of Electronic and the

emerging areas of computers and micro-computers has tremendously enlarged the scope of voactional training of some types of handicapped persons.

The educated handicapped persons are, by and large, a highly motivated group. All they need is an opportunity for training and selective placement. Given these facilities, they can contribute society as effectively as able-bodied individuals, apart from the restoration of their human dignity.

Efforts should be made to provide them with opportunity for higher technical education, which is limited at present to vocational training at the Ill level. Institutes of higher level technical education already exist in advanced countries, but there is none at present at the Diploma or Polytechnic level in India.

In our country "The Integrated Education for disabled children" (IED) scheme was introduced by the Ministry of Welfare, Government of India in 1974, and it gained a serious footing only in 1986. A separate Directorate of Special Education, research and Training has been formed in some states like Karnataka to implement the IED scheme in government and government aided schools in the State for vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped. The IED scheme is being implemented in non- government and private schools with the assistance of the non- government organisations (NGOs) like Karnataka Welfare Association for the Blind and others.

An attempt is being made in Karnataka by the Rehabilitation Engineering Centre, under the aegis of Sri Jayachamarajendra College of Engineering, Mysore - 6 to establish a Polytechnic for the Physically Handicapped in Mysore with the assistance of the World Bank to train the orthopaedically and hearing handicapped

with disability of 40% or more and hearing disability of 70db or more, at the Diploma level and to assist them later to secure employment in the industries nearby or to start enterprises of their own. When success-

fully implemented, it will be a unique and pioneering experiment in the vocational rehabilitation of the severely handicapped persons in India.

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