CHAPTER VII

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OF THE
PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED OF ASSAM

7.1 Introduction

Education should have an utilitarian aim. It means that education should help an individual to earn his livelihood. Now, it is admitted on all hands that the school should provide vocational training to the pupils so that they become economically self-sufficient in future. Vocational education not only benefits the individual but leads the society to greater and greater prosperity and industrial advancement. The child of today will become the productive and effective member of the family tomorrow. Therefore, the education system needs to be related intimately to productivity.

Modaliae Commission (1952-54) suggested vocationalisation of secondary education and consequently multipurpose schools were established. The measures of relating education to productivity has been well explained by the Indian Education Commission (1964-’66) and the following four links have been enumerated.
1. Science as a basic component of education and culture.

2. Work-experience as an integral part of general education.

3. Vocationalisation of education especially at the secondary level to meet the needs of industry, agriculture and trade.

4. Improvement of scientific and technological education and research at the University level with special expansion of agriculture and allied sciences.

In the educational policy of 1968 based on the recommendations of Kothari Commission, importance was given on vocationalisation of secondary education.

"Vocationalisation of higher secondary education was a major objective in the reforms envisaged in the Education Policy adopted in 1968. However, the attempts made in the past have not borne fruits and enrolment in this stream, which was expected to include around fifty percent of students at the +2 stage, has remained marginal confined to a few states. The courses started with little imagination and with poor wherewithal, have also lacked in prestige and attractive power. Unless a radical reconstruction can be attempted with sufficient financial backing, there would be no point in continuing this inherently worthwhile experiment. ¹

¹Challenge of Education - a Policy perspective, Ministry of Education, Govt. of India, New Delhi, p. 45.
The Govt. of India, again stressed with more vigour on the vocationalisation of secondary schools in the New Education Policy of 1985.

Vocational training is very essential for making the physically handicapped child self-sufficient in life. It is now believed that vocational rehabilitation services enable the handicapped children to attain social and economic independence and develop in them a sense of dignity, self-respect and a feeling of security. Vocational rehabilitation changes a disabled or handicapped person from a state of dependence and helplessness to one of independence and usefulness. Keeping in view the importance of vocational rehabilitation of the physically handicapped, vocational education and vocational guidance should be organised in the secondary schools, for the physically handicapped students.

"Vocational rehabilitation, for example is that part of the continuous and co-ordinated process of rehabilitation which involves the provision of those vocational services e.g. vocational guidance, vocational training and selective placement designed to enable a disabled person to secure and retain suitable employment".  

It has been found in the study that no stress has been given on vocational education and training in the special institutions for the physically handicapped. At present no institution provides vocational training to the students. Though pre-vocational training is imparted to the students in some trades, the quality and standard of such training fail to prepare them to become economically independent in future.

The present system of education for the physically handicapped in Assam serves to encourage the students to go for higher education and to take teaching as a career. Few students go for higher education and others remain idle at home as a result of which the parents as well as the handicapped students feel anxious thinking about their future. Therefore, courses in schools for the physically handicapped need to be completely overhauled with a view to providing effective vocational training to the students so that they can be made fit for handling jobs.

Since the employment market in India is highly competitive, there is, therefore, a critical need for the handicapped persons to be properly evaluated and assisted with a view to facilitating their early rehabilitation in the society. When we talk about gainful employment of the disabled, the question arises of the job in which he would
be most productive. Any successful vocational rehabilitation service should consist of the following essential features.

(a) Assessment (b) Vocational guidance (c) Physical conditions (d) Social services (e) Skilful training (f) Selective placement (g) Follow-up services (h) Residential accommodation (i) Training allowances (j) Other benefits.

(a) **Assessment**

It is the most important aspect of vocational rehabilitation. It is essential to evaluate the physical and mental skills and capacities of the handicapped in order to find out the suitability for various jobs through psychological and workshop evaluation.

(b) **Vocational Guidance**

The vocational objective is to be determined on the basis of the physical, educational and vocational abilities of the person concerned. In the light of this, the physically handicapped is to be given advice. For the physically disabled, because of his physical limitations, the counselling is to be more specific, that is, the client is to be guided toward a particular job and helped in handling the job. The vocational diagnosis and the measures to be adopted in order to get a job, are to be determined in co-operation with the person to
be employed because the client's inclination is to be given the first consideration.

(c) Physical Conditions

The client is to be physically conditioned, that is kept fit for the job through normal activities and recreational programmes in the vocational rehabilitation centres. The physical conditioning may also be done or assisted by restorative or remedial exercises and sometimes it can be done by the use of special equipment.

(d) Social Services

Some amount of social services is also needed for the vocational rehabilitation of the physically handicapped. The social worker may extend assistance to the physically handicapped ones in resolving any conflicts with the employers or co-workers and in maintaining interpersonal relationships.

(e) Skill Training

For successful discharge of the duties in the vocational field, skill training is necessary. Such skill training will enable the disabled to earn his livelihood satisfactorily. The rehabilitee is to be placed for skill-training in a vocational rehabilitation centre preferably nearer to his place of residence, because then only he can contribute to the
(f) Selective Placement

It is the last but the most important link in the whole process of vocational rehabilitation. Through this, the qualitative evaluation of all other services whether medical or social as factors of employability may be done.

(g) Follow-up Services

In order to assess the success and efficiency of job placement, the follow-up services are to be extended to the period as required by the employees. Moreover, follow-up services will detect the factors hindering the successful performance of an employee who is physically handicapped.

(h) Residential Accommodation

Each vocational Rehabilitation centre is to provide residential accommodation with domestic facilities of high quality. Such accommodation should provide all facilities for physical and social well-being of the inmates, which is to be ensured by a qualified house-keeper or matron or superintendent.
(i) **Training Allowances**

During the training period each trainee is to be given a monthly allowances to meet his personal expenditures. He may also be encouraged to save a part of it if and when possible.

(ii) **Other Benefits**

Other benefits are also to be extended to him beyond those which will enable him to acquire vocational skills. Among these benefits should be included literary classes, lectures on citizenship, personal hygiene, civic responsibilities and facilities for recreation. Besides, all rehabilitees are to be encouraged by vocational Rehabilitation centres to strive for success and independence in life.

(k) **Establishment of co-operatives by handicapped persons**

may be encouraged by providing special concessions to them. Industries Department can help in marketing the produce of the handicapped entrepreneurs. Voluntary agencies may also extend their assistance to such ventures.

There should be closer inter-relationship between the vocational training given to the handicapped and the job opportunities open to them. Moreover, there should be better co-ordination between Govt. and voluntary organisations and
between labour agencies and industries and schools.

Besides, rural vocational rehabilitation programmes are also to be separately prepared. Such programmes are to be pursued in these rural areas where basic rural infrastructure exists in the form of small-scale and cottage industries, rural institutions, labour-incentive public works and co-operatives.

The present study has revealed that most of the disabled children of Assam belong to rural areas and the incidence of disability in the rural areas is greater. But the vocational services are almost non-existent. Therefore, in Assam, the rehabilitation efforts in the rural areas must be accelerated. Keeping an eye to the total social conditions and even prejudices and misconceptions about the causes of disability.

7.2 Vocational Courses for the Physically Handicapped

Based on the principle "Right man for the right job", the following courses are suggested.

7.2.1 Employment of the Blind

Considering the nature of handicaps, employment of the blind is really a difficult problem. Firstly, because, vision has a vital role in man's life and his activities and secondly because the capacity of one who is blind varies considerably
from that of another.

The following are some of the professions where the blind persons can be found suitable.

Music (Vocational and instrumental), law, teaching, journalism, general and business administration, physiotherapy, computer programming, stenography, telephone operators (Using digital telephone) and public address system.

It has been found that the blind students in Assam are not encouraged to select these professions. The educational administrators should take proper steps for the reservation of some seats for the blind in these professions.

The following crafts should be introduced in the secondary schools or other vocational schools for the blind.


The students should be allowed to learn one or two crafts and there should be all types of facilities for the craft works and trained teachers should be appointed.
There should be vocational guidance and counselling in the schools. There must be a placement officer in each school who will cater to the needs of the students of his own school. Achievements and capabilities of the blind children should be highlighted through the mass media like radio, newspaper etc. and public attention is to be drawn towards these children.

7.2.2 Employment of Deaf-mutes

The following types of jobs are suitable for the deaf-mutes.

(a) Fixing stamps, putting seals, mail sortings etc. in the post office.

(b) Writing addresses, counting currency notes, checking of accounts, comparison of statements, typewriting etc.

(c) Liftman, photographers, artists, tailors, gardeners, factory workers, copying and composing jobs and all precision and manual jobs

(d) Teachers in deaf and dumb schools

(e) Factory jobs requiring collating, stuffing, packaging, mechanical assembly, inspection salvage and reclamation operations.
(f) Custodial jobs, wood and metal works, weaving, knitting, hosiery and skilled and unskilled jobs are some other areas where they can be suitably employed. In addition to these some special trades may be suggested for the deaf and dumb girls - nursing, cutting and tailoring, knitting, weaving, food or fruit preservation, embroidery, dancing, cloth-painting, book-keeping etc.

It has been found that there is provision of only pre-vocational training of some crafts in the deaf and dumb school at Kahilipara in Guwahati. The students would not be benefited with the help of such training and therefore the curriculum in the institution should be re-oriented giving more importance to the vocational subjects. Vocational trades like carpentry, tailoring, welding, knitting & embroidery works, soap-making, manufacture of plastic bags, gardening etc. should be introduced in the schools. There should be properly trained instructors and provision for other facilities for different trades in the schools.

As there are facilities for doing agricultural works in Assam, the deaf and dumb students should be given training in agricultural works. The deaf and dumb may be trained in the fields of commercial or fine arts through the different Art colleges in India leading to National Certificate, diploma
or degree.

The deaf and dumb may be sent for training in sheet metal work, wire man ship, fitting, welding, painting, machine operation, instrument mechanism, manufacture of Radio and T.V. etc. at the National Centre in Hyderabad. A centre for such types of training should be established in Assam at the state level and the Ministry of Industry may be entrusted with this responsibility.

A good number of training-cum productive centres with marketing facilities may be attached to the Deaf and dumb school at Kahilipara in which there will be provision for book binding, tailoring, cane-work, soap-making, weaving etc.

There are eight Junior Technical Schools, fourteen Industrial Training Institutes and twelve Polytechnics in Assam. There should be provision for reservation of some seats for the deaf and dumb students in these institutions.

A diagnostic centre should be established in the State for the physically handicapped. This centre will make differential diagnosis and render counselling services in care and training with the help of experts from different disciplines - medical, social and psychological.
More training-cum production centres should be set up by the government as well as private organisations, if necessary with the assistance of world agencies.

In respect of industrial economy and agricultural economy, separate programmes should be made for the urban and the rural areas. For the urban sector, the deaf and dumb may be trained as typist, tracer, compositor, packer, fitter, blacksmith, moulders, welder, carpenter, turner, electrician, mechanic, pattern-maker, tailer, book-binder, launderer, shop-keeper, dry-cleaner and photographer etc.

In the rural sector, they may be trained in poultry and animal husbandry, pottery, hair-cutting, black-smithy, shoe-making, tailoring, carpentry, gardening, weaving etc.

Economic rehabilitation of the deaf and dumb is very important. If they are provided with adequate facilities, they will act as dedicated workers and enlightened citizens of the state because they possess the inherent capacity for it. But they can be best employed as workers in offices, factories and industrial organisations.
7.2.3 Economic and Vocational Rehabilitation of the Orthopaedically Handicapped

It has been found in the study that there are no special institutions for giving vocational training to the orthopaedically handicapped. But the orthopaedically handicapped persons are fit for different types of works. The training in the following may be suggested for the orthopaedically handicapped.

(i) Loss of Functions in the Lower Extremities

These persons must be able to move about with some sort of walking aide.

(a) Teaching jobs in schools, colleges and technical institutions (b) Research data compilation and processing, statistical evaluation (c) Clerical, executive and administrative jobs including accounts, sales etc. but they should entail no or less moving about (d) All skilled and semiskilled and manual jobs requiring the use of upper extremities, but less or no moving about such as liftmen, compositers, proofreaders, telephone operators, salesman, typists, stenotypists, peons, clerks, accountants, receptionists, electrician, plumbers, cashiers, technician, tailors, painters, artists, moulder etc. (e) Technocrats such as doctors, engineers and other professional executives, judges etc.
(ii) **Loss of Function in Upper Extremities**

These persons must have one useful hand. There may be partial or complete loss of function in the other hand or arm.

(a) Teaching jobs in schools, colleges and technical institutions.

(b) Research data compilation, statistical evaluation in various categories of research institutions, laboratories, offices etc. but requiring little or no use of instruments or complicated machines or tools.

(c) Clerical and senior administrative or executive jobs requiring no or little use of instruments but moving about.

(d) Public prosecutors and government advocates

(e) Semi-skilled and unskilled jobs which can be handled with one useful hand along with prosthesis in the other hand such as liftman, waterman, proofreader, peons, clerks, accountants, receptionists, artists, chowkidars.

Considering the nature of handicaps of the orthopaedically handicapped students, different vocational courses should be introduced in the special units of the orthopaedically handicapped, to be established in Assam.
(iii) Liaison should be maintained with the industrialists and employers of other professions for the placement of the orthopaedically handicapped in their establishments and they should be persuaded to provide on the job-training for them.

(iv) Provision must be made for vocational and pre-vocational training and different types of training programmes may be introduced in variety of combinations and settings. The training programmes should include training in:

(a) Basic skills that will prepare the trainees in the fundamental and academic skills in reading, writing and typing. Most of the jobs require such skills.

(b) Core skills that prepare the trainees for more complex job activities, general or particular.

(c) Specific skills that prepare the trainees for a particular job.

(d) Work-adjustment that relates to every job and covers all the aspects of training and is concerned with motivation.

(v) Some industries may also assume the role of 'Good will' industries like those in some eastern and western countries of the world. Good will industries may provide training to the disabled in ware-housemanship, food services, sewing,
dry-cleaning, laundering, upholstery, wood works, small ware repairs, bi-cycle repairs. The training is provided on the basis of the trainee's efficiency and employment potential. The training programme is also to be made on the basis of the particular demands for skilled or semi-skilled services that are available in the placement-market of the society.

(vi) There is to be some fixed quota of job reservation for the orthopaedically handicapped in all sectors, private or public.

(vii) Architectural and structural obstacles should be removed from the buildings in which orthopaedically handicapped employees will work.

(viii) There should be follow-up services for recording the progress of training in order to determine whether the placement has been satisfactory and to evaluate the success of a particular training programme. It should also provide an opportunity to remove the obstacles if there are any for satisfactory job performance. And the period of follow up is to be determined by the requirement of the trainee because some may need a greater degree of supervision at later stage than others.
(ix) All trainees of the rural vocational rehabilitation centres should be provided with adequate kit of tools appropriate to their training and enough raw-materials to enable them to establish themselves in self-employment.

(x) Suitable transport facilities should be provided for the orthopaedically handicapped workers. It constitutes an important part of their vocational rehabilitation scheme. Sometimes, it has been found that even when the handicapped person has been rehabilitated medically, educationally or vocationally, he cannot work or live as everybody else because there is no suitable transport facility for him. So the whole process of rehabilitation becomes fruitless endeavour, because even passing through the various phases of rehabilitation, the handicapped person fails to live an independent and productive life. Transport problems are then to be removed for him.

(xi) In order to remove the obstacles, the state may initiate the "Rehabus Scheme". This scheme is the first experimental project introduced in Hongkong to provide special services to the physically handicapped in solving their transport

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difficulties.

The goal of vocational rehabilitation is to assist the disabled in being economically independent and to make him a productive citizen of the country. The "Rehabus Scheme" is a step towards it.

The Rehabus scheme (originally the minibus scheme for the disabled) is aimed at testing the feasibility of a fixed route and scheduled minibus service in meeting the transport needs of the disabled at a reasonable cost. The scheme is to provide a door to door service operating on a fixed schedule and in a fixed route. It is a special transport service to and from the place of work to enable all those who cannot get engaged in any gainful employment. Such service possesses the following characteristics -

(1) Directness of the route to provide door to door service.
(2) Structuring of the routes - routes are predetermined based on the origin and destinations of the selected passengers.
(3) Public service - it is public service as distinguished from a private service like private automobiles.
(4) Method of service is pre-arranged.
(5) Comfortable service with guaranteed seats with assistance for boarding the bus and alighting from it.
(6) Reliability of service.

(7) Peak-hours operation – to enable the passengers to go to the place of work at the office hour.

(8) Ancillary service – for recreation, shopping, visits, medical treatment on holidays on the pre-booked basis.

The two essential inputs for such service are manpower and finance. The same scheme may also be pursued in India on the central and state govt. level. As the study has revealed that there are transport problems for the orthopaedically handicapped, the Govt. of Assam may initiate such a scheme in the city of Guwahati and big towns of the state at the initial stage and gradually there may be further expansion of the service. The researcher thinks that such an attempt will be highly beneficial for the orthopaedically handicapped employees in various field of vocation.

7.3 Some Common Suggestions for the Economic and Vocational Rehabilitation of the Physically Handicapped

1. Sheltered Workshop for the Physically Handicapped – Most severely handicapped persons need special arrangements for preparing them for entry into the labour market. Advanced countries have solved the problems by establishing a network of sheltered workshops. They are truely the last resort for
giving employment to physically handicapped with serious loss of functions. They focus on unskilled, labour-intensive work after proper training such as packaging, bench assembly, wood working, metal working, inspection, custodial work, manufacturing jobs, reclamation, salvage operation etc. Sheltered workshops are indeed indispensable and will go a long way in ameliorating the difficulties of handicapped for these are the final major component of the rehabilitation system and provide employment for those who have few options in the competitive market. Sheltered workshops are thus not only the employers of last resort but also a source of service for those most in need welfare for workfare in its true sense.4

But it has been found that there is only one sheltered workshop for the blind in the district of Nagaon of Assam and the problems in the workshop have been discussed previously. The Govt. of Assam should seriously contemplate ways and means to update... and modernize the same and the blind workers should be given due wages.

Opening up of more sheltered workshops for the physically handicapped should be done for the persons who are unsuitable


34. A Blind student working in a work-shop of Ramkrishna Mission Blind School.

35. Students working in a vegetable garden in Ramkrishna Mission Blind School, Narendrapur.
for employment in normally run open industries. The sheltered workshops should be training-orientation oriented.

Different types of crafts should be included in the programmes of the workshops e.g. soap-making, cane and bamboo works, book-binding, carpentry, tailoring, knitting and embroidery, welding etc.

There should be properly trained instructors in the workshops. The handicapped workers should be given due wages and there should be proper board and lodging facilities for the handicapped workers in them.

2. *Vocational Rehabilitation Centres*

There is only one vocational rehabilitation centre for the physically handicapped in Assam. There should be at least one vocational rehabilitation centre in each district of Assam, for the physically handicapped and the centres should be known as *District Rehabilitation Centres* for the physically handicapped. The centres should be designed to offer guidance and provide comprehensive facilities in the rural areas at the grass-root level. The study has revealed that there is lack of awareness among the parents regarding the vocational rehabilitation facilities for the physically handicapped persons. The centres should develop community awareness regarding the rehabilitation facilities for the handicapped persons. The
centres should demonstrate that the physically handicapped are also capable of competing for open employment. The vocational rehabilitation centres should give importance to the following programmes.

(a) Proper evaluation of the mental abilities by psychological tests.

(b) Various types of training for different vocations/jobs suiting to the local demands and availability of jobs should be arranged.

(c) The trainees should be awarded stipend at the rate of Rs.300.00 per month.

(d) Efforts should be made to place the evaluated physically handicapped client in salaried jobs with the help of special Employment Exchanges and also through direct contact with prospective employers.

(e) The centres should help the handicapped in getting loans from the banks, charitable organisations, trusts etc. for self-employment.

(f) The centres should help the physically handicapped persons in getting certain physical aids such as tricycle, wheel chairs, hearing aids, crutches, artificial limbs, walking sticks etc. from the Govt. of India, Ministry of Social
Welfare according to their needs. Help from organisations like Lions club, Rotary Club and individual philanthropists should also be sought.

3. Special Employment Exchange

As already mentioned, there is only one Special Employment Exchange for the physically handicapped at Guwahati in Assam. But the number of registered unemployed physically handicapped persons is very low as most of the physically handicapped persons do not know about the existence and functioning of the special employment exchange for the physically handicapped. Therefore, people should be made aware of the programmes and functions of the employment exchanges for the physically handicapped. Two more special employment exchanges should be established one in upper Assam and the other in lower Assam, for the proper placement of qualified and eligible handicapped persons without much trouble.

4. Whenever necessary, special technical institutions should be established by the state government or voluntary organisations to impart training to the handicapped.

Workshops or co-operative societies engaged in agro-based industries should be set up by suitable agencies.
5. **Self-employment for the Physically Handicapped**

There are ample scopes for self-employment of the physically handicapped persons in Assam. Loans at concessional rates of interest should be arranged through banks, charitable organisations, trusts etc. to facilitate those handicapped persons who wish to be self-employed.

Following are some illustrative occupations for self-employment.

(i) Selling stationary including pencils, ball point pens etc. (ii) Selling books (iii) Selling candy, etc, coffee etc. (iv) Selling combs, nail cutters, handkerchiefs and other wares (v) Cycle repairing (vi) Repairing ploughs and other agricultural equipment (vii) Making of ropes and other rural products (viii) Dairy (ix) Poultry (x) Bee-keeping (xi) Soap making (xii) Chalk and candle making (xiii) Tailoring (xiv) Carpentry etc.

6. A number of posts should be created and the physically handicapped should be employed in the Plywood, Tea, Oil sectors of Assam. In all India Radio also the physically handicapped should be employed.

7. The employers in different organisation should be made to strictly adhere to the Govt. direction of 3 p.c. reservation
It is the duty of the society to provide more incentives to employers who engage a large number of handicapped employees.

8. There should be a master plan and a time bound programme and importance should be given to the implementation of legislations existing in the statutes book and if necessary fresh legislation should be made for complete rehabilitation of the handicapped through employment in all the public as well as private enterprises.

9. Reservations of jobs in (a) and (b) categories under the Govt. should also be made by legislation and not merely by executive orders.

10. In the U.S.S.R., the handicapped are given full fare concessions in road transport and 50 p.c. concession for journeys by rail, sea and air. All these facilities should be extended to the handicapped in our country also.

As the unemployment problems is a burning question, therefore stress should be laid on self-employment of the physically handicapped. In the private sector, the employers may have doubts regarding the efficiency of the handicapped persons, therefore proper training should be given to the
physically handicapped in order to make them efficient and competent for employment in different jobs.

It is sincerely hoped that the state Govt. of Assam would consider the above suggestions for the vocational rehabilitation of the physically handicapped. This would definitely ease the situation to a great extent and the physically handicapped people in our state will be greatly benefited.