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UNDERSTANDING THE COMPETENCY LEVELS OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES IN VOCATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

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Abstract

People with intellectual disabilities find it difficult to learn and retain new information and to adapt to new situations. The researcher converge qualitative and quantitative data (mixed research method) in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. A sample size of 600 students in the vocational skills class and teachers who handle the students was selected for the study. The students at the vocational skills class were chosen because the researcher believed they may have attained some degree of mastery in vocational skills and the teachers handling them. The idea of vocational training for individuals with intellectual disabilities in special schools in Hyderabad is to prepare them to acquire skills necessary to lead independent lives in future.

Key words: *vocational, programs, intellectual, disabilities, competency level, etc.*

1. INTRODUCTION

People with intellectual disabilities find it difficult to learn and retain new information and to adapt to new situations. Children with intellectual disabilities develop more slowly than their peers and require additional support to develop. They may take longer to learn to walk and to take care of their personal needs, such as dressing or eating. Moreover, there may be some things they cannot learn. Rose, Saunders, Hensel and Kroese (2005:10) mention difficulty with concentration, poor communication skills, problems understanding instructions and difficulty in becoming independent. The extent of the limits of learning is a function of the severity of the disability (Mental retardation). Special Schools in Hyderabad introduced the vocational training program since the establishment of the school for about 38 years ago. The school trains students in animal husbandry, home management, wood work, bead making, door mat making, batik/tie and dye, leather works etc. The school according to the assistant head teacher, reported has been able to graduate 10 students since its inception to date and all of these graduates are currently employed with one of them being a staff of the school. Also according to the reporter, students spend 6 years in the academic unit learning the literacy and numeracy (functional academics) and later will spend 3 years in the vocational training program based on each child's ability and severity of the condition/retardation. After the 3 years in the vocational skills, the students spend another 3 years in the community to practice the skills they had learned from the school.

1.1 Intellectual disabilities

Intellectual disability (ID), also known as general learning disability[3] and mental retardation (MR), is a generalized neuro developmental disorder characterized by

significantly impaired intellectual and adaptive functioning. It is defined by an IQ under 70, in addition to deficits in two or more adaptive behaviors that affect every day, general living.

People with intellectual disabilities find it difficult to learn and retain new information and to adapt to new situations. Children with intellectual disabilities develop more slowly than their peers and require additional support to develop. They may take longer to learn to walk and to take care of their personal needs, such as dressing or eating.

1.2 Competency Levels of Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Students with intellectual disabilities are exceptional students with sub-average intellectual functioning who may deviate from the able individuals in their physical, mental and social characteristics. The students have one unique need which is quite different from all other disability groups. They depend on vocational training programmes for a living. Vocational training programmes enable individuals to acquire relevant skills which promote quality of life, self-worth, respect and dignity. They therefore, require vocational training programmes in order to develop their maximum potentials. Preparing individuals with intellectual disabilities for total independence and employability therefore requires a comprehensive trans-disciplinary vocational programmes and an emphasis on post-school planning, which is an important role for special schools. The competency levels of students with intellectual disabilities are the processes involved in batik/tie and dye making, enabling the school system take measures to improve on students' skills.

1.3 Objectives

1) To assess students' competency levels in the processes involved in batik/tie and dye at Special School.

2) To identify the challenges militating against the competency of students in the vocational training programmes at Special School.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Landsberg (2005:381) states that the latest definition of the American Association on Mental Deficiency (AAMD) for intellectual disability reads as follow: "Mental retardation refers to substantial limitation in present functioning. It is characterised by significantly sub-average intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptable skills areas: communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure and work." Mental retardation manifests before age 18.

G. M. Steyn & C. J. Vlachos Little information is available on future vocational preparation for intellectually disabled students in South African schools. Currently teachers adapt the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to educate these students. A literature study was conducted to investigate existing models in the United States of America in order to develop a framework for a South African vocational training program.

Helga Fasching The aim of this contribution is to shed light on the following questions: to what extent are labour market policy measures accessible for women and men with ID (intellectual disabilities)? What is the reality of transition to employment for this target group? What is the success rate of women and men with ID accessing labour market policy measures and the employment market per se?

A presentation of selected empirical results (N = 625) of a nationwide survey conducted with the organisations that implement labour market policy measures in Austria illustrates the accessibility and success rate of these measures for women and men with ID.

Tianxi Xu, Ian Dempsey & Phil Foreman Background The use of effective theory and practice in school-to-work transition for adolescents with intellectual disability (ID) is essential to enhance transition outcomes. In China, little attention has been paid to these issues. The current study explored Chinese parents' and transition teachers' views on school-to-work transition services for adolescents with ID.

Jeanne Jackson, Allyn Rankin, Sue Siefken & Florence Clark This article discusses a grant-funded occupational therapy independent living skills transition program for adolescents with developmental disabilities on a non-mainstreamed high school campus. The Options Program was designed to provide intensive transition services through its emphasis on exploring and broadening the range of individuals' choices' about employment, living arrangements, and social activities. The assessment procedure, program model, curriculum goals, and intervention strategies are presented.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher converge qualitative and quantitative data (mixed research method) in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.

3.1 Sample Size

A sample size of 600 students in the vocational skills class and teachers who handle the students was selected for the study.

3.2 Sampling Technique

The students at the vocational skills class were chosen because the researcher believed they may have attained some degree of mastery in vocational skills and the teachers handling them.

3.3 Instrumentation

The instruments for the study were in- depth interview guide for the teachers and teacher-made test for the students.

4. DATA ANALYSIS

It include the demographic characteristics of respondents, overview of the vocational training programme at Special Schools in Hyderabad, students' competence in the processes involved in making batik/tie and dye at Special Schools in Hyderabad, students 'competence in the processes involved in leather work (sandal making) at Special Schools in Hyderabad and challenges militating against vocational training programme at Special Schools in Hyderabad.

Table 1 - Measuring and Cutting of Material into Required Sizes

Ranking	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	320	53.3
Good	160	26.6
Fair	120	20.0
Total	600	100

From TABLE 1, it could be seen 8 (53.3%) of the students were able to measure and cut materials into require sizes excellently. Based on their performance in line with the conscious competence matrix, these students were judged as having attained unconscious competence, and are thus in stage four within the conscious competence matrix. Those who scored good were 4 (26.6%) and because their performance was also remarkably high, they have attained conscious competence in measuring and cutting materials into require sizes. while the remaining, 3 (20%) were fair in measuring and cutting materials into required sizes and were perceived to be within the unconscious incompetence stage.

Table 2 - Ranking Of Students in Folding Materials

Ranking	Frequency	Percent
Excellent	320	53.3
Good	160	26.6
Fair	120	20.0
Total	600	100

The ranking of the students who are able to fold materials is shown in TABLE 2 below. The scores indicate that 8 (53.3%) of the students could excellently fold materials and were therefore perceived to have reached the unconscious competence stage. This was followed by 4 (26.6%) of them score good and were considered to be consciously competent. three students (20%) had fair and were judged to be unconsciously incompetent. The results show that these students had not met the standards as demanded by the curriculum since they still operate only at a lower grade.

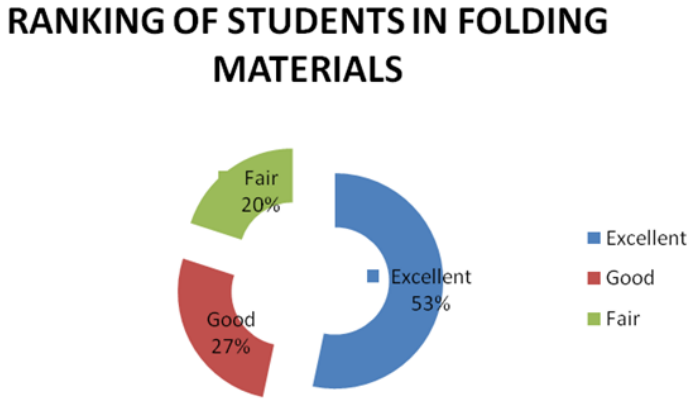

Figure 1 - Ranking of Students In Folding Materials

Table 3 - Students Ability in Tying Of Materials

Ranking	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	0	0
Good	320	53.33
Fair	280	46.66
Total	600	100

From TABLE 3, only 8 students (53.3%) scored well and were deemed to have reached the conscious incompetence. These students understand that there is existence of the skills and they are now trying to learn it. As a result, they were yet to acquire basic understanding of demonstrating skills involve in tying a material. This was supported with the fact that

7(46.6) students perform poorly in terms of tying of materials and they were seeing to have reached unconscious incompetent stage according to the model adopted.

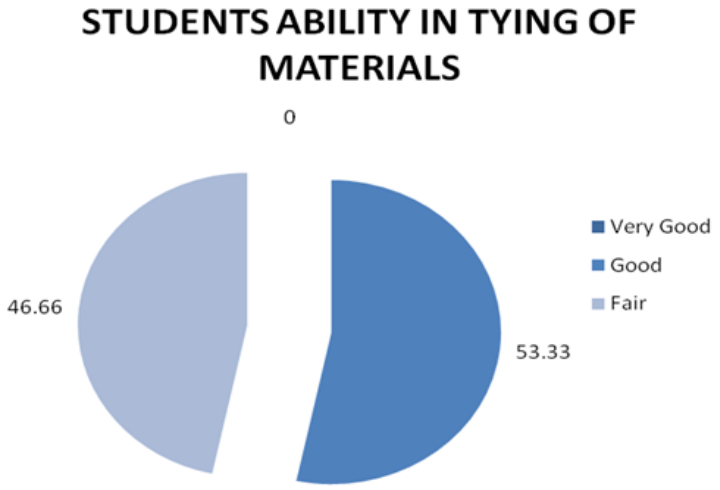

Figure 2 - Students Ability in Tying Of Materials

Table 4 - Students' Competency In The Processes In Patterns Making In Leatherwork

Ranking	Frequency	Percent
Very Good	360	60
Good	120	20
Fair	120	20
Total	600	100

According to Hammill and Bartel (2000), vocational training programme like leather work focuses on helping those with intellectual disabilities to acquire skills and techniques that are used in vocational training to assist such individuals to acquire relevant skills for transition program. Table indicates the performance of the students at Special Schools in Hyderabad in the processes involved in pattern making in leather work. Nine students (60%) were excellent at the processes in pattern making hence are in the unconscious competence stage, while the response of 3 (20%) students was very good and were considered as being consciously competent. The results show that additional practice time is required for this category of students who could easily migrate to the fourth stage of the conscious competence matrix. 3 (20%) scored very poor. These students completely failed to display the processes involved in making patterns in leather work and therefore, were judged as being unconsciously incompetent.

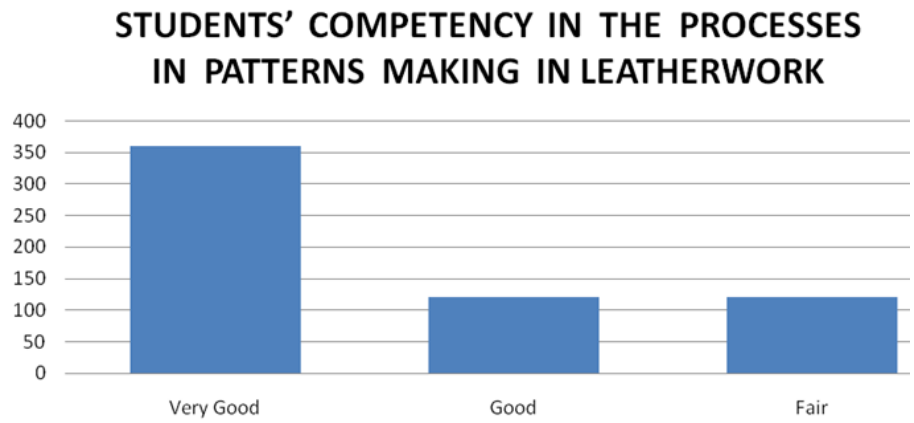

Figure: 5- Students' Competency in the Processes in Patterns Making In Leatherwork

5. CONCLUSION

The study concluded that majority of the students had higher competencies on measuring and cutting materials into required sizes, folding of materials and tying of materials, thus in relation to these skills they were consciously and unconsciously competent. In terms of waxing of materials, majority of the students were either conscious or unconscious incompetent. The data showed that challenges limiting effective of students' competence in vocational training in the school are more personal than external influence. This was because most of the challenges are probably due to the individual response to the training and familiarity in developing their competencies in vocational training. Comparatively students' competence in batik/tie and dye was higher than leather work. Thus, students had reached higher stages in the conscious competence matrix in batik/tie and dye than leather work.

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