

The Impact of the Vocational Skills Training Program for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities under the Transition Class in Tagoloan Central School

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ABSTRACT

The Vocational Skills Training Program was initiated by the Special Education (SpEd) teachers of Tagoloan Central School. This program was designed to empower Learners with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) between the ages of 14 to 25 through cooking skills development and the promotion of social integration. The program was created out of the pressing need to address the limited opportunities available to this marginalized group within the community. It aims to demonstrate skill mastery in cooking of the learners from needing maximum assistance to independent individuals and improve the social skills of the learners while doing the cooking activities. By offering hands-on cooking experiences such as cooking rice, French fries, frying fish, eggs and making pastillas (milk dessert) learners acquired essential life skills, gain confidence, and explore their creative potential. Participants helped each other do the cooking task while singing their favorite songs, turn taking, sharing and cleaning cooking equipment thus breaking down barriers and dispelling misconceptions about intellectual disabilities. Result showed that each learner developed independence, self-reliance, and confidence towards work while some needed minimum to maximum assistance. Social integration was fostered through cooking activities as individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to share cookery skills, exchange stories, and build connections. This training for have proven effective because with an average of 75% as the cooking and social skills of the learners enhanced their work skills ready for their future employment. Further research is needed to assess the long-term impact and scalability of this vocational training initiative.

Keywords: vocational skills, intellectual disability, employment, social integration, cooking skills

Introduction of Best Practices

Within special education, efforts to provide meaningful inclusion and empowerment opportunities for people living with intellectual disabilities had led to innovative strategies beyond classroom instruction. These best practices report examined an innovative vocational skills training program implemented within Tagoloan Central School's Transition Class. This program had been tailored specifically for eight (8) learners with intellectual disabilities by providing practical skills that promote independence and social integration. These core abilities encompass cooking rice, French fries, eggs, pan cakes and making pastillas (milk dessert) before finally frying fish for breakfast integrating the social skills.

Phuthi (2022) explained that technical and vocational education provision in Zimbabwe: leveraging institutional support for learners with special educational needs" underscores the importance of adequately training individuals with special educational needs within the technical and vocational education system. He added that training seeks to provide these learners with the skills, knowledge, and competencies necessary to not only access vocational education but also to thrive in it. Further, it emphasizes that institutional support, such as tailored curricula, accessible facilities, and trained educators, is essential to ensure that learners with special needs can effectively participate and benefit from vocational education programs. Thus, in Zimbabwe and similar contexts, this inclusive approach aims to empower individuals with special needs, enhance their employability, and contribute to their overall well-being and integration into society.

This training program developed by Special Education Teachers for learners with intellectual disabilities was rooted in the imperative of addressing the unique needs of this marginalized group. By tailoring the program to their abilities and providing hands-on experiences, the researchers aimed to empower them with practical life skills, booster self-confidence, and promote social integration. Limited opportunities in the community highlight the urgency of this initiative, as it offers a pathway to greater independence and enhances the quality of life for participants. Special Education Teachers are uniquely positioned to create a supportive, inclusive environment, and this program seeks to bridge the existing gap by offering a well-rounded, inclusive, and empowering vocational training opportunity.

Tagoloan Central School's vocational skills training program represents an inclusive approach to disability-inclusive education that proves its viability as an innovative best practice. Not only has vocational training proven its worth in terms of skill acquisition but it is also helping individuals with intellectual disabilities live a meaningful, self-sustained life which contributes to more inclusive societies.

Justification of Best Practices Implementation

Implementation of Tagoloan Central School's Transition Class vocational skills training program for individuals with intellectual disabilities is grounded in multiple dimensions of logic. This best practice served as a comprehensive response to their learners' pressing challenges and needs; specifically limited post-school prospects

often lead to dependence and isolation for this learner group; imparting practical skills like cooking rice, frying fish and making pastillas through this curriculum empower learners beyond its walls - thus building capability beyond classroom walls.

As its basis, Pasaribu (2021) stated on his work "Vocational Education at Special Schools in North Sumatra" highlights the effectiveness of vocational training programs in this region for students with special needs. He discussed the positive impact of tailored vocational curricula and the provision of accessible resources, leading to improved skills, self-confidence, and opportunities for these learners. The result emphasized the role of such programs in promoting employability and enhancing the overall quality of life for students with disabilities in North Sumatra.

Tagoloan District in Misamis Oriental, Philippines is only catering elementary learners and cannot proceed to high school level due to lack of teacher for these learners so this training began. The vocational training program trained eight (8) mild to moderate learners with intellectual disability twice in a week, five (5) independent and three (3) needed minimum assistance during cooking activities. Minimum Assistance was needed due to the cognitive ability of the learners through verbal or physical prompts. Thus, more time for intensive training was recommended to achieve the expected skills for these learners and fund will be needed to continue the program because of the amount of the needed ingredients for cooking. As a result of the training, one (1) learner was employed in the Municipal Hall under the General Services Office. More partnership with the local establishment will be needed for the On-the-Job Training (OJT) to broaden their experiences.

Therefore, educating the community and stakeholders had played a critical role in shaping this best practice. Advocates for disability-inclusive education emphasize equipping those with intellectual disabilities with skills necessary for active participation in society; vocational training serves as a beacon of hope, connecting academic learning with real world application. Collaboration among parents, educators and community members ensures its relevance and potential impact is maximized.

Objectives of Implementation

The objectives of best practice implementation are:

1. To demonstrate skill mastery in cooking of the learners from needing minimum assistance to independent individuals.
2. To improve the social skills of the learners while doing the cooking activities.

Best Practices Implemented

The execution of the vocational skills training program at Tagoloan Central School is a holistic endeavour rooted in careful planning, collaboration, and dynamic instructional strategies. Central to its implementation is the development of a tailored curriculum that breaks down culinary tasks into manageable steps. This curriculum takes into account the cognitive abilities and learning styles of each learner in the Transition Class with intellectual disabilities, ensuring accessibility and engagement.

The teachers created an Action Plan for the entire activity as a blueprint for the activities to follow. Then a letter was sent to the principal to allow them to do the program. The researchers tapped the Stakeholders to be their partner in educating the learners. Van's Snack Hub - a small business inside the school allowed the learners to experience cooking French Fries and sell it to the customers. The researchers scheduled the cooking activities as presented below.

Table 1
Action Plan for the Vocational Training Program

Date	Activities	Materials and Ingredients Needed	Remarks
August 2022	Cooking Rice	Rice Cooker, Rice, water, measuring cup	5 out of 8 were independent
September 2022	Frying Egg	Frying Pan, ladle, eggs, oil, salt	6 out of 8 were independent
October 2022	Cooking French Fries	Fryer, oil, French fries, powdered cheese	5 out of 8 were independent
November 2022	Making Pan Cakes	Frying Pan, ladle, measuring cup, measuring spoon, all-purpose flour, baking soda, sugar, evaporated milk, butter, vanilla,	6 out of 8 were independent
December 2022	Making Pastillas (milk Dessert)	Mixing bowl, spoon, water cellophane (wrapper), plastic gloves, powdered milk, condensed milk, marshmallows	5 out of 8 were independent
January 2023	Frying Fish	Frying Pan, ladle, oil, fish	4 out of 8 were independent

Table 1 of the Vocational Training Program showed the schedule of the training and its activities, the materials and ingredients needed and the remarks of the learners if they needed assistance. This means that the result depends on the complexity of the activity and the cognitive ability of the learners. The less complex the task the more independent the learners be. Like in frying eggs, 6 out of 8 learners were independent because the task was easy for them but in frying milkfish 4 out of 8 learners were independent because the task was complicated. Therefore, learners with Intellectual Disabilities can acquire the skills when given an opportunity, support and more experiential approach. Parents were encouraged to do the activities at home to strengthen the skills. The challenge of the program was the fund needed to sustain the program for a longer period of time in terms of finances.

During the implementation process, integration of multisensory experiences was done. Educators employ tactile, olfactory, and gustatory elements to facilitate deeper understanding and retention. Learners are encouraged to touch, smell, and taste the ingredients as they engage in practical culinary activities, creating a sensory-rich learning environment that caters to diverse sensory preferences.

Collaborative learning is a cornerstone of the program's implementation. Group activities are thoughtfully woven into the curriculum to encourage peer interaction, cooperation, and communication. These activities provide learners with opportunities to develop social skills and a sense of camaraderie, fostering a supportive community within the classroom.

The implementation of the program is marked by a deliberate progression of skills. Students begin with simpler tasks like cooking rice and gradually advance to more complex activities such as frying fish and making pastillas. This gradual skill-building approach not only ensures mastery of individual tasks but also instills a sense

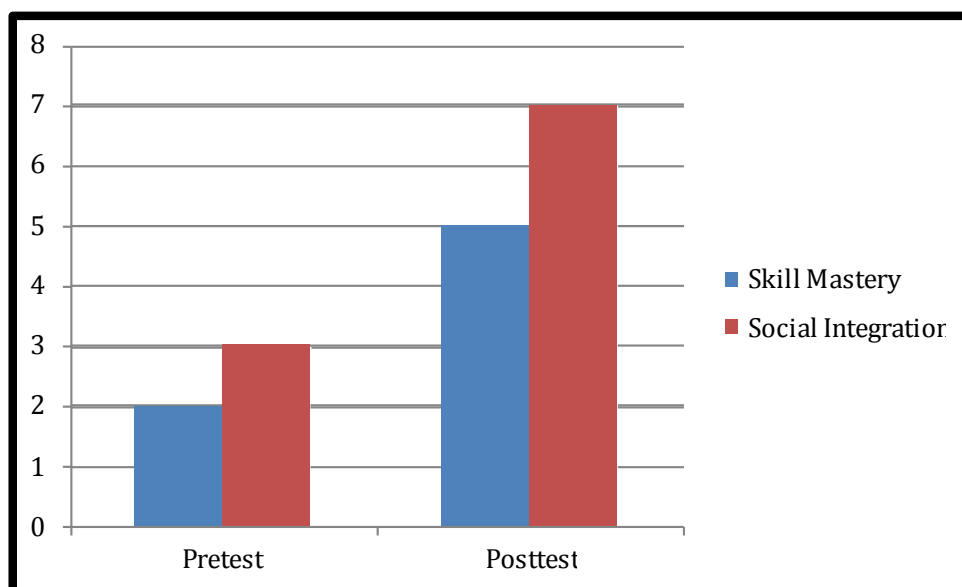
of accomplishment and self-confidence, motivating learners to embrace challenges and strive for continuous improvement.

Lastly, the program's impact is amplified through community integration. Learners can do OJT to the partnered stakeholders but needed assistance during their meltdowns and seizure attacks.

In conclusion, the implementation of the vocational skills training program exemplifies a multifaceted approach. It encompasses curriculum customization, multisensory learning, collaborative strategies, progressive skill cultivation, parents involvement and community engagement. By combining these elements, the program creates a rich and supportive environment that empowers learners with intellectual disabilities to develop essential skills, nurture their sense of identity, and ultimately thrive as active contributors to society.

Impact of Best Practices Implemented

Figure 2
Skills' Training and Livelihood Program



As shown in Figure 1, the result of the conduct of the pretest and posttest of the skills' training and livelihood program of the eight learners with intellectual disabilities aged 13-25 shows low skills in their pretest and improve during the post test. Social Integration got 7 out of 8 learners improved due to the interaction they had during the activities. Skills Mastery had 5 out of 8 learners who improved to independent learners because of their cognitive ability that they need least assistance on measurements and safety precautions. This means that the skills training is effective and shows big improvement to the learners that they can be independent individuals. This implies that these learners can have job opportunities and be employed soon when given proper training.

The implementation of the livelihood skills training program for individuals with intellectual disabilities at Tagoloan Central School has yielded a transformative impact, aligned with the program's objectives. The impact is evident across various dimensions, highlighting the profound positive changes experienced by the learners, their families, and the broader community.

Skill Mastery: Learners have successfully acquired a diverse array of practical skills, ranging from cooking rice to making pastillas. This mastery has not only equipped them with tangible capabilities but has also elevated their self-esteem and self-confidence. As they confidently demonstrate their culinary skills, a newfound sense of accomplishment radiates among the learners, bolstering their belief in their own abilities.

Social Integration and Transition Preparedness: Collaborative learning activities have facilitated the development of essential social skills, enabling learners to communicate, collaborate, and engage with their peers more effectively. This has resulted in enhanced social integration within the classroom and beyond. Moreover, the acquired vocational skills have positioned learners with intellectual disabilities for a smoother transition into adulthood, with potential pathways for vocational pursuits, continued education, and self-sustaining endeavors.

Table 2
Impact of the Implemented Best Practices

Impact Areas	Outcomes
Skill Mastery and Confidence	5 out of 8 Learners exhibit proficiency in cooking skills, leading to heightened self-esteem and a strong sense of accomplishment as independent individuals. They can cook rice, fry egg and fish, make pan cakes and pastillas independently.
Social Integration	7 out of 8 Increased peer interactions, improved communication, and a sense of belonging are observed within the classroom. These learners can share their experiences with the classmates, sing songs while doing the activities, take turns in preparing the mixtures, wash the materials after the task which made them responsible individuals.

In conclusion, the impact of the implemented vocational skills training program is far-reaching and multi-faceted. It resonates with the program's objectives by empowering 75% of learners with intellectual disabilities to lead more independent, inclusive, and purposeful lives, both within their immediate environment and the wider community.

Summary and Recommendations

The journey through the vocational skills training program for individuals with intellectual disabilities at Tagoloan Central School showcases a remarkable transformation, guided by a comprehensive set of best practices. The program's implementation, deeply rooted in addressing real-world challenges and harnessing the potential of learners, has yielded impactful outcomes across multiple dimensions.

By imparting a diverse range of practical skills, from cooking rice to making pastillas, the program has not only equipped learners with tangible abilities but has also elevated their self-esteem and confidence. The collaborative learning activities have fostered social integration, enabling learners to communicate, collaborate, and connect with peers, thus enriching their sense of belonging.

The program has positioned learners for a smoother transition into adulthood by cultivating vocational skills that offer potential pathways for further education, vocational pursuits, and entrepreneurship. Families have been actively engaged in the learning journey, reinforcing skills at home and contributing to a supportive and cohesive learning environment.

The emphasis on community integration has broken down barriers and challenged societal perceptions. Learners' active participation in communal events has showcased their capabilities, fostering a more inclusive community spirit. The individualized learning approach, combined with holistic development, has nurtured well-rounded individuals who not only possess practical skills but also exhibit cognitive, emotional, and social growth.

In conclusion, the vocational skills training program stands as a testament to the power of disability-inclusive education. It reflects a paradigm shift from focusing solely on academic learning to preparing learners with intellectual disabilities for active participation in society. The impact achieved aligns with the program's objectives – skill mastery, enhanced self-esteem, social integration, transition preparedness, family engagement, community inclusion, individualized learning, and holistic development. This comprehensive approach equips learners with the tools and confidence to lead meaningful lives, thereby contributing positively to their families, communities, and society at large.

Therefore, the vocational skills training program has had an incredible transformative effect on learners with intellectual disabilities, instilling them with a sense of achievement while elevating self-esteem and confidence. Furthermore, learning real world applicable skills creates independence which enables individuals to actively contribute within their families and communities - as well as providing a pathway toward adulthood, such as more successful integration into vocational pursuits or further education opportunities; by sharing culinary talents at community events the program serves to promote community integration while dismantling social barriers

As the journey continues, there are several recommendations to further enhance the impact of the vocational skills training program:

1. **Continuous Skill Progression:** Implement a structured framework to monitor learners' skill progression, ensuring that the program remains adaptive and responsive to individual growth trajectories.

2. Expanding Community Integration: Collaborate with local businesses or organizations to provide learners with opportunities to showcase their skills in real-world settings, fostering even greater community inclusion.
3. Life Skills Curriculum: Integrate additional life skills, such as budgeting, time management, and grocery shopping, to further enhance learners' independence and preparedness for adulthood.
4. Teacher Training: Provide continuous professional development for educators to stay updated with the latest methodologies and strategies in disability-inclusive education.
5. Parent Workshops: Offer workshops and resources to families that empower them to support their child's skill development and personal growth effectively.
6. Collaborative Research: Engage in collaborative research initiatives to continually assess the program's impact and refine best practices based on evidence-based insights.

By embracing these recommendations, the vocational skills training program can continue to flourish, equipping individuals with intellectual disabilities with the tools they need to lead empowered, and inclusive lives, breaking barriers, and forging a more compassionate and accepting society.

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