

A Study on the Effectiveness of Vocational Training Programmes for Prisoners in Sri Lanka

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Abstract: *The Prisons Service rehabilitates, and reforms offenders and the vocational training programme (VTP) helps offenders improve their economic and social conditions. And VTP aims to reduce incarcerated populations' poor educational achievement and employability. Despite considerable facilities, the impact of VTPs on Sri Lankan prisoners is dubious. Accordingly, the study aimed to examine the efficiency of VTPs for offenders in Sri Lanka by concentrating on trainers' experiences and perspectives. The sample consisted of five trainers who provided VTPs for inmates, using the purposive sampling method, and the data was gathered through structured interviews. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data of the research. Inmate reactions may reflect learning desire. Participation, willingness, and motivation are evaluated. This study found that inmates were more involved, willing, and motivated to participate in vocational programs. Attendance, punctuality, and the ability to endure long sessions can be used to evaluate participation. Even though many offenders lacked a fundamental understanding of these procedures, all inmates who participated in the training sessions were able to learn everything fast and readily, as indicated by the items they produced. Prisoners provide mutual respect for their leaders during training sessions, listen to and support them, and vocational training reduces alienation. Effective organizational support for VTPs, positive response from inmates to take the training, creating opportunities for inmates to expand their learning and assisting ex-inmates to find self-employment opportunities, learning and behavioral changes among the inmates, promoting interrelationships among the*

inmates, providing an effective incentive system for inmates, and cost avoidance in the prison. Findings suggested that the successful implementation of VTPs for offenders is advantageous for inmates, prison administration, and eventually society.

Keywords: *Vocational Training, Rehabilitation, Prisoners, Effectiveness*

1. Introduction

One of the Prisons Service's primary functions is the rehabilitation and reformation of offenders. The prisoner is a legal term for a person who is incarcerated, and it refers to any person who is currently detained in legal custody because of a court order or other legal requirement (The Prison Security Act, 1992). Their lives should not be confined to the confines of their cells but explored by the world. As a result of the recognition of the government's responsibility for re-integrating prisoners into society, prison authorities have focused a great deal of attention on the implementation of a variety of programs. The provision of VTPs for inmates is one program that provides inmates with greater assistance to improve their economic and social conditions (Linden and Perry, 1983). Vocational education can be considered one of the most widely implemented and evaluated correctional interventions. Under the direction of the Department of Prisons, Sri Lanka offers vocational training to remand as well as short- and long-term inmates, such as Agriculture, Canning, Carpentry, Handloom, Soap & Phenyl Making, Tailoring, and Weaving, as well as Other

Training Programs (Performance Report, 2020). The primary objective of vocational education programmes is to mitigate the effects of low educational attainment and diminished employability that are prevalent among correctional populations (Hujer et al. 2006). In the context of Sri Lanka, the Department of Prisons has decided on vocational training for prisoners. A Nigerian prison study suggests the necessity of evaluating the efficacy of VTPs in prisons by stating that the prison system must be more progressive to enable inmates' ultimate rehabilitation through vocational training. This will facilitate the effective and proper incorporation of prisoners into society. If inmates can effectively utilize this vocational training in prisons, it will facilitate their reintegration into society and improve outcomes by empowering them (Aliu, 2019). And Prisons serve the public by keeping in safe custody those committed by the courts and treating them with humanity and helping them lead a useful life in society as law-abiding citizens after their release from prison. Although substantial provisions have been made, the impact of VTPs on the lives of inmates in Sri Lankan prisons is questionable. In addition, it is questionable whether the specialized training inmates receive in prison is truly beneficial for their survival after they reintegrate into society and whether they build a successful future; this must be investigated. Therefore, the purpose of the study was to determine the effectiveness of VTPs conducted for inmates in Sri Lanka by focusing on the experiences and perspectives of trainers who engage in providing VTPs for inmates. The significance of the study lies in its focus on a neglected area of society and its evaluation of the efficacy of a government programme.

2. Methodology

This study is a qualitative case study exploration conducted in 2021 and the article focused on VTPs in Welikada prison. The sample consisted of five trainers who provided VTPs for convicts.

Therefore, they were selected by using the purposive sampling method, and the data was gathered through structured interviews. A guide for interviews was used to identify the participants' basic demographic information and their perspectives on the effectiveness of the VTPs. In this study, thematic analysis was used as the data analysis method.

Experimental design

In this study, data collection was based on five characteristics, and the effectiveness of VTPs was determined based on that.

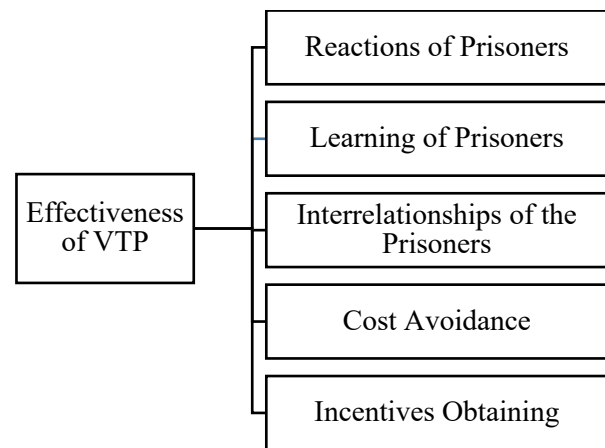


Figure 1

3. Results And Discussion

Table 1: Demographic information of participants

| No | Type of Employment | Years of Service | Teaching Programmes |
|----|-----------------------|------------------|---|
| 1 | Jailor | 12 | Tailoring, Bag Manufacturing |
| 2 | Vocational Instructor | 10 | Hair Cutting, Tailoring, Bakery Items, Handloom |

| | | | |
|---|--------------------------|----|---|
| 3 | Jailor | 14 | Carpentry, Agriculture |
| 4 | Jailor | 08 | Agriculture, |
| 5 | Vocational Instructor | 08 | Broomsticks, Brooms, Soap, Oil, Bakery Items |

Reactions of inmates over the VTPs

Reactions of inmates may indicate the inmate's or trainee's motivation to learn. In addition, their participation, willingness, and drive are evaluated. Inmates had a better level of involvement, willingness, and incentive to participate in these VTPs, according to this study. Participation can be evaluated based on the offenders' training attendance, punctuality, and capacity to withstand the length of the sessions. As stated by all trainers, most detainees are everyday attendants, except for court appearances, health clinic visits, etc. In addition, most of the time, prisoners arrive on time at the training location, and it appears that they participate with great zeal. When it comes to the motivation of the inmates who pass through these VTPs, they have a desire to acquire new knowledge, and a desire to be motivated. According to both participants 1 and 2, guilty convicts are permitted between seven and ten days of home leave to visit their families. The inmates' participation in VTPs is a major element that is examined in this regard. Depending on their length of incarceration, prisoners are granted home leave and are required to participate in the industrial sector's training. Therefore, it is regarded as a prerequisite for granting this freedom to convicted prisoners.

A. Learning of Inmates

All participants in the study agreed that, even though many of the inmates lacked basic knowledge about these practices, all the inmates who participated in the training sessions were able to learn everything taught in the sessions very quickly and easily as evidenced by the products they produced. Most of the time, prisoners use their free time to create unique works of art, which gives them a sense of self-satisfaction. Additionally, some of the convicts' works are promoted by the jail administration, and their market share is mostly due to the quality of the inmates' items. The things manufactured by the convicts are of high quality and may be sold without question. In the batik training, inmates are instructed on a variety of batik masterpieces, which they then manufacture on prison grounds to sell them.

B. Interrelationships of the Inmates

It will be easier to implement these programmes if the inmates maintain healthy relationships with one another throughout the training. All survey participants reported that inmates are very corporative and supportive of training initiatives. In addition, prisoners have the quality of mutual regard; they demonstrate mutual understanding and respect for their leaders during training sessions, listen to and support their leader, and vocational training minimizes prisoner alienation.

C. Cost Avoidance

When correctional programming reduces misconduct, reduces recidivism, and improves post-release job prospects, it can create a monetary benefit for society, mostly in the form of expenditures avoided by preventing crime. The government puts a substantial amount of money into jail maintenance. And this might include staffing costs, utility charges, costs for the convicts' meals and clothing, as well as several other costs associated with the prison's maintenance. According to the study's

five participants, prisoners may be eligible for early release if they request it. Consequently, the jail administration considers a variety of inmate-related facts. One of these facts could be the prisoners' exemplary conduct within the prison walls. When convicted prisoners appeal for release from prison or a reduction in their term, the prison administration and the courts consider the inmates' good behavior as one of the criteria. Participation in the VTPs could encourage prisoners to act well and demonstrate it to others. And it will assist them in reducing their prison sentence. They stressed how VTPs could aid offenders in maintaining their good behavior within the jail. "Prisoners may not need to spend their time chatting and fighting with other convicts." They can engage in significant activities. So, they may demonstrate proper conduct within the institution." As a result, if the number of prisoners can be reduced, the maintenance costs of the jail will be cut to a certain degree.

D. Incentives Obtaining

There are few monetary and non-monetary incentives in place to encourage the involvement of offenders in these training programmes. Regarding monetary incentives, agreements have been made to deposit a specific amount of money into the bank accounts of offenders who participate in these activities. In addition, prisoners who participate in programs are entitled to a daily wage for their services. And in terms of non-monetary incentives, it was determined that convicts are entitled to home leave and that their efforts be recognized by hosting multiple exhibitions of the things they produce. According to the educators, prisoners also receive an NVQ diploma upon completion of the batik, weaving, and tailoring training programs. NVQ, or the National vocational Qualification certificate, is a nationally recognized credential that attests to a person's proficiency in a specific occupation. Moreover,

it is believed that NVQ-level certificate holders might readily get a job. Consequently, it may be argued that the monetary incentives received by offenders participating in these training programs would be an investment upon their release and that the non-monetary incentives they got would improve their motivation. Specifically, the certificate will provide them with acknowledgment and boost their sense of self-worth.

In the paper *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education*, vocational education is highlighted as a form of correctional education for inmates. In addition, readers can gain a brief understanding of the connection between vocational education and recidivism. In addition, several other evaluation criteria, including organizational support, reaction, and learning, inmate behavior, improvement in inmate relationships, etc., are described here. There, the inmates underlined that these programs present future work chances for them, and they also identified the programs as future investment opportunities, a means of mental relaxation, and a means of shortening their prison term. And some of them are interested in the incentives to which they are entitled. Even though the study was performed more with the trainers than with the convicts themselves, the trainers have elaborated on certain aspects of the inmates' impressions of these programs. It is possible to concur with the conclusions of the preceding research because it has been determined that these programs can be viewed as a future investment opportunity for convicts as well as a means for inmates to spend their spare time productively and achieve mental relaxation. Moreover, according to the trainers' expertise, the motivation of the offenders to participate in these training may stem from the home leave privileges they could earn by demonstrating excellent behavior in jail. These training programmes aid offenders in establishing satisfying living conditions, primarily through

self-employment options, and hence may assist inmates in avoiding antisocial behaviour to some extent. Under the "qualifications" section of this study, it is determined that prisoners in Sri Lanka receive a certificate upon completion of their training programmes. And it assists in recognizing the skills, accomplishments, and information acquired by the inmates through this training. Additionally, the inmates may be considered for employment opportunities by other employers. Under the concept of "safe space," the inmates' understanding of their peers is evaluated. And in our study, criteria were employed to evaluate the efficacy of such programmes by fostering inmate relationships and it was discovered that the offenders retain positive ties with their fellow inmates.

4. Conclusion

This thematic analysis investigates the efficacy of VTPs for Sri Lankan convicts and it was carried out by four trainers who are delivering VTPs to the inmates. Based on the study's findings in the analysis and discussion chapter, the following may be said regarding the efficacy of VTPs for inmates in Sri Lanka. The department of corrections has made a substantial contribution to the implementation of more effective VTPs on prison grounds, ensuring that separate places and all necessary resources are available in adequate quantity. They are aiming to improve the effectiveness of these programmes and boost the participation of prisoners in the training. The offenders who are enrolled in VTPs have a higher level of enthusiasm for their participation. They display a high level of participation in the training programmes and are willing to participate in these programmes for a variety of reasons. The offenders who received training are reaping the benefits of these programmes by absorbing all the acquired knowledge and abilities and deploying them to the best of their ability. They make both marketable goods and goods for their

enjoyment. The information gained from these programmes will help former convicts to pursue self-employment options, ultimately contributing to the economic growth of their communities. These training programmes aid inmates in fostering ties with their fellow inmates and with their trainers. From an organizational standpoint, the provision of vocational training for inmates is a cost-effective method for avoiding costs. The inmates who participate in the courses may be eligible for an early release from prison, thereby eliminating their maintenance costs. Also, inmates are provided with an excellent incentive structure that provides them with monetary and non-monetary incentives, as well as savings, recognition, and value for their efforts.

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Author Biography



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