



RESEARCH PAPER

Explore the Effectiveness of Vocational Training Services available for Students with Hearing Impairment in Government Institutions of Punjab Province: A Qualitative Probe

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out the effectiveness of vocational training services for the students with hearing impairment in Punjab Province. Qualitative paradigm was used to conduct this research. Vocational training teachers of students with hearing impairment who were working in Govt. vocational training centers of Special Education were considered as a population of this research. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for this research. Six vocational teachers of students with hearing impairment of vocational training centers were selected as a sample of this research. Open ended in depth interviews were conducted to gather the information and get the answers to research questions. NVivo was used for thematic analysis. It was concluded that participants were satisfied with the current level of vocational training provided in the institutes. Perception of society, attitude towards vocational training, limited institutes, lack of professional career guidance cells and lack of staff were the main obstacles of vocational training. This qualitative research suggested to vocational training institutes to upgrade their training resources as per the international standards.

Keywords: In Depth Interviews, Students with Hearing Impairment, Vocational Effectiveness, Vocational Teachers, Vocational Training

Introduction

A comprehensive and inclusive approach, technical and vocational education and training aims to support individuals in realizing their full educational and professional potential and, more over to enable them to meaningfully contribute to the communities in which they reside. It is necessary to create programs with a clear emphasis on the changing economic, social, and cultural demands of the local and regional levels (William, 2002). The vocational training facilities lack the necessary equipment to deliver the kind of instruction that, after students have finished it, may lead to employment. Most training programs lack an efficient follow-up strategy. Pre-vocational training programs make up the majority of those that are available (Ali, 2007).

Murgor, Keter and Changa'ch (2014) narrated the discrimination and exclusion of students with disabilities in institutions of teaching and vocational education and training is one of the most prominent aspects. Second, some school buildings are inaccessible to pupils with disabilities because they were not designed with their requirements in mind. Third, laws that set minimum test scores for applicants to teaching vocational education programs have severely limited the ability of impaired students to enroll in programs that teach technical and vocational skills. While students saw teachers

as being unpleasant to them, teachers showed a good attitude toward the impaired pupils.

To provide job placement and follow-up services on a regional level, the participating universities will collaborate closely with the several state vocational rehabilitation agencies. Additionally, there will be continued close industry collaboration to plan on-the-job training for students who cannot pursue advanced training but may still profit from the program's academic, remedial, and psychological services. The teaching staff will collaborate closely with counsellors to establish such a program if it is possible for the student to be placed in on-the-job training while still receiving program services (Hammermeister and Burrows, 1968). Job readiness for vocational graduates is affected by experience, insight into the working environment, and occupational competence through employability skill (Putriatama, Patmanthara & Sugandi 2016).

Vocational training institutes are a source of comparative advantages to boost productivity growth and reflect such growth in more and better jobs since they contribute to the development of skills and competencies. Economic competitiveness is affected by worker education and training not only globally but also at the regional and sub-regional levels. The relationship between rising productivity and both short- and long-term employment growth is generally well understood. In the same way, those assessments have given public policies and social discourse that incorporate the goal of maintaining stable development in productivity and employment another angle to consider (International Labour Office, 2008).

Middleton (1993) suggested that if developing nations want to compete in the current economic environment, their labour force's job skills must be improved. Economic efficiency can be significantly increased by a flexible, trained workforce, and skill development can be made more efficient and equitable with the help of the right policies.

An essential factor in determining productivity growth is vocational training. It has been established that providing each employee with an additional hour of training increases productivity growth by about 0.55 percentage points (Sala and Silva 2013). Samoliuk, Bilan and Mishchuk (2021) narrated that higher vocational training expenditures are an indicator of successful businesses. The cost of vocational training has a beneficial influence on changes in the GDP per capita, the major indicator of macroeconomic benefits. Thus, it was determined that one of the factors driving macroeconomic development is the necessity to create professional training programs for staff. Vocational education has a stronger impact on economic growth than higher education (Vu, Hammes and Im, 2012). Economic growth and vocational education are positively correlated. Better vocational training increases work force productivity and efficiency, further boosting economic growth (Fatima and Saleem, 2016). Nilsson (2010) narrated that Vocational Education and Training improve the chances of young people to gain access to the labor market. Economic development and technical education and training in the nation have a favorable and substantial relationship. It is essential that the development of technical and vocational education be matched by a discernible increase in employment in the formal economy (Mupimpila and Narayana 2009). A nation's ability to compete economically is strongly correlated with the calibre of its human capital, which is mostly determined by its policies regarding high-quality education and training. As both contribute to the social and economic development of a nation, a healthy balance between mainstream and TVET must be upheld for any economy to prosper (Nooruddin 2017). Accumulative participation of labor in financial activity

motivates them to mend their own skill and efficiency hence contribute more and earn more (Khilji, Kakar and Subhan 2012).

Material and Methods

Research Design

Qualitative type of research was used to conduct this study along with the descriptive research design.

Population and Sample Strategy

Vocational training teachers of students with hearing impairment employed in Govt. vocational training centers of Special Education were considered as a population of this research. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample for this research. Six vocational teachers of students with hearing impairment of vocational training centers were selected as a sample of this research out of three vocational training centers situated in Punjab Province.

Data collection Instrument

Typical qualitative interviews were conducted as a one to one session in which the researchers put open ended questions in front of the participants. Those open ended questions were just for probing. Method of triangulation was used for the purpose of credibility of this instrument.

Validity of Instruments

To make sure the validity of the results of interviews, the researchers asked the responses of the vocational teachers so that they may confirm their responses or information. The researchers make sure to represent the reality of the actual information rather than reproduction of the information.

Sample for Pilot Testing of Qualitative Part

Overall it seemed quite difficult to determine the direction and progress of the qualitative interviews at this level. Early reflections were used as pilot testing of the statements of the interviews as well as to determine and to take estimate of direction of the interviews in a most appropriate manner. Transcription of starting interviews was used for the purpose to judge whether there was a need to change the statements of in depth interviews or not. Both types of feedback were to be seemed. Feedbacks were positive and negative as well. But it was concluded that the researchers could not draw a single clear line between the pilot phase and complete and final results of the qualitative interviews.

Qualitative Analysis

This section presents the qualitative analysis of the six in-depth interviews conducted at three vocational training institutes Lahore, Faislabad, and Okara in Punjab Province. The vocational training institutes are now undergoing an upgrade. According to the researchers' observation, new projects, vocational equipment, and vocational crafts are being implemented. It was also observed that only three vocational training centers in Punjab Province are not sufficient to cater to the whole population of the province and

it also causes blockage for the hearing impaired There is a set criteria for admission in these vocational institutes such as students must be at least 14 years old or possess a minimum qualification of middle grade to be admitted to vocational training schools. These interviews with vocational training staff members enabled the researchers to achieve the following research objective:

Explore the effectiveness of vocational training services available for students with hearing impairment in government institutions of Punjab Province.

All participants at Punjab's vocational training institutes were interviewed by the researchers themselves. These interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis and interpretation purposes. Since Nvivo is regarded as one of the best tools for qualitative data analysis, it was used for theme analysis. These six transcribed interview files were separately uploaded in Nvivo as (File 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6). The researchers used the auto-coding approach in the program, which created key codes and allowed for the development of a theme hierarchy map, allowing for a comprehensive study of replies. Other tests, such as the word cloud or word frequency test, were used to determine the most frequently repeated terms in these interviews, which helped the researchers find answers to the research question and comprehend the current state of vocational training programs for hearing-impaired students in Punjab Province.

A detailed analysis of qualitative interviews, all six participants are coded as (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, and P6).

Table 1
Participants of the study

	Participant 1	Participant 2	Participant 3	Participant 4	Participant 5	Participant 6
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female
Institute	Govt. Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons, Lahore.	Govt. Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons, Lahore.	Govt. Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons, Lahore.	Govt. Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons, Lahore.	Govt. Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons, Okara.	Govt. Vocational Training Centre for Disabled Persons, Faisalabad
Qualification	Diploma in Mechanical	Diploma	Diploma in Art and Craft	MPhil in computer science	Diploma in Mechanical	Diploma
Experience	26 years	12 years	33 years	4 years	13 years	33 years
Designation	Junior Instructor	Vocational Instructor	Junior Instructor	Computer Instructor	Junior Instructor	Junior Instructor
District	Lahore	Lahore	Lahore	Lahore	Okara	Faisalabad

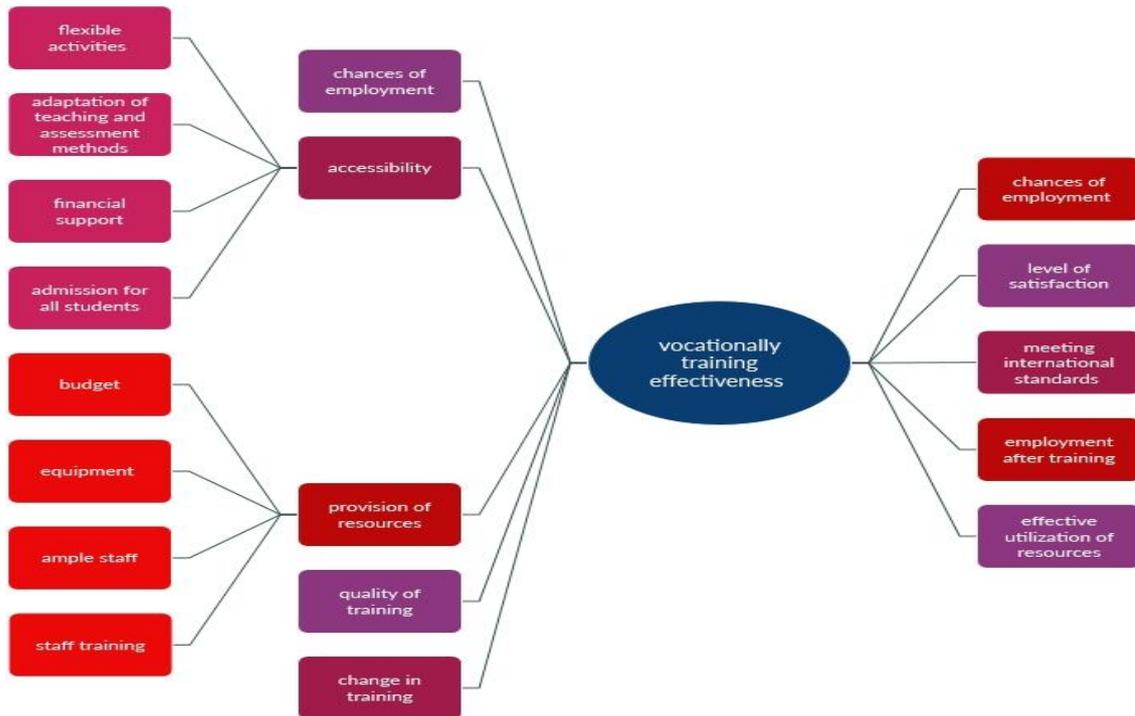
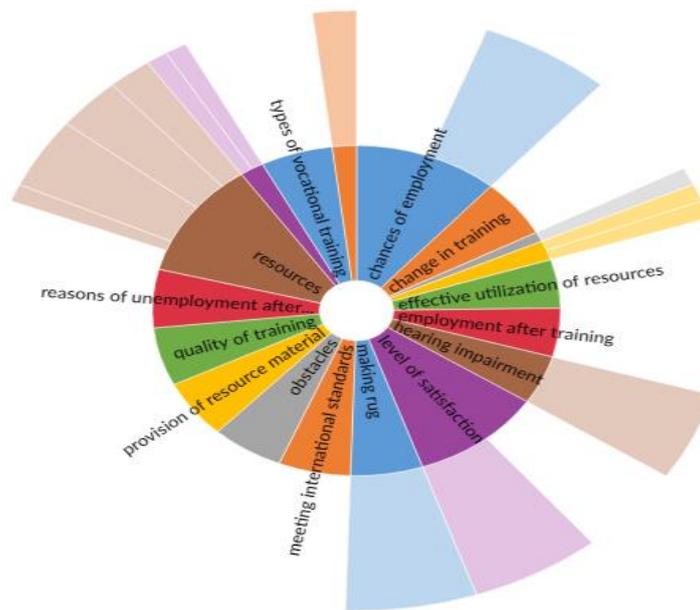


Figure 1: Identified themes



Types of vocational training

- Stitching
- Mat making
- Rug Making
- Knitting
- Computer
- Wood Work

- Drawing class
- Cutting

Quality of Training

All the participants agreed that the quality of vocational training is very important for the effective outcomes and success of hearing-impaired students. If the aims of a program of vocational education are to be accomplished, the program as a whole, including the teachers, the materials, and the standards for assessment, must be of the highest possible quality. When we speak of a school as providing its students with a high-quality education, we are referring to instruction that is not only instructive but also time-efficient. This kind of instruction allows students to develop as students while also enabling them to enjoy the time spent in school. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that students enrolled in vocational programs get education and training that is current with the norms of the relevant industry. This will allow them to join their respective professions completely prepared.



One participant stated:

When we provide good quality vocational training to students with hearing impairment, only then they can get practical experience in their chosen field. (P3)

Another participant linked the quality of training with the time period, she stated:

Quality should be improved. For example, if a diploma is of three months, it should be extended up to six months. Similarly, if a diploma is of six months, it should be extended up to one year. The time period should be extended so that students with hearing impairment can get vocational training of better quality. (P2)

One participant explained that the quality of training is very good at their institute since it is affiliated with TVTA.

Yes at this time this course is affiliated with TVTA. An outline of TVTA is being followed at this time. So we can say that this vocational training is of high quality. (P4)

One participant said that their training institute is very good at their institute, and students are enabled to work independently after their training is completed.

Yes, it is of good quality. Students become able to do work independently and can live in a society with grace and honor. (P6)

Accessibility

All the participants acknowledged the importance of accessibility for any vocational training program to be effective for hearing-impaired students. The responses from the participants indicate that accessibility in terms of admission, materials, transportation, and financial support for taking part in the vocational training program is very important.

We try to make sure that learning material must be appropriate and accessible to students with hearing impairment. (P1)

In response to a question about accessibility, one participant stated:

Yes, our vocational training services are accessible for students with hearing impairment. After completing middle standard education, all levels of hearing-impaired students can get admission to vocational training. We try to make the environment more accessible for students with hearing impairment so that progress in vocational training can be possible. (P2)

Another participant shared their thoughts on the accessibility level of their institute:

The environment can be accessible in both ways; physical environment as well as social environment. The physical environment of the vocational training center is safe for students with hearing impairment. There is no restriction on any student with hearing impairment. It is accessible to all levels of hearing-impaired students. (P3)

One participant stated the level of accessibility at their vocational training institute:

As we know that there are many aspects of accessibility, we try to make accessible our communication with students with hearing impairment. Transportation facility is also provided to the students to make the institute accessible. (P2)

Effective utilization of resources

All the participants agreed that effective utilization of resources is very important. They described how resources play an important role in the successful completion of vocational training.

Resources are used very effectively and efficiently for the vocational training of students with hearing impairment. We include time, budget, curriculum, resource persons, placement, and material while using the word resources. (P1)

Another participant highlighted the significance of relevancy and updated course material that enables the students to get relevant and the latest skills that help them to lead an empowered life.

While utilizing the resources, three things are very important to be considered. The first one is the relevancy, that the resources that are used to provide vocational training for students

with hearing impairment are relevant. We can explain this thing in such a way that whether the resources are valid or not. The second thing that should be considered is whether the resources are updated or according to new trends or not. The third thing is whether it is adapted according to the needs of the students with hearing impairment. So according to these criteria, we can conclude that the material is valid as well as according to the needs of the students with hearing impairment but it should be more advance to fulfill the demand of the new era.

(P3)

When asked about the effective utilization of resources, one participant mentioned that they have course materials and equipment but they lack the staff, and because these resources are not fully utilized and vocational training is not effective.

To utilize the resources effectively, the most important thing is the availability of the resources, then we can talk about their utilization. The number of teachers is less as compared to the demand. Human resource is a very big resource to provide vocational training for students with hearing impairment. Here we have the material for providing vocational training for students with hearing impairment but due to the limited staff, it becomes difficult to use these resources effectively.

(P4)

One participant mentioned that resources at their institute are fully utilized and students are getting the best possible training with the available resources.

Yes, resources are used effectively for the betterment of students with hearing impairment.

(P6)

Career Guidance

Career guidance is a strategy that assists people in determining what they want out of life, what potential routes they may take to get there, and then making concrete strategies to put those plans into action to achieve their goals. It's beneficial at any age, but particularly for those who are just beginning out in their professional lives. To make progress in one's profession despite the abundance of opportunities available, it could be beneficial to seek out career counseling. Even after completing vocational training, some students may have feelings of disorientation and uncertainty over how to begin their hunt for jobs. Career guidance plays a crucial role in finding a suitable job and career development, particularly for students with hearing impairment. Despite all these facts, all the vocational training institutes lack professional career guidance cells or career counselors. Students get guidance from their teachers mostly.

There is no post of career guidance or counselor. In the world, there is a seat of counselors in educational institutions that guide students about their careers. There is no counselor available for students with hearing impairment for their career guidance. (P1)

A career counselor or advisor explores the students' skills and interest levels and then suggests a balanced solution. But there is no post of career guidance in vocational training institutions for students with hearing impairment. So as teachers, we try to guide the students. Whatsapp groups are also made for guidance. (P2)

But there is no seat for career guidance for students with hearing impairment in vocational training centers. We try to guide the students via WhatsApp, whenever any vacancy is announced, it is informed to our students, and guidelines are provided to them. But still, we can say that more efforts are required in this matter. (P4)

Unfortunately, there is no seat for career guidance in vocational training centers for students with hearing impairment. (P6)

Level of satisfaction

When participants were asked about their level of satisfaction majority of the participants mentioned that they were satisfied with the current level of vocational training provided in the institutes. One of the participants stated that there are various levels to measure satisfaction such as the environment of the institution matter such building infrastructure, available facilities for the children, availability of updated equipment, trained staff, and resource materials.

There are many angles to measuring satisfaction. For example satisfaction with the building, satisfaction with the material, satisfaction with the environment, satisfaction with equipment, satisfaction with teaching methodologies, satisfaction with follow-up, and satisfaction with the result. The overall environment is satisfactory. We also try our best to use proper and effective teaching strategies to provide vocational training to students with hearing impairment. But there should be more equipment for better practice. There should be more buildings to provide vocational training to students with hearing impairment. There should be more advanced and innovative vocational training so that eligibility criteria for getting a job can be achieved by students with hearing impairment. (P2)

Very much satisfied. Now we have affiliation with TVTA so I am more satisfied. (P3)

The number of students is less so there is a need to guide the parents of students with hearing impairment to enhance the enrollment of the students. (P4)

Yes, satisfied with this training. Because the ultimate goal is to make the students with hearing impairment independent in their lives. (P5)

Yes, I am satisfied with the current level of vocational training that is being provided for students with hearing impairment. But there is always a space for betterment in every field. But now at this time, I am satisfied with the current vocational training for students with hearing impairment provided by the Punjab government. (P6)

Change in training

All the participants were asked about the major changes in vocational training that occurred over time. All the participants explained that there are many changes in vocational training in the last ten years span. There is more awareness and students with hearing impairment are willing to get vocational training for betterment of their future and employability. Some of the participants mentioned that facilities are better new as compared they used to be in the past. Participant 6 also mentioned that infrastructure has changed buildings are better now, there are changes in curriculum and resources as well. This indicates that vocational training institutes have improved over time and new types of training courses are also introduced.

A major difference can be seen. Ten years ago, there was a lack of awareness. Now at this time, we have more facilities as compared to the past. People know about the training at this stage. (P2)

Yes, there are major changes. (P3)

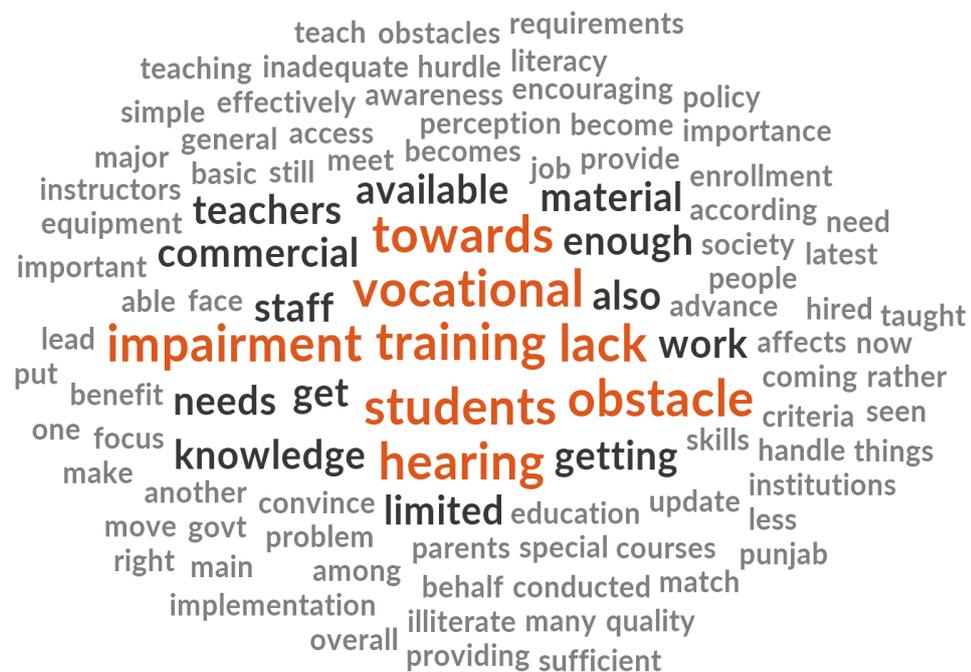
A major difference is seen. Betterment is being seen daily. With the help of vocational training, we can reduce the ratio of unemployment in Pakistan. (P4)

Yes, ultimately with time all things changed. The overall trend has changed. Students are more willing to attend vocational training. The overall environment of vocational training has changed as compared to ten years ago (P5)

Yes, there are changes from the last ten years in the field of vocational training for students with hearing impairment concerning resource material, curriculum, staff members, and concerning buildings. (P6)

Obstacles

Upon asking about the obstacles in vocational training for hearing-impaired students, all the participants highlighted several issues/obstacles prevailing in providing vocational training. When these obstacles were analyzed in Nvivo for word frequency the following word cloud chart appeared.



This word cloud chart enabled the researcher to identify the main issues that are major hindrances or obstacles in providing effective vocational training to hearing-impaired students. For example, one of the participants stated that there is a lack of updated course material. Students are still being taught outdated course which does not meet the requirements of this age.

Vocational training is being provided but still, we can say that we should update our knowledge and commercial work or get the job on the behalf of this vocational training. (P1)

Another participant highlighted that the major problem is a lack of awareness about the benefits of vocational training among parents and students, which leaves them untrained and forces them to lead dependent life.

Still, there is a lack of awareness among people about vocational training. (P2)

Another participant stated that there is minimum enrollment in vocational training institutes because of the unawareness and unwillingness of parents to send their children to vocational training centers. It was also mentioned that equipment is available in sufficient quantity but there is a lack of trained staff which is a major problem.

Enrollment of students is not enough. Students are not coming towards vocational training. Govt. provide us sufficient material but we have to face the problem of lack of staff. Equipment is available but teachers are not enough according to the needs. Instructors are not available right now. (P3)

Other participants also mentioned the problem of attitude towards vocational training. Parents are not willing to send their hearing-impaired children to vocational training centers. They also mentioned that there are very limited vocational training centers that cannot meet the needs of hearing-impaired students in Punjab.

Parents are illiterate. There is a need to convince people that vocational training is more important. Limited access to vocational training is also a major obstacle for students with hearing impairment. (P4)

Another participant identified that all over Punjab there are only three vocational training institutes for hearing-impaired students which is not sufficient to meet the needs of all the hearing-impaired students in the province. It is not possible for students living in far areas to get access to vocational training. There should be more institutes so that more students can get enrolled in vocational training. Another important aspect mentioned by the interviewee was the lack of awareness and unwillingness of parents to send their children to vocational training. There is a need for the attitude of parents towards vocational training should be changed.

There are only three vocational training institutions for students with special needs in Punjab. Limited staff is hired to teach vocational training to students with special needs. To convince the parents about the importance of vocational training for their students with hearing impairment. The overall trend is less towards vocational training for students with hearing impairment. (P5)

Perception of society towards vocational training is another major obstacle that was pointed out by the interviewee. There is more trend toward general education and literacy rather than skill development. Parents don't consider vocational training essential for the better of their future and getting jobs. There are some more obstacles such as a lack of teaching material and limited trained staff. There is a need to acquire more trained staff and resource materials so that vocational training staff can perform their job effectively. Another obstacle is the lack of policy implementation which has become a hurdle in the way of vocational training.

Perception of society is one of the obstacles to getting vocational training. The general perception of society towards vocational training is not encouraging at all. More focus is put on literacy education rather than vocational education. Lack of teaching material is also an obstacle to getting vocational training this lack of material makes the teachers unable to do their job effectively. Limited staff is available. We lack in the implementation of the policy which becomes another hurdle to getting vocational training. (P6)

Yes, resource material is enough. (P6)

Chances of employment

The effectiveness of vocational training can be assessed based on the chances of employment after they get vocational training. When all the participants were asked about the chances of employment after training all participants gave mixed responses.

One participant stated that it is not possible to get a job after a short vocational training, which indicates that the time duration for this training is not sufficient to get the job.

It is hard to get a job based on only three months diploma. (P1)

Another participant mentioned that there are good chances of employment after this vocational training as students are trained for cutting and stitching clothes so they can get employment in various textile-related industries.

Yes, students with hearing impairment seek a lot. They work in brands' stitching centers on pay. For example stitching of trousers or pants etc. (P3)

Another participant stated that if students have basic formal education along with vocational training they can find employment in their relevant fields.

The basic qualification is a must for employment. A student, whose basic qualification is complete along with a diploma, has the eligibility completed to apply for a job.

(P4)

It can be said that after getting vocational training, students with hearing impairment can start their work in the housing industry or can work for a helping hand in any industry. (P5)

Another participant made a statement that chances of employment are uncertain because this vocational training diploma is very short and it cannot guarantee getting a job after this training.

To some extent, not sure. Because these courses are of a short period (P6)

Employment after training

The purpose of this vocational training is to ensure the betterment of hearing-impaired students. When the participants were asked how many students get employment after this vocational training they mentioned that it is not likely to get jobs only based on this diploma. Very few students get employment.

No, just based on this course, no one got employment. (P2)

Most of the students get jobs. (P3)

Two students are working in an internship. Some of the students have started their businesses. (P4)

A few students get employment. (P6)

Reasons for not getting employment

When participants were asked about the reason for their unemployment. The majority of the participants mentioned that the course duration is short, and students cannot learn everything in just three months which is not sufficient for getting the job.

The limited duration of the course becomes the main reason to face difficulty while getting the job. (P2)

The time duration of vocational training is less for example these diplomas are of three months and six monthly courses. (P5)

These courses are of short time. Only three or six months' diplomas are being offered to the students that are not enough to get the job. (P6)

Another participant mentioned that apart from other reasons for unemployment, one of the main problems these students face is the very limited number of job offerings for disabled persons.

So many reasons for this thing for example their disability becomes a reason and sometimes limited jobs are offered for special persons. (P3)

Another reason for unemployment after vocational training is the lack of confidence, parents and families of hearing-impaired students do not want their children to work or get a job in the market.

The eligibility of getting knowledge also counts in this matter. In some situations, family members do not want their children to do the job. (P4)

Meeting international standards

It is very important to maintain the quality and efficiency of vocational training programs. Nowadays, this world has become a global village and to compete in the job market vocational training programs must meet international standards. Since these students have to make their careers in a developing and growing market where they need to meet international standards. When the participants were asked about whether their training matched international standards majority of the responses were negative.

While the comparison is based on machines, yes it is. Because machines of high quality are being used at this time. When we talk about woodwork, we can say no. this is not parallel with international standards. Even here we do not use that wood quality that is used on the international level. They have more machinery as compared to us. (P1)

No, we cannot claim this thing. (P3)

No, it is not parallel with international standards because syllabi are outdated. (P4)

No, we cannot say that it is parallel with international standards. (P5)

No, this training is not parallel with international standards. (P6)

Conclusion

It is concluded that chances of employment, level of satisfaction, meeting international standards, employment after training, effective utilization of resources, quality of training, change in training, accessibility, flexible activities, adaptation of teaching and assessment methods, financial support, admission for all students, provision of resources, budget, equipment, ample staff and staff training were identified as themes. Students with Hearing impairment enrolled in vocational programs got education and training that was current with the norms of the relevant industry. Resources played an important role in the successful completion of vocational training. Vocational training institutes lack professional career guidance cells or career counselors. Participants were satisfied with the current level of vocational training provided in the institutes. Vocational training institutes had improved over time and new types of training courses were also introduced. Perception of society, attitude towards vocational training, lack of policy implementation, limited institutes, lack of update course material and lack of staff were the main obstacles of vocational training. Very few students get employment. Course duration was short, and students could not learn everything in just three months which was not sufficient for getting the job.

Recommendations

1. Career guidance cells of vocational training should be established.
2. Vocational Teachers should equip the students with hearing impairment with the skills to pursue entrepreneurial careers and lifelong learning.
3. Vocational training institutes should upgrade their training resources as per the international standards.

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