

**Perceptions of Teachers and Vocational Trainers on the Importance of Pre-Vocational Skills for Transitioning Intellectually Disabled Students from School to Employment**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In the area of pre-vocational skills which play a key role in the transition of students with intellectual impairments from school to work this research sets out to compare the views of main stream instructors and vocational trainers. We did a sequential explanatory design study which looked at points of view, attitudes and insights of both groups to determine what they do agree and what they differ on in order to better facilitate the transition of students with intellectual disabilities into the work place. We aimed to see what the differences are between the thoughts of curriculum/class teachers and vocational instructors. We looked at a sample of 109 class teachers and 39 vocational instructors who work with Intellectually disabled students in special education schools. For in depth look at the issues we did semi structured interviews and also we used questionnaires to collect data. To get in depth info on what each group of teachers think we did interview them. For the large scale data we used questionnaires. We did thematic analysis of the interview data and statistical analysis of the questionnaire data which we then compared to draw out what we could. It is known that vocational education is very important but because this service is not present at the centers it is very hard for them to achieve financial independence and self sufficiency. The results of this can prove to be very useful in the improvement of the success of vocational training programs which are put in place to help students with intellectual disabilities to do well in the work force.*

**Keywords:** intellectual disability, transition, vocational skills, employment, adaptive skills

## INTRODUCTION

World Health Organization (WHO) (2019) reports that intellectual disability (ID), which results from intellectual developmental disorder, begins during the developmental stage and includes deficiencies in both intellectual and adaptive functioning in the conceptual, social, and practical domains. According to the DSM-5, the three requirements for the diagnosis of ID include deficiencies in intellectual functioning, including planning, reasoning, problem-solving, and academic learning, as well as problems in adaptive functioning, with the beginning of these deficits occurring during childhood. Based on the level of disability, which is measured by IQ range, there are four categories of ID: mild, moderate, severe, and profound ID (Girimaji, 2018; Kishore et al., 2019; Tafla et al., 2021).

The persons who have a slight or moderate intellectual disability are admitted to a special education program, where they begin their academic careers alongside peers. Self-help skills, adaptive behaviors, and education in five categories are all being worked on. Along with this, pre-vocational skills education is beginning to get them ready for independent life. One half of the special education program is curriculum-based, while the other is career-based. The pupils' skills vary, and everyone's learning preferences are determined by their Hayward Nine Intelligence, thus an individualized education plan is created for each student after learning about their strengths (Dell'Anna et al., 2022; Venkatesh et al., 2023).

The child's aptitude, strength, and future plans form the basis of the education plan. Stakeholders evaluate a child's early education once it is completed, and with the help of the school administration and parents, a subsequent plan for higher education or career training is created. Parents' opinions are the most important consideration for secondary education and career preparation. It is a prevalent misconception that these children can't work at all. These children are thinking about being a burden on the family and the community (Ashraf, 2019; Wildmon et al., 2024). A child-friendly setting with appropriate support and need-based support should be present for postsecondary education in order to promote optimal learning. In addition to physical health, education is given to improve conduct, language, socioemotional abilities, and self-help skills. The goal of special education for children must be to prepare them for life after school. It is felt that the support systems in place for young people with disabilities are insufficient. Students' support and educational needs must be met within the constraints of the school's scope and capabilities. As of 2017, the World Bank estimated that 2.49 percent of Pakistan's population was disabled in some way enrolment in Education (Pulimeno et al., 2020; Kaizar & Alordiah, 2023).

According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Pakistan's gross enrolment rate for primary school students with disabilities was much lower than that of students without impairments. Access to education is unequal, which is problematic. The abilities required for admittance into a particular industry are those acquired through vocational training. These abilities assist children with ID in developing into good workers who can meet standard job requirements, operate on their own, maintain a high standard of work, and work quickly. In Karachi, offer VTS in a variety of ways for people with disabilities, including ID. In Karachi, for instance, 55% of special schools offer vocational education for children with impairments, including ID. These ID students have the capacity to work independently and uphold high standards of conduct (Bhuttah et al., 2020; Khalid & Tadesse, 2024).

The period between finishing school and starting a job is vital for all students, but those with intellectual disabilities have particular difficulties during this time. In order to successfully prepare these children for the workforce, pre-vocational skills are extremely important. To enhance the overall transition process for children with intellectual disabilities, it can be helpful to comprehend the perspectives of both mainstream teachers and vocational trainers. The transfer of children with intellectual disabilities from school to employment in Pakistan involves a number of difficulties, particularly when contrasting the perspectives

of conventional teachers with vocational trainers regarding the necessity of pre-vocational skills (de Paor et al., 2025).

### **Difficulties in Prevocational Training**

Difficulties in pre vocational training for students with intellectual disabilities in Pakistan is that we see low awareness and inadequate training among educators which in turn leaves them unskilled to properly teach pre vocational skills. Also we see that social stigma and misperception of intellectual disabilities plays a role in how teachers' interaction and support of these students is shaped which in turn plays into the development of transition plans (Munir et al., 2023). Also it is common for schools and vocational centers to have resource shortages and we see limited access to very specialized vocational training programs. We also have issues of poor collaboration between traditional and vocational trainers as well as low family support which is a result of low awareness (Sultana & Anis, 2023). Also we see that policy implementation is a issue which in turn leaves resources and support inconsistent and we have a large scale issue of suitable employment which is marred by work place discrimination. To get over these issues we need a multi pronged approach which includes better preparation of teachers, raising awareness, increasing program access, better resource allocation, fostered cooperation among educators, families and policy makers and we must promote inclusive work places. By doing this we put in place the base for a smooth transition from school to work which in turn empowers individuals with intellectual disabilities to achieve independence and full social participation (Venkatesh et al., 2023; Pirzada, 2023).

### **Perceptions of Vocational Trainers**

Vocational training professionals have in depth knowledge of practical workplace skills and are aware of the value of pre-vocational education which weaves into the fabric of what we do for individuals with intellectual disabilities. We are tuned into job market requirements and are able to tail our teaching methods to the diverse learning needs of these students which in turn smooths their path to the work force. We put forward pre vocational skills which we feel is key to promoting inclusion, independence and self confidence among students with intellectual disabilities which in turn lessens their use of social support systems (Majid & Razzak, 2015; Shaukat, et al., 2019). Also by this we are able to tap into an under utilized talent pool which benefits the economy, we foster social cohesiveness which comes from the acceptance and empathy we promote and we are upholding the right of individuals to education and full social participation. We are closing the skills gap which in turn improves quality of life and supports long term social sustainability also we are by this are challenging the stereotypes which present around the what people with intellectual disabilities are able to do (Sajjad et al., 2010; Muhammad et al., 2024).

### **Objectives of the Study**

Following are the objectives of this research study:

- To evaluate and contrast curriculum teachers' and vocational trainers perspectives on the significance of pre-vocational abilities for intellectually challenged students' smooth transition from school to the job.
- To determine where curriculum and vocational training differ in their knowledge of pre-vocational skills as they relate to the needs of students with intellectual disabilities.
- To examine the difficulties of teachers, encounter when preparing intellectually handicapped students for the workforce and the methods they use to address these difficulties.

### **Significance of the Study**

To improve our understanding of issues related to the value of pre-vocational skills for students with intellectual disabilities as they prepare to enter the profession we are looking at the attitudes of curriculum teachers and vocational trainers. For also improving the transition of students with intellectual disabilities into the workforce.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In this study we look at which differences there are between what curriculum teachers' and vocational professionals' see. For all students, and especially those with intellectual disabilities, the transition from school to work is a very critical issue. These students require pre-vocational skills in order to handle the issues present in the workforce.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Students with intellectual disabilities face a variety of challenges while applying to the workforce. Physical, mental, emotional, and/or social constraints can also prevent people from developing the work skills necessary to meet the expectations of industry and business. Therefore, it is important to early, systematic, and programmatically prepare children with special needs in special schools (SLB) as well as those who study inclusively in regular schools. Programs for vocational learning are implemented continuously and in stages. Students learn through play at the early childhood level, rudimentary literacy skills are established in elementary school, vocational learning accounts for 60% of learning in junior high, and is 70% more effective than academic learning in high school (Park & Park, 2021; Jacob et al., 2023).

The development of practical skills provided to these students with intellectual disabilities is undoubtedly tailored to their ability. If a child's condition permits him to study all the stages of a skill, there is no harm in teaching him all the stages; nevertheless, if this is not possible, it is sufficient to teach the child one or two stages of the talent (Iftikhar et al., 2024). For instance, if the circumstances permit, children with intellectual disabilities are entitled to learn all the steps involved in creating slippers. However, if the situation is impossible, he simply has to learn one or two steps, such as how to glue it or glue it. The imparting skills to persons with special needs is equally crucial. They can discover their innate talent, such as a talent for handicrafts, from these skills. If there is a talent that is apparent, it has to be nurtured and valued. In this way, it is anticipated that they lead busy lives, and if the craft they make has the potential to be popular, that will be a benefit for them (Young & Rooney, 2023; Chang et al., 2025).

In order to prepare intellectually disabled children for a career and to contribute to their families and society, vocational skills education can be seen as a stage in career preparation. In line with the expected statement made by the Council for Exceptional Children's Division on Career Development and Transition that "career development involves the preparation of the individual for the roles of the student, worker, family member, and citizen. Because they can receive vocational skills training in a variety of fields, such as housekeeping, carpentry, farming and livestock, office skills, marketing skills, entrepreneurship, and other Semi-skilled skills, children with mild intellectual disabilities have a wider range of employment opportunities (Pristiwaluyo, 2017; Liao et al., 2024).

While the skills that can be learnt are more constrained for children with moderate intellectual disabilities, this does not eliminate their chances of being able to find employment and live independently. They can pick up minor tasks that they can accomplish in a protected workshop or learn housekeeping skills so they can work from home. Additionally, despite needing supervision and modest tasks, children with intellectual disabilities can nonetheless work in some organizations. Teachers, governments, parents, and employers are just a few of the stakeholders who must be involved in the implementation of vocational

skills education. To develop the kinds of abilities, procedures, and tactics that can be used with children who have special needs, cooperation is required (Boat, 2015; Joyce et al., 2025).

Vocational training means preparing affected people with physical, sensory, or emotional disabilities for employment and helping them cope effectively with the environment" in this regard. It has been noted that the vocational training facilities offered in both the public and commercial sectors are insufficient to meet the needs of people with disabilities. The Government of Pakistan (2002) underlines the importance of utilizing the vocational training programs, whether they are run by private organizations or by the federal, provincial, or district governments. The facilities that are now available are limited to the pre-vocational skill training programs that are offered in special education schools. Additionally insignificant is the number of institutions providing vocational training on a nationwide level (Majid & Razzak, 2015; Iftikha et al., 2022).

There is no record of the students' work that has been taken outside of the special schools. Only a small percentage of impaired students who left schools found employment; those who did were either hired because of their own efforts or because of the abilities they acquired after leaving school. These students are limited in number, compared to the vast majority of school dropouts who remain unemployed due to a lack of options for them to receive vocational training and employment. In order to adequately train the impaired children for the workforce, it is crucial to establish and construct vocational training programs that may be implemented in schools. It is necessary to provide vocational training through ODL since Pakistan lacks a technical and vocational network (Molina et al., 2021; Cologon, 2022).

In a research, education for children with intellectual disabilities can take place either separately in special schools or alongside other students in conventional schools that practice inclusive education. If it is held in a public school, a modified curriculum tailored to the personality and capabilities of those children must be used. If it is held in a special school, the curriculum used must be specially created based on individualized competency requirements that the school has collated and specified based on the outcomes of assessment. The development of vocational skills rather than intellectual talents is the main objective of education for children with intellectual disabilities (Лопатинська et al., 2023). The aim is for those children to be capable of supporting themselves and to have the necessary job skills to live in the neighborhood. Because it now employs a modified standard curriculum, the curriculum utilized for children with intellectual disabilities has not been able to properly fulfill their needs to be able to live freely. Their education must be continuous, narrowly focused on a specific set of abilities, and delivered through an internship program in sheltered workshops if they are to have acceptable vocational skills. Children with intellectual disabilities could best develop their talents by receiving a specially developed educational service (Hayes & Bulat, 2017; Hornby & Kauffman, 2024).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

This study based on a qualitative approach, including open ended question for interviews, to gather data from both curriculum teachers and vocational trainers. The population consisted of educators working in various public special schools and vocational training centers dealing with to intellectually disabled students. The interview included questions about professionals' perceptions of pre-vocational skills and the support required for a continuous transition into the workforce. Additionally, in-depth interviews were conducted to gain deeper insights into their experiences and recommendations.

### **Sample**



This study which includes a sample of general and vocational teachers that work with Intellectually Impaired students in special education and vocational training settings will be used.

### **Data Collection**

Semi structured interviews and questionnaires was the methods of data collection. To go in depth into the issues related to the two groups of teachers we conducted interviews with them. For the collection of quantitative data we used questionnaires which administered to a large number of teachers.

### **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis of the qualitative data from interviews was done. The results, then be compared to draw out relevant conclusions.

### **What Respondents Say?**

According to a respondent who works at one of the special education centers, these institutions lack qualified vocational trainers. Additionally, a trainer is provided, but they are unqualified to provide vocational training to the children with IDs because they cannot study normally and require more advanced and contemporary methods. Other respondents respond as:

- The vocational training facilities lack the necessary equipment to deliver instruction that would prepare students for employment after they complete their studies.
- There is a very little selection of trades.
- The students are unprepared for the labor market.
- The majority of training programs lack an efficient follow-up plan.
- Special needs workers are denied their legal rights at the workplace.
- Because the refresher courses are not offered, they are unable to keep their positions in light of the recent developments.
- Pre-vocational training programs make up the majority of the available training options.
- The personnel at vocational training centers are typically not fully qualified to instruct the special students.
- Some schools use less qualified nontechnical teachers to deliver the vocational education.
- Only prevocational training programs are offered at the majority of special schools.
- There is no set curriculum, and the only occupational skills taught are those relevant to the vocational both because there are more readily available teachers and resources are required regardless of the market.
- Over the course of the vocational classes alone are insufficient to achieve skill mastery necessary to perform a job and compete with the capable bodies of people.
- The majority of schools used a yearly system of despite assessment; a sizable number of schools had absolutely no mechanism of evaluation.
- Schools were these teaching children who are mentally disabled. Numerous schools possess a variety of assessment systems, including; systems that are monthly, quarterly, half-yearly, and annual.
- The teacher-student ratio in Pakistani schools is high (1:15), which is not optimal given the teacher shortage.
- In most schools, there is training equipment, but it is either not sufficient for student needs or is not used effectively because there aren't any certified vocational trainers.

- To accommodate pupils with unique needs, not all schools have the resources such as speech therapy, physiotherapy, or psychological evaluation.
- Due to inadequate teacher training facilities, there aren't enough skilled vocational trainers available.
- The special schools don't keep any records of where their former students got jobs.

## **FINDINGS**

**Limited Access to Education:** In Pakistan what we see is that many of the children with intellectual disabilities have access issues when it comes to quality education. Also it is due to the lack of inclusive educational settings and trained teachers for students with special needs.

**Negative Social Attitudes:** It include stigma toward disability play a role in the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities in to the whole of society. In this social and cultural setting also we see that they may have issues in the workplace and in what jobs they are able to obtain.

**Lack of Vocational Training:** There is a lack of vocational training programs that cater to students with intellectual disabilities. We must put in place proper vocational training which in turn will give these students skills relevant to the labor market and improve their employability.

**Limited Job Prospects:** In Pakistan we see that many times people with intellectual disabilities have little success in getting into good careers. Also reports indicate that which may be in part because of what employers think of and what preconceptions they have about the ability of disabled people.

**Support Services:** In many parts of Pakistan there is a lack of developed transition services and support networks for students with intellectual disabilities which include career counseling, job placement, and job coaching.

**Policy and Legal Framework:** Pakistan has a legal framework which includes and protects the rights of people with disabilities which also includes intellectual disabilities.

**Family Assistance:** Families are integral to the process of transition for students with intellectual disabilities in Pakistan. Also we see that often families have difficulty in recognizing their child's particular needs and in accessing the right support.

**Knowledge of Pre-Vocational Skills:** In the study we found out that traditional teachers and vocational educators see the value of pre-vocational skills in preparing students with intellectual disabilities for the workforce. Also, because of their first hand role in vocational programs' teaching which may also include practical experience -- vocational teachers came across as having a better grasp of these abilities.

**Emphasis on Functional Skills:** While in the former vocational training which put more into practice elements like communication, time management, problem solving, and self advocacy and in the later traditional academic which leaned more toward theory and academia we see this play out. This also brings to light the value in a team based approach and a broad scope in designing the curriculum.

**Inclusive Education:** An issue raised by representatives from each group was the value of a comprehensive curriculum which puts pre-vocational skills into practice for all students no matter what their ability is. This inclusive approach was put forth as a basic element which promotes among students' cooperation, empathy and understanding.

**Education for Teachers:** In that we see to improve the ability of students to deal with the issues which intellectual disabilities present during transition, both groups of teachers reported a need for specialized training and professional development.

It is important to note the work done by many NGOs, government programs and organizations which have put forth initiatives to improve the lot of people with intellectual disabilities in Pakistan. We have seen progress in inclusive education, career options and vocational training. That said we still have a way to go in creating a more inclusive environment which sees Pakistani students with intellectual disabilities through from school to work.

## **DISCUSSION**

Vocational training that takes place in school for young people and continues through to adulthood may also benefit people with ID in their job search. We should see vocational training and job readiness programs that focus on the development of individual decision making and adaptability in the work place. Also effective vocational rehabilitation programs for people with ID will put in place support for the individuals as well as their families. They should also include training that fosters autonomy and lessens the need for support and assistance in the workplace (Bratti et al., 2022; Mudde et al., 2025).

In order to access, remain in, or return to the workforce after an injury, illness, or impairment, a person must go through vocational rehabilitation. This approach covers the steps taken to support the person, their employer, or other parties, such as assistance in finding employment and managing the practical aspects of rehabilitation. It comprises a wide range of treatments to assist people with health conditions and/or disabilities in overcoming obstacles to work so they can access, maintain, or return to employment. Occupational difficulties According to occupational adaptation theory, a person develops an adapted behavior to meet the demands of the task when a new occupational challenge arises in order to carry out professions connected with life roles (Frank, 2016; Lee et al., 2023).

The social skills are the behaviors that are advantageous to both parties and reinforce one another in social interactions. Typically, the intellectual disability that exhibits delayed communication and less social interactions co-occurs with the social skill deficit. Children with ID have less opportunity to be accepted, engage in meaningful interactions with peers, and achieve well in school due to their impaired social skills. Studies have shown that for students with ID to do better in high schools, intervention and social support are necessary. According to academics, school-based social skills training (SST) benefits children with IDs because it places them in a setting where social interactions with peers commonly occur (Hughes et al., 2011; Yizengaw, 2022).

For children with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities, in addition to social skill training, all research participants felt that vocational training is also a necessity. At the chosen special education institutions, vocational training consistently improves the learning capacity of children with IDs. Electronics, chick production, hand and machine embroidery, canning, and stitching are all covered in the course. Children with IDs are more likely to be socially ostracized because they are unable to provide for themselves (Bagadood et al., 2025). The psychological health and inclusion of people with IDs depend on meaningful employment, which fosters a sense of identity and social status. Therefore, it is crucial for people with ID to be included in the workforce, which is made possible by vocational training. Additionally, since they can be socially trained and schooled to a limited extent, such instruction is more successful and beneficial for children with mild ID or slow learners (Dossal et al., 2023; Gul & Chaudhry, 2023).



However, children are denied the advantages of having vocational skills due to the lack of availability or least effective instruction at the specified centers. One of the responders stated: "These institutes have open positions for vocational trainers." Although we requested a vocational instructor in writing to the Directorate, nothing has been done. The majority of the technical employees relocated back to their home regions following the 18th Amendment, which is the cause of this uncaring attitude. As a result, there is a shortage of such professionals. The Directorate is currently unable to fill this void (Peng et al., 2023; Jahanzaib et al., 2024).

It is acknowledged how important vocational education and training are, but because these services are not provided at the centers, it is extremely difficult for them to become financially independent and self-sufficient. Additionally, such training might help parents conquer their difficulties and experience less anxiety. However, the absence of such programs has an impact on parents of children with disabilities as well as those children themselves. For children with IDs to be included in the future workforce, the government must properly update special education facilities with cutting-edge tools and resources (Haider et al., 2021; Dixi & Ravichandran, 2023).

## **CONCLUSION**

For students with intellectual disabilities, the period between finishing school and starting employment is crucial, and pre-vocational abilities are crucial to their effective integration into the workforce. This study clarifies the parallels and discrepancies between conventional teachers' and vocational trainers' viewpoints on the value of pre-vocational abilities. A smoother transition for children with intellectual disabilities can be encouraged by instructors by acknowledging these differences and encouraging collaboration between the two. The results also highlight the necessity of an inclusive curriculum that meets the various requirements of every student, ensuring that nobody is left behind in the process of empowerment and independence. In conclusion, a society that is inclusive, varied, and compassionate must recognize the value of pre-vocational skills for helping children with intellectual disabilities make the transition from school to the workforce. We can create an environment where everyone, regardless of ability, has equal possibilities to prosper and lead satisfying lives by overcoming the hurdles and providing the necessary assistance.

Pre vocational skills are a base for preparing children with intellectual disabilities for the work force which includes self advocacy, social skills, problem solving, time management, and communication which in turn increases their independence and job prospects. It is very important for traditional and vocational educators to work together which is which is to put academic and practical training together to promote full skill development. IEP's play a large part in which we tailor instruction to what each student brings to the table and which goals are to be achieved in their growth. In an inclusive environment social interaction between students also is promoted and we see rise in self esteem from being placed in dynamic classroom environments. Also vocational programs do a great job of providing real world based learning that is also interest driven and so results in better occupational success. Finally it is very helpful in this phase out to have family included in the change over to the work force which in fact also helps us as educators know what that particular child may need and how best to support them through this transition.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following recommendations are made on the basis of research findings.

1. Provide professional development in the areas of vocational training and traditional education that focuses on the instruction of pre-vocational skills for which intellectually challenged students may benefit from.
2. Improve vocational training programs through collaboration with employers and career centers that will in turn see the revision of curriculums to meet labor market needs and thus better skill development.
3. The learning resources and assistive technologies are made available to students with intellectual disabilities in our schools and training centers.
4. Engage families and communities in the change process which in turn will create a strong support system for students.
5. Foster traditional and vocational educators' interaction and dialogue which in turn will put in place a unified approach to the transition to the workforce.

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