ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR PERSONS WITH LOCOMOTOR DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

Employment is a means of subsistence, to support oneself and his dependents. In any society, work is more than an activity. It is a major contributing factor to a sense of well being. This is all the more important for persons with disabilities (PWD), for whom securing a job and becoming self reliant is the most critical one. Provision of gainful employment is a vital assistance to PWD not only from the point of view of his economic needs but also to boost him psychologically to live with his disability. Vocational rehabilitation (securing and retaining a job) is the crux of comprehensive rehabilitation management process. India has been progressive in recognizing the rights of persons with disabilities. The national policy for persons with disabilities seeks to create an environment that provides them equal opportunities, protection of their rights and full participation in society. Economic empowerment is the most important aspect in empowerment of persons with disabilities and therefore, the government has been promoting employment of persons with disabilities through education and vocational training. Goverment is mandated to provide 3% reservation in employment to persons with disabilities. It is the private sector who has to come forward and provide employment opportunities to PWDs. Given the right environment and job selection, there is absolutely no doubt that a person with disability is in no way less capable than anybody else.

This paper is a descriptive and conceptual paper about the challenges of PWDs, needs and problems, present employment scenario, existing and prevailing employment avenues for PWDs, central government schemes and incentives. Paper also emphasizes on the deficit area and the role of social worker in creating awareness and advocacy. There has to be a robust policy framework as well as an efficient and effective delivery mechanism. The ultimate aim and goal is social integration of PWDs in the main stream of community thus creating inclusive society adding to progress of nation.

Keywords: Persons with disabilities, Employment, Government, schemes

Introduction

The Persons with Disabilities Act defines disability as blindness, low vision, leprosy-cured, hearing impairment, locomotor disability, mental retardation, or mental issues. The last Indian Census of 2011 showed that 2.21 percent of the Indian population, or 27 million people, were found to have disabilities. Under Indian law, a person must be suffering from at least forty percent disability as certified by a medical authority to be a “person with disability”. A medical authority is a state certified hospital or institution that can issue a disability certificate.
According to Census 2011, persons with disabilities in rural areas are much higher than in urban areas. The Office of The Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities notes that approximately three-quarters of the persons with disabilities are in the rural areas. Thus, the number of persons with disabilities is much higher than 2011 census count as lack of access to medical facilities in rural areas may not enable people to get certified as disabled. People in rural areas usually lack the skills and are disconnected from the labour market. Also, the proportion of persons with disability in movement was highest (20.3%) as compared to other types of disability according to Census 2011.

Even though persons with disabilities constitute a significant proportion of population in India, their needs for employment still remain unsatisfied. A survey conducted by National Centre for Promotion of Employment for disabled People (NCPEDP) on top 100 companies in 1999, the rate of employment of disabled persons in private sector was only 0.28% and in multinational companies was as low as 0.05%. Seventy three percent of disabled people were found to be unemployed according to The National Sample Survey Organization projecting that approximately nineteen million disabled people were unemployed based on the 2011 census. However, another study has shown that approximately 70 million are persons with disabilities in India and only 0.1 million have been able to get employment in the industries till now. It becomes important to understand the challenges faced by the persons with disabilities in finding employment opportunities and focus on the increasing role of the Government policies and programmes in promoting employment opportunities for PWDs in India.

Challenges faced by PWDs in employment

In India, persons with disabilities face numerous challenges when looking for developing skills for gaining meaningful employment opportunities and becoming self-dependent by earning a decent livelihood. The study of challenges faced by the persons with disabilities in employment is important to understand the significant role Government can play to remove these barriers in employability of the persons with disabilities. The challenges can be from two sides – Persons with disability and from the Companies which are as follows:

Lack of accessible education

Persons with disabilities may not be able to contribute to the labour market due to their lack of employability skills and education. The literacy rate among the persons with disabilities is quite low which may not enable them to be functionally productive even if they are hired for a job. The schools and higher educational institutions are not well-equipped to cater to the special needs of PWDs. School may lack the basic infrastructure and accessibility like ramps/lifts etc that enables the persons with locomotor disability to attend classes without any hindrances. Families of such CWDs / PWDs feel the financial burden for their medical assistance and may not be willing to spend on their education further. Children with disabilities rarely opt for higher education.

Low self esteem

Persons with disabilities usually suffer from low self-esteem and confidence and doubt their abilities to find employment. They develop inferiority complex and start isolating themselves from social gatherings. In rural areas, such persons are often bullied and considered a burden. Persons with disabilities start attaching a social stigma and stop finding employment. Even if they are hired, they suffer from low self-esteem and stop participating at work.
**Lack of basic living skills**

Persons with disabilities may not able to perform the daily activities like use of washrooms, personal hygiene, grooming, travelling safely etc. Such hindrances often de-motivate them to take up a job as the environment doesn’t support them and finally they become dependent on others for a living.

**Preference for Government jobs**

PWDAct reserves 3% of all categories of jobs in Government sector for persons with disabilities. However, a small proportion of people have succeeded in finding employment in the industries. Persons with disabilities repeatedly sit for entrances and might not be successful due to lack of knowledge of English, computer etc. They finally lose hope and feel frustrated when they are not able to pass the exam.

**Disfavor Corporate sector**

Persons with disabilities usually are reluctant in joining the corporate sector as they may lack the access to technology, reasonable qualifications, knowledge of English language, good communications and management skills. Corporates usually stress to employ persons with disabilities who are independent. However, Persons with disability who are highly dependent on their family members may be unable to seek employment. Sometimes, the overprotective parents and relatives only create psychological constraints for the persons with disabilities to be independent.

**Health Issues**

Lack of medical treatment and assistance may further deteriorate the condition of persons with disabilities further creating obstacles in their employability. Persons with locomotor disabilities might not get an access to wheelchairs and continue with bamboos and wooden sticks which create problems in their mobility at work.

**Dependence on Government Incentives**

The persons with disabilities may be highly dependent on the financial assistance and pensions given under various schemes of Government and shall be resistant in taking up jobs even if they have all the abilities to be hired by organizations. Such persons are concerned with their survival and meet their basic needs which may be fulfilled by the minimum assistance given to them by the government.

**Disconnect with labour market**

Persons with disabilities may not be able to connect themselves with the labour markets due to lack of access. Such persons isolate themselves and may not be updated with the information about recruitments in various jobs for them.

**Lack of encouragement**

Persons with disabilities are often discouraged by their families to take up employment and develop fear and social stigma. They feel that their disabilities have led to loss of employment opportunities for them. They start avoiding social interactions which further create problems in their employability.
Availability of skilled candidates from general category

Companies usually have a pool of talent and skill set of the general category candidates and therefore they may not be interested in hiring the persons with locomotor disabilities. Companies strive for maximizing their profits and in times of recession or financial downturns they may not be willing to hire persons with disabilities unless incentivized to do so by the government.

Lack of adequate infrastructure

Companies usually lack the adequate infrastructure that should be obstacle–free for the persons with locomotor disabilities which further discourage them to apply for jobs.

Lack of centres for hiring PWDs

There are very few centres or employment exchanges that can help the companies to hire persons with disabilities. Such training centres can not only help to connect PWDs with the employers but also help in providing them with necessary training and development for them to become employable.

Government Schemes and Programmes:

Economic Rehabilitation is the most important aspect of rehabilitation of the PWDs which can be achieved only through employment. It can either be self employment or employment in private or public sector. In India, large number of people are disabled belonging to low income groups. Disability creates hindrances for them to lead a productive life. Government can play a significant role in order to make differently–abled persons earning members so that they become self dependent economically and live a life with dignity and respect. Various benefits and schemes provided by the Government in India are discussed below:

Reservation in Jobs

In 1977, the government initiated the policy of reserving 3 percent of jobs (C & D categories) for persons with disabilities which was later extended for A & B Categories as well with PWDAct in 1995 in Government sector. Therefore, 3 percent of vacancies in case of direct recruitment to Group A, B, C, D posts shall be reserved for persons with disabilities of which 1 percent each shall be reserved for persons suffering from 1. Blindness and low vision, 2. Hearing impairment, 3. Locomotor disability and cerebral palsy in the post identified for each disability.

A roster of 100 points is prescribed for reserving positions for persons with disabilities in government employment. Points on roster are reserved every year are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Visually impaired</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing impaired</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically disabled</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Persons with disabilities are given an age relaxation of up to ten years in the upper age limit for recruitment to government positions. They are also exempted from payment of application fees and examination fees.

If for any year the vacancies reserved for persons with disabilities are not filled, the vacancies are required to be carried forward for three consecutive years until a suitable candidate is found. If a suitable candidate is not found even after three years, the vacancies may be filled through interchanging between disabilities after which the reservation ceases to exist.

The government also provides that persons with disabilities should not be denied promotion in their employment on account of the disability / medical fitness if they are otherwise medically fit and can discharge their duties satisfactorily.

The government provides that persons with disabilities recruited to Group C and Group D employment on regional basis may be given postings, as far as possible under administrative constraints, nearest to their native places within the region. Requests from PWDs employees for transfers to offices in or nearest to their native places may also be given priority.

Also, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has reserved 7.5 per cent of all types of dealership agencies of public sector oil companies for persons with physical disabilities.

**Education**

Students with disabilities are provided with three percent reservations in seats in Government and Government aided institutions. Comprehensive Education Scheme for CWDs Scheme provides for built-in infrastructure and transport facilities which is accessible and barrier free, supply of books, uniforms and stationery, specialized learning aids and scholarships for students with disabilities.

Inclusive Education for the PWDs at Secondary Stage (IEDSS) scheme supports children with disabilities aged 14 or above for completing their secondary education from Class 9 to Class 12 in government, local body and government aided schools. The scheme provides for identification of children with disabilities moving from elementary school to secondary and providing them with aids and appliances for their disabilities, access to learning material, transport facilities, hostel facilities, scholarships, books, assistive technologies and provision of scribes and readers.

Under Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, scholarships will be given to persons with disabilities to pursue Mphil/PhD and covers all the universities and institutions under University Grants Commission.

**ADIP Scheme**

Under PWDAct, Government of India has a scheme of assistance of disabled persons for purchasing/fitting of aids and appliances. Under the scheme, persons with locomotor disabilities will be given the following aids/appliances as notified by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

i. All types of prosthetic and orthotic devices.

ii. Mobility aids like tricycles, wheelchairs, crutches walking sticks and walking frames/rolators.

iii. All types of surgical foot wears and MCR chappals.

iv. All types of devices for ADL (activity of daily living).
Aids and appliances help the PWDs to carry on their daily activities and make them functionally productive to carry out employment activities. The scheme aims to provide the needy deprived disabled persons with durable, scientific, modern aids and appliances for their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation. It enables PWDs to overcome the hindrances in performing the activities due to their disability and become functionally productive and employable.

**Scheme for providing Employment to Persons with Disabilities in the Private Sector - Incentives to the Employers**

Government also plays an important role in promoting employment among PWDs by providing incentives to private sector employers.

Sec41 of PWD Act, 1995 provides incentives to employers to ensure that 5 percent of their workforce is composed of persons with disabilities.

Under the scheme, the Government of India shall make a payment of employer’s contribution towards the Employees Provident Fund Organization (EPFO) and the Employees State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) for the first three years in respect of persons with disability appointed in the private sector for a post carrying monthly emoluments up to Rs.25,000.

**Composite Regional Centres for Persons with Disabilities (CRCs)**

The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has set up five Composite Regional Centres for persons with disabilities to counter the lack of adequate facilities for rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities. These Centres shall provide both preventive and promotional aspects of rehabilitation like education, health, vocational training, research and manpower development and employment.

**District Disability Rehabilitation Centers (DDRCs)**

In addition to CRCs, the Ministry with the State Governments is setting up District Disability Rehabilitation Centers (DDRCs) to provide rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities. These centers will provide services for prevention and early detection of disability, medical facilities and provision of training for acquisition of skills through vocational training, job placement in local industries at district headquarters as well as through camp approach. These centres are being set up in unreached areas of the country.

**Accessibility features in public buildings**

Persons with disabilities shall be able to function well in their jobs only when they are provided with a barrier-free environment. The Government under PWD Act provides funds to universities and administrative training centres for installing lifts/ ramps for providing a barrier free access to persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Urban Affairs & Employment is engaged in the process of modifying the existing building bye-laws which would be applicable to all buildings and facilities used by the public to ensure access and barrier free environment to persons with disabilities.

**Tax Benefits**

Under section 80 U of Income tax Act, the persons with disabilities are eligible for deduction of Rs. 50,000 whose disability is in range of 40-80 percent and deduction of Rs. 1,00,000 is given to those
with disability of more than 80 percent. Deduction of Rs. 50,000 can be claimed for dependents with 40 per cent to 80 per cent disability and Rs. 1,00,000 can be claimed for dependants with 80 per cent or more disabilities by the legal guardians of dependent persons with disabilities under section 80 DD under income tax Act for expenditures incurred on medical care, training and rehabilitation expenses or annuity paid. Persons with disabilities are also exempted from payment of professional tax.

**Special Employment Exchanges**

The government has established special employment exchanges for persons with disabilities in all state capitals and special employment cells have been set up in all district headquarters for recruitment to government posts reserved for persons with disabilities. In places where special employment exchanges have not been established, special employment cells have been set up within regular employment exchanges. Persons with disabilities are required to register themselves with the special employment exchanges/cells to be eligible for government employment under reservation. Special employment registrations can also be done at the 17 vocational rehabilitation centres for persons with disabilities.

**Financial Assistance for self employment**

The National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC): provides loans to persons with disabilities for self employment.

The details of the schemes are –

- For agriculture/allied activities – Loan of up to Rs. ten lakh
- For setting up small business in sales/trading sector – Rs. five lakhs
- Purchase of vehicle for commercial hiring – Loan of Rs. ten lakhs
- For setting up small industries unit – Loan of Rs. twenty five lakhs
- For professionally educated/trained persons with disabilities for self-employment – Rs. twenty five lakhs
- For building business premises on own land for employment – Rs. three lakhs

The business for which financial assistance is sought should be directly operated by the applicant. In case of persons with autism, cerebral palsy or mental retardation, the parent/spouse/legal guardian of the applicant is authorized to enter into contract with NHFDC on behalf of the applicant.

**Awards and Recognition**

In order to recognize the efforts and encourage others, separate awards are being presented to the most efficient/outstanding employees with disabilities, best employers, best placement agency/officer, outstanding individuals, outstanding institutions, role models, outstanding creative disabled individuals and for outstanding technological innovation and adaptation of innovation to provide cost effective technology under Scheme of National Awards for the Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities.

Awards are also given to Government Sector, Public Sector Undertakings and private enterprises for creating barrier free environment for the persons with disabilities, the best district in the field of disability rehabilitation, best local level Committee of the National Trust and to the best State...
Channelizing Agency (SCA) of the National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC). Preference is given to the placement of women with disabilities, particularly, from the rural areas and self-employed women.

**Challenges in implementation of Government Schemes**

After listing the various schemes of the Government of India for persons with disabilities, it can be said that the role of government is imperative. However, it is also important to list the challenges in implementation of these schemes for the PWDs to reap the benefits under the scheme.

**Ineffective Job quotas**

It has been seen that the reservation in jobs for persons with disabilities is insufficient and inadequate looking at the large number of persons with disabilities. In 2014, A bench headed by Chief Justice Lodha said that the people with disabilities have not got their dues in the last 19 years despite the framing of persons with disabilities (Equal opportunities, protection of rights and Full Participation) Act 1995. The quota is not sufficient to meet the increasing need.

**Lack of awareness about schemes**

Every year huge amounts of funds are allocated for the spending on various schemes and programmes of the Government for the benefits of persons with disabilities. However, lack of awareness about the schemes among PWDs create hurdles in reaping the desired benefits. Here, the role of social worker comes into play who can create the awareness and also efficiently work for reducing the paper work and other formalities for the PWDs to get the suitable employment.

**Need to sensitize employers**

Employers need sensitization about the issues pertaining to the employment of PWDS. The myths need to be rectified. Acceptance of PWDS as productive members by employers and coworkers is needed to encourage them to look for employment in public/private sector. Various programmes can be undertaken by social worker to remove the stigma of disability and also eliminate the fear of stigma by association for employees of an organization.

**Less incentives for private sector**

Looking at the huge numbers of persons with disabilities in India, it can be said that not everyone can be accommodated in Government sector. Currently, the incentives given to private sector is not enough. The government can increase the qualitative and quantitative incentives given to private sector for employing persons with disabilities and also building a barrier-free infrastructure for them to become independent in their work settings.

**Connecting labour market with rural areas**

Most of the benefits of the schemes and the reservations are reaped by the persons with disabilities in urban areas as they are better equipped with education and training to become employable as compared to the rural persons with disabilities. Persons with disabilities in rural areas are often reluctant to find employment as they fear to lose the mere financial assistance they get from the
government. Therefore, it is needed to first change the mindset of these people to understand the importance of education and skill development for becoming independent and then linking them to labour market. Social workers and NGOs can assist the government for the same.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the government is playing extremely important role in promoting employment opportunities for PWDs through various schemes and programmes. After, understanding the status of PWDs in India and challenges faced by them in finding employment, the responsibility of the Government increases manifold to assist them and make them functionally productive and self–reliant. The deficit areas in role of the Government is also recognized to plug in the shortcomings in implementation of policies and stressing the role of professional social workers and NGOs to assist the Government in creating awareness, counseling and also sensitizing the employers and co-workers about the persons with disabilities. The myths associated with disability stigma have to burst for effective implementation of policies. The psychological constraints of persons with disabilities have to be removed through proper counseling sessions to boost their self confidence and esteem. Self employment can be encouraged with skill development programmes.

Lastly, it can be quoted that give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day but teach a man to fish, and you feed him for a lifetime. Thus, we can say that economic rehabilitation is the crux of comprehensive rehabilitation for persons with disabilities which help them become independent and lead a dignified life.

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