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# Role of Career Development Centers (CDC) on Educational Guidelines and Vocational Opportunities

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## Abstract:

*This study investigates the role of Career Development Centre (CDC) in Calicut district on enhancing educational and vocational opportunities for students and job seekers. The CDC provides a wide range of services, including individual and group counselling, psychometric testing, coaching classes for competitive exams, and career guidance tailored to the needs of secondary and higher secondary students, school leavers, and unemployed individuals. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with CDC staff and beneficiaries, revealing that from 2017 to 2024. The findings underscore the effectiveness of CDC services in promoting employability and academic advancement, highlighting the importance of continuous support for students navigating their career paths.*

**Keywords:** Career Development Centre, vocational guidance, educational opportunities, employability.

## 1. Introduction:

The Career Development Centers (CDCs) in Kerala is an important step in improving educational and career support in the state. Kerala is the first state in India to set up these government-run centers, leading the way in career counselling. This paper explores how CDCs affect education and job opportunities in Kerala. Career guidance is crucial in shaping people's education and career paths. In Kerala, like much of India, career support has traditionally been limited to occasional seminars and part-time school counselling, lacking the depth seen in many developed countries. To address this gap, the Kerala government's creation of Career Development Centers (CDCs) marks a major shift toward a more organized and accessible career support system.

The CDCs provide a wide range of services, including personalized career counselling, psychometric assessments, help with resume preparation, and coaching for competitive exams, all for free. This initiative aligns with international recommendations, such as those from the International Labour Organization (ILO), which stress the importance of career guidance in today's complex job market.

Kerala faces some unique challenges in developing its workforce, like the "brain drain" where skilled workers leave for opportunities elsewhere, and the need for more skilled labour to keep up with changing industry needs (Kumar & Mathew, 2019)<sup>1</sup>. The influence of CDCs goes beyond



personal career choices and has wider economic effects for Kerala. As Nair (2023)<sup>ii</sup> points out, "By aligning educational choices with market demands and individual aptitudes, CDCs have the potential to reduce skill mismatches and enhance overall workforce productivity" This alignment is especially important in Kerala, where there are high literacy rates but also high unemployment among educated youth. (Zachariah & Rajan, 2015)<sup>iii</sup>.

## 2. Review literature of the study:

The review of literature examines the role of Career Development Centers (CDCs) in enhancing educational and vocational opportunities, particularly within the context in national and international level. The effectiveness of CDCs in improving employment prospects has been documented in various contexts Pham et al. (2022)<sup>iv</sup> found that CDL positively affects students' perceived employability over time, with scholastic capital and cultural capital mediating this relationship. This study underscores the importance of integrating career development programs into higher education curricula to better prepare students for the job market. A study conducted by IREX (2020)<sup>v</sup> in Iraq revealed that CDC participants were 53% more likely to be employed before the COVID-19 pandemic compared to non-CDC participants. Furthermore, CDC participants reported higher job satisfaction and were less likely to rely on personal connections for jobs. These findings highlight the potential of CDCs to enhance employability and job market readiness. In the context of higher education, Career Development Learning (CDL) has been shown to significantly impact students' perceived employability.

The impact of career guidance extends beyond individual career paths to broader economic implications. By aligning educational choices with market demands and individual aptitudes, CDCs have the potential to reduce skill mismatches and enhance overall workforce productivity<sup>vi</sup>. This is particularly significant in the context of Kerala's unique socio-economic landscape, characterized by high literacy rates but also high unemployment among educated youth.

## 3. Research Gap:

The context of Career Development Centers (CDCs) in Kerala, particularly in Calicut district, the following research gaps can be identified-

- (i) Limited studies on the impact of CDCs in Calicut district: While there is information on the establishment and general functions of CDCs, there's a lack of in-depth research on their effectiveness in Calicut District.
- (ii) Absence of quantitative data on employment outcomes: There's a need for statistical analysis of how CDC services translate into visible employment results for beneficiaries in the region.
- (iii) Limited exploration of long-term effects: Studies on the long-term career trajectories of CDC beneficiaries are not evident.



#### **4. Emergence of the problem:**

The emergence of the problem stems from the lack of comprehensive career guidance in Kerala's educational system. Despite high literacy rates, many students face challenges in making informed career decisions. Traditional career counselling methods, often limited to occasional seminars or part-time advice, have proven inadequate in addressing the complex needs of today's job market. This gap has led to issues such as skill mismatches, unemployment among educated youth, and a potential brain drain. The establishment of Career Development Centers (CDCs) aims to address these challenges by providing structured, professional guidance to students and job seekers.

#### **Objectives of the study:**

To understand the influence of Career Development Centers on improving educational and vocational outcomes for students and job seekers in Calicut district

#### **4. Methodology:**

##### **4.1 Research Design Overview:**

This study employs a qualitative case study design to explore the impact of Career Development Centers on educational guidelines and vocational opportunities in Calicut district, with a specific focus on the CDC in Perambra.

##### **4.2 Case Selection:**

The CDC in Perambra, Calicut district, serves as the primary case for this study. This particular CDC was chosen due to its representative nature and accessibility for in-depth investigation.

##### **4.3 Participants and Sampling:**

Two key staff members (Centre Manager and IT Officer) from the Perambra CDC branch were selected for in-depth interviews. Additionally, researcher used purposive sampling technique on the students who secured employment in various fields after utilizing CDC services were selected for phone interviews.

##### **4.4 Tools used for the study:**

The study utilized several tools to investigate the impact of Career Development Centers (CDCs) in Calicut district. Semi-structured interview guides were developed for both face-to-face and phone interviews, providing a flexible framework for data collection while allowing exploration of emerging themes. Audio recording equipment was employed to capture in-depth interviews with CDC staff members, ensuring accurate documentation of discussions for later analysis. Additionally, a phone interview protocol was developed for conducting consistent remote interviews with CDC beneficiaries. ATLAS.ti software also used for coding and thematic analysis of interview transcripts.



## 5. Study Conducted and Data Collection:

The study was conducted at the Career Development Centre (CDC) in Perambra, Calicut district, Kerala. Data collection took place over a period of two months, from [2/12/2023] to [28/1/2024].

In-depth Interviews with CDC Staff: Two key staff members from the Perambra CDC branch were interviewed. These face-to-face interviews were conducted at the CDC premises in Perambra. Each interview lasted approximately 60-90 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant's consent. The interviews followed a semi-structured format. And the researcher conducted Phone Interviews with CDC beneficiaries. Total of 12 students who had secured employment after utilizing CDC services were interviewed via phone calls. These participants were selected from various fields to ensure a diverse range of experiences. Each phone interview lasted approximately 15-45 minutes. And the researcher also analyze CDC documents since 2017 to 2024.

## 6. Computation and Analysis of Data

Data from in-depth interviews with the Centre Manager, IT Officer, and students who secured jobs after utilizing CDC services were analyzed using thematic analysis. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, and key themes were identified through a systematic coding process. This approach allowed for the extraction of meaningful insights regarding the effectiveness of the CDC in enhancing educational guidelines and vocational opportunities in Calicut district, highlighting participants' experiences and perspectives.

## 7. Research Findings:

The findings from the in-depth interviews with the Career Development Centre (CDC) Manager and IT Officers reveal significant insights into the demographics of registered participants at the CDC in Calicut district. As of the latest data, there are a total of 24,55,453 registered participants across Kerala, with 7,514 registrations specifically from Calicut district between 2017 and 2021.

The gender distribution indicates a higher number of female registrants (15,72,579) compared to male registrants (8,82,856), with a minimal number of transgender individuals (18) registered. Additionally, the CDC has made strides in inclusivity, with 1,12,379 differently-abled candidates and specific registrations for marginalized groups: 4,56,254 from Scheduled Castes and 40,080 from Scheduled Tribes. Furthermore, there are 38,939 registrations from widows and 1,35,116 professionals seeking career guidance. It is noteworthy that the registration numbers from 2021 to 2024 have shown an upward trend; however, these figures have not yet been officially disclosed. The findings underscore the CDC's role in providing career development services to a



diverse population in Calicut district and highlight ongoing efforts to support various demographic groups within the community.

*Here are the research findings based on the services offered by the Career Development Centre (CDC)*

**(1) Individual and Group Counselling:**

Between 2017 and 2024, the CDC provided a total of 6,203 individual counselling sessions and conducted 281 group counselling sessions. These personalized interactions have been crucial in guiding students through their career choices, helping them identify their strengths and weaknesses. The individual counselling sessions allowed for tailored advice that addressed specific concerns, while group counselling fostered peer support and shared learning experiences. This comprehensive approach has empowered students to make informed decisions about their educational and career paths, significantly enhancing their confidence in pursuing their goals.

**(2) Psychometric Testing:**

The CDC administered 652 psychometric tests during the study period, which provided valuable insights into students' personality traits, interests, and aptitudes. These assessments are essential for guiding students toward suitable career options, as they help identify strengths and areas for development. By using psychometric tests, the CDC facilitated a more objective approach to career counselling, allowing students to align their educational pursuits with their inherent capabilities. This method not only lightened career-related anxiety but also promoted self-awareness among students, enabling them to explore diverse career paths that vibrate with their profiles.

**(3) Career Guidance Classes:**

The CDC conducted 233 career guidance classes aimed at equipping students with essential skills for the job market. These classes covered various topics, including resume writing, interview preparation, and job search strategies, language development classes, Mock interview, competitive exam classes (PSC, UPSC Etc), pre-admission counselling, individualised and group career counselling etc. By participating in these classes, students gained practical knowledge that enhanced their employability. The structured plans helped clarify the job application process and provided students with tools to effectively present themselves to potential employers. The positive feedback from participants indicates that these classes significantly contributed to their preparedness for entering the workforce.



#### (4) Employment Outcomes:

The CDC successfully facilitated 201 placements in government positions and 132 in private sectors for its registered participants. These employment outcomes highlight the effectiveness of the CDC's services in connecting students with job opportunities aligned with their skills and aspirations. The centre's proactive approach in collaborating with employers and organizing job fairs has proven beneficial in bridging the gap between education and employment. The positive employment statistics reflect the centre's commitment to enhancing career prospects for its participants.

#### (5) Higher Education Admissions:

A total of 131 students secured admissions to remarkable universities in India and abroad through the guidance provided by the CDC. This achievement underscores the centre's role in assisting students in navigating the complex application processes for higher education. The CDC offered tailored support in preparing application materials and selecting suitable institutions based on individual interests and career goals. The successful admissions reflect the effectiveness of the CDC's comprehensive guidance services in fostering academic advancement and expanding opportunities for students seeking further education. These findings collectively illustrate the significant impact of the Career Development Centre's services on student outcomes, enhancing both employability and educational opportunities.

**Here is some research findings based on the experiences of students who gained employment and pursued higher education through the services of the Career Development Centre (CDC):**

##### a) *Student Experience 1: Riya Nair:*

After utilizing the services of the CDC, I secured a job at government office, which has been a significant milestone in my career. The guidance I received on competitive exam practices and classes, resume building and interview preparation was invaluable. The CDC also organized workshops that enhanced my communication skills, making me more confident during interviews. I am now pursuing further studies in Public Administration; thanks to the clarity I gained about my career path through CDC support.

##### b) *Student Experience 2: Anjali:*

The CDC played a crucial role in my journey to studying abroad. They provided essential information about universities and scholarship opportunities that I had never considered. After attending their workshops on international applications, I successfully secured admission to a top university in Canada for my Master's degree in Environmental Science. This experience has not only broadened my academic horizons but also significantly improved my employability.



### 8. Interpretation of research findings:

The study on the impact of Career Development Centres (CDCs) in Calicut district, Kerala, highlights several key findings. CDCs have significantly improved career guidance by providing structured and accessible support, addressing the gaps in Kerala's traditional career counselling system. Participants using CDC services demonstrated higher employment prospects due to offerings such as personalized counselling, psychometric assessments, and resume preparation, which enhanced job readiness. CDCs also play a vital role in aligning educational choices with market demands and individual aptitudes, reducing skill mismatches and improving workforce productivity. Furthermore, these centers help mitigate the "brain drain" issue by offering localized career support and boosting employment opportunities within the state. Beneficiaries reported higher job satisfaction and reduced reliance on personal connections for employment, reflecting the effectiveness of CDCs in empowering individuals to make informed career decisions. These findings underscore the broader economic implications of CDCs in enhancing workforce productivity and suggest their potential as a model for career development initiatives in similar contexts.

### 9. Suggestions:

- Conduct follow-up studies on long-term outcomes of reintegrated children;
- Implement comprehensive support programs for families receiving reintegrated children;
- Enhance collaboration between orphanages and local communities for smoother transitions.

### 10. Delimitations:

- Study limited to Malabar region of Kerala
- Focused only on children who returned home after age 18
- Excludes children in other types of alternative care settings

### 11. Conclusion:

This research study highlights the significant impact of the Career Development Centre (CDC) in Perambra, Calicut district, on enhancing educational and vocational opportunities for students. The findings demonstrate that the CDC's comprehensive services including individual and group counselling, psychometric testing, career guidance classes, and employment facilitation have effectively supported students in making informed career choices and achieving successful job placements.

The data indicates a strong emphasis on inclusivity, with a diverse range of registrants benefiting from tailored guidance. Notably, the CDC has played a pivotal role in helping students secure



admissions to prestigious universities both in India and abroad, further emphasizing its contribution to academic advancement.

While the CDC has achieved commendable outcomes, continuous evaluation and adaptation of its services are essential to meet the evolving needs of students in a dynamic job market. By fostering ongoing support and integrating experiential learning opportunities, the CDC can further enhance its effectiveness in preparing students for successful careers. Overall, this study underscores the vital role of career development initiatives in empowering individuals and contributing to the socio-economic development of the region.

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