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## Application of the World Café Method for Learning and Providing Solutions for Disabilities

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### ABSTRACT

The objective of this research was to apply the World Café method to learn and provide options for problem-solving to people with disabilities students of the Faculty of Management Sciences at Dhonburi Rajabhat University. The researchers used the World Café method to collect data from 50 students and analyzed it using content analysis. The study found that the students exchanged knowledge about problems encountered in their daily lives, such as transportation problems, communication barriers, dependence on others, and issues faced by people with learning disabilities. Importantly, the students emphasized the problems related to employment opportunities for people with disabilities, as well as limited career advancement and financial insecurity. The options for problem-solving were opening coffee shops or restaurants that employ people with disabilities and establishing vocational schools that provide opportunities for people with disabilities to become entrepreneurs. These options are in line with the social innovation concept and can be used to alleviate or solve the problem of employment for people with disabilities in the future.

### INTRODUCTION

In the past, people with disabilities often did not receive much attention from society, especially in terms of employment opportunities. This is especially true in Thai society, which still strongly adheres to the family system, leading to disabled individuals being hidden within caregiving families without being given equal opportunities to work like everyone else. Many people with disabilities who had no family to take care of them had to pursue a career and take care of themselves alone, which affected their quality of life and caused them to feel insecure about living in society, even though the rights of people with disabilities are equal to those of the general population. (Sawangasuk & Keawprapassorn, 2019; Toquero, 2020).

In comparison to people without disabilities and households without a disabled member, people with disabilities and households with a disabled member experience higher rate of deprivation, including food insecurity, substandard housing, a lack of access to safe drinking water and basic

sanitation, inadequate access to health care, and a lack of assets (World Health Organization, 2012). This is a result of some things, including discrimination, the absence of reasonable accommodations, and the presumption that individuals with disabilities are incapable of performing particular jobs. People with impairments were consequently frequently denied employment prospects, and those who did so frequently had to deal with low pay and few chances for career progression (Martin & Honig, 2020; Warmate et al., 2021; Lindsay et al., 2023).

In addition, disabled people who lacked family assistance had to sustain themselves financially and professionally. Their quality of life was negatively impacted by this circumstance, and they also experienced social anxiety as a result. Even though their rights are intended to be on par with those of the general population, many people with disabilities felt alienated from society (Sawangasuk & Keawprapassorn, 2019; Tassé et al., 2020; Cottingham et al., 2023).

A method called “World Café” encourages people to search out, share, and combine their thoughts to explore and discuss topics of interest (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Silva & Guenther, 2018). Participants in a World Café can discuss and debate topics of interest in a creative manner. Additionally, World Café promotes collaboration and relationship building, which results in the discovery of solutions to problems or intriguing issues. World Café achieved success in fostering opportunities for establishing connections and exchanging narratives, as this approach facilitated communication at a more intimate level beyond the typical work environment. (Lagrosen, 2019; Lohr et al., 2022 Schiele et al., 2022).

The principles of World Café consist of 7 elements (Brown & Isaacs, 2005; Carson, 2011; Bumble & Carter, 2021; Lohr et al., 2022) which are; 1) Setting the context, which involves stating the purpose and establishing broad guidelines for the conversation; 2) Creating hospitable space, which provides an atmosphere of warm conversation where participants feel safe, relaxed, and respectful towards one another; 3) Using powerful questions, which are aimed at drawing participants in and generating interest, open-ended, and non-judgmental questions that seek a deep understanding of the issue at hand; 4) Encouraging everyone's participation, which stimulates a “we” conversation rather than an “I” conversation, and invites participants to speak up freely; 5) The combination and linking of diverse perspectives utilize the power of the system dynamics, where the participants change tables and engage in conversation, resulting in a greater variety of ideas, knowledge, and issues that are then interconnected and reinforced; 6) Deeply listening and understanding together gives importance to everyone's ideas, listens and applies them for the benefit of all, interconnecting thoughts without neglecting the participation of each individual; 7) Harvesting and sharing discoveries together create knowledge, options for solving problems that are ethical and can be put into practice. From these principles, it can be concluded that World Café is a method that gathers ideas to search for knowledge together, giving importance to listening without judgment, focusing on diversity, and leading to new options or ways to solve problems that are ethical and can be put into practice.

This research has used the World Café method to learn and provide options for problem-solving to people with disabilities by students of the Faculty of Management Sciences at Dhonburi Rajabhat University. The research question was "How should the problem of persons with disabilities be solved?" The findings of the study can be applied in the future to lessen or resolve issues facing the group of people with disabilities.

## **METHODS**

This research employed the World Café method to provide solutions to problems for a group of people with disabilities by utilizing social innovation concepts. The participants of the World Café were 50 university students from the Faculty of Management Science, Dhonburi Rajabhat University, including 22 business administration students, 16 communication arts students, and 12 service industry students. The selection criteria for the participants were that they had previous experience related to the issue and were aware of the problems faced by the group of people with disabilities. When choosing the participants, previous knowledge of a topic or area related to the problems faced by those with disabilities was taken into account. With the help of this criterion, it was ensured that the participants were aware of some of the issues and challenges the target group faced. Knowing the problems faced by those with disabilities is important, but knowing these problems was also a factor in participant selection. This requirement ensures that participants understand and have some compassion for the target population, which will encourage productive discussions and problem-solving throughout the World Café meetings.

The data collection was conducted using the World Café method, which included the following steps: Preparation stage, where the topic for discussion was set by asking the question “Have you ever had any experience, involvement, or awareness of the problem of people with disabilities?” Researchers had informed the students to prepare themselves one week in advance before the World Café activity. During the activity, the classroom was arranged in a circular table style and divided into 8 groups, each consisting of 6-7 people. Participants of such a number were capable of initiating synchronized dialogue, facilitating

introspection on various matters, promoting knowledge sharing, and even discovering fresh avenues for taking action (Chang & Chen, 2015; Decker-Lange et al., 2021). The room was equipped with drinks, music, and writing materials such as paper, pens, and colored markers for each group. In the introduction to the World Café, the researchers welcomed the participants and introduced the activity, which was organized into three rounds. Each group selected a representative to be the host, and the remaining members were participants. Then the researchers introduced the topic for discussion, which was the issue of people with disabilities.

The activity stage began with the host and participants of the World Café engaging in conversation in the “first round” with the question

“Have you ever had any experience with or been aware of issues faced by people with disabilities?” This took 20 minutes and provided an opportunity for everyone in the group to talk. After the allotted time, each group of students summarized the content of their conversation before moving to a different group for the “second round”. The host remained in the same group and, before the conversation began, summarized the content of the previous discussion. The question for the second round was “How should issues faced by people with disabilities be addressed?” The students then exchanged ideas and discussed possible solutions. After the time was up, the students collaborated to summarize the content of their conversation (see Figure 1).



Figure 1 Presentation and example of summarized the problems and solutions for people with disabilities

The researcher had each host in each group summarize the content of past discussions to inform other members of different groups, and to select topics to discuss in the third round. The agreed topic for discussion in the third round, by the participants of the World Café, was “Employment Opportunities for People with Disabilities”. In the third round, members of each group moved to another group and

started a conversation for 20 minutes, allowing students in each group to discuss the aforementioned topic. After the discussion, the participants of the World Café helped to summarize the content once again. In the presentation of results, after the discussion of each group had finished, students presented the content that had

been discussed and summarized the problems and solutions for people with disabilities.

The researcher used content analysis to analyze the data that was summarized on paper and obtained from presenting the results. The accuracy of the data analysis was checked by the three researchers using the triangulation method. Additionally, member checking was used to confirm the accuracy of the data analysis with the participants.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Problems of People with Disabilities from the Experiences of World Cafe Participants**

The research found that the participants in the World Cafe exchanged their learning about issues related to disabilities through relevant experiences. They acknowledged the problems faced by people with disabilities, including visual, hearing, physical, and learning disabilities. The problems were summarized into two categories: problems in daily life and problems related to work, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Issues of people with disabilities from the experiences of World Cafe participants

<b>Problems in daily life</b>	<b>Problems related to work</b>
- Travel problems	- Lack of employment opportunities
- Communication barriers	- Limited career advancement
- Dependence on others	- Financial insecurity
- People with learning disabilities	

#### **1. Problems in daily life**

Travel problems, especially for people with visual and mobility disabilities, both in using public transportation and traveling within buildings. For individuals with visual disabilities, navigating through public transportation systems can be a significant challenge.

Public transportation systems rely heavily on visual cues, such as signs and maps, which can be difficult for people with visual impairments to understand. Additionally, bus and train stations may have uneven surfaces or obstacles that can pose hazards for individuals with visual impairments (Participant in World Café).

People with mobility disabilities also face significant challenges when traveling. Many public transportation systems are not fully accessible, with inaccessible entrances, a lack of ramps or elevators, and narrow doorways. This can make it difficult or impossible for individuals using wheelchairs or other mobility aids to board and exit public transportation vehicles. Moreover, traveling within buildings can also be challenging for people with disabilities. For example, stairs can be a significant barrier for individuals with mobility disabilities, and elevators may not be available or may be out of service. In addition, buildings may not have clear signage or navigational aids, making it difficult for people with visual impairments to navigate.

Communication barriers can be a significant problem for individuals with disabilities, especially those who have difficulty hearing, speaking, or processing information. These barriers can prevent people with disabilities from accessing information, communicating their needs and wants, and participating fully in social, educational, and professional environments.

Deaf or hard of hearing who use a different language or dialect may face communication barriers when interacting with others who do not speak or understand their language (Participant in World Café).

People with disabilities who are deaf or hard of hearing may have difficulty understanding spoken language or communicating with others who do not know sign language. They may require interpreters, assistive listening devices, or other accommodations to participate fully in conversations and activities.

People with disabilities may feel like they are a burden on their caregivers or family members and struggle with feelings of guilt, helplessness, and frustration (Participant in World Café).

Dependence on others can also limit a person's social and recreational opportunities. They may be unable to participate in activities that require physical ability or mobility and may be restricted in their ability to interact with others due to communication barriers or other limitations.

People with learning disabilities face a range of challenges in their daily lives that can impact their ability to function independently and participate fully in society. Some common problems that people with learning disabilities may face

include: People with learning disabilities may struggle with reading, writing, math, and other academic skills. This can make it difficult for them to succeed in school and later in the workplace (Participant in World Café).

Moreover, people with learning disabilities may face stigma and discrimination in society, which can lead to feelings of isolation, low self-esteem, and a lack of opportunities. Additionally, people with learning disabilities may have limited access to resources, such as assistive technology, educational support, and specialized healthcare services.

## **2. Problems related to work**

Lack of employment opportunities, this is a significant and ongoing problem. Many businesses are not equipped to accommodate people with disabilities, such as by providing wheelchair ramps or sign language interpreters. This can make it difficult or impossible for people with disabilities to access job opportunities. Additionally, negative attitudes and stereotypes about people with disabilities can create a hostile work environment, leading to discrimination and exclusion.

Another challenge is the lack of accommodations and support services available to people with disabilities. This includes things like assistive technology, job coaches, and transportation services. Without these resources, people with disabilities may struggle to perform their job duties or even access the workplace at all.

Limited career advancement, people with disabilities may have limited opportunities for career advancement due to a lack of training or educational opportunities, as well as negative attitudes from employers. There are several reasons for this, including a lack of training or educational opportunities, as well as negative attitudes from employers. People with disabilities may not have access to the same training and educational opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues (Participant in World Café).

This can be due to physical or logistical barriers, such as inaccessible training facilities or a lack of accommodations for their disability. Without the necessary training and education, it can be difficult for individuals with disabilities to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to advance in their careers. Additionally, negative attitudes from employers can also limit the career

advancement of people with disabilities. Employers may not believe that people with disabilities are capable of performing certain tasks or may underestimate their abilities. As a result, they may not provide the necessary support and accommodations for employees with disabilities to succeed in their roles and advance in their careers.

Financial insecurity, this issue is a major concern for many people with disabilities. People with disabilities often face a lack of employment opportunities and may earn lower salaries than their non-disabled peers. This can make it difficult for them to make ends meet and provide for themselves and their families.

People with disabilities may also face higher expenses related to their disability, such as medical bills, assistive devices, and home modifications. These additional expenses can further exacerbate financial insecurity and make it difficult for people with disabilities to achieve financial stability (Participant in World Café).

Financial insecurity can have a ripple effect on other aspects of life. It can limit access to healthcare, housing, and education, and may lead to social isolation and a lower quality of life. It can also contribute to mental health issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

## **The Options to Solve the Problems Related to Work for People with Disabilities**

The options to solve the problems related to working for people with disabilities include opening cafes or restaurants that hire disabled people, and establishing schools to train and provide opportunities for disabled individuals to become entrepreneurs.

### **1. Opening cafes or restaurants that hire disabled people**

This option is an opportunity for employment by hiring people with disabilities to work. Restaurants can hire people with visual impairments to work as part-time staff while attracting people with singing abilities to create an atmosphere with their singing voices within the shop.

People with hearing or communication disabilities can be employed, while people with physical disabilities can be hired as permanent staff for various job positions, such as servers, kitchen staff, and cashiers, among others (Participant in World Café).

Opening coffee shops and restaurants can provide benefits for employers by hiring people with disabilities. They can access a diverse and skilled workforce, gain positive publicity for their inclusive hiring practices, and create a more welcoming and inclusive workplace culture. However, employers need to improve the work environment to accommodate people with disabilities. For example, designing work methods that are suitable for people with hearing disabilities, using technology to facilitate communication, and providing accommodations that help people with disabilities perform their job more effectively. These measures can enhance the flexibility of work and make the workplace more accessible and comfortable for people with disabilities.

Work should be designed to be suitable for the characteristics of disabilities, by utilizing technology, for example, if a person has a hearing impairment, the employer may use computer technology with tactile screens to facilitate communication between the person with a disability and customers (Participant in World Café).

Coffee shops and restaurants can offer a variety of job positions that can accommodate people with different types of disabilities. People with hearing or communication disabilities can work as servers or kitchen staff, using sign language or other communication aids, such as notepads or tablets. People with physical disabilities can work as cashiers, baristas, or managers, with the help of ergonomic equipment, such as adjustable tables or chairs (Participant in World Café).

The benefits that occurred to people with disabilities from employment can be stated as employment provided them with a sense of purpose, independence, and social inclusion. It also improved their financial stability and quality of life, as well as enhanced their skills, confidence, and self-esteem. Furthermore, working in a coffee shop or restaurant offered unique opportunities for personal and professional growth, such as learning new skills, interacting with customers, and developing social networks.

## **2. Establishing schools to train and provide opportunities for disabilities**

Establishing schools to train and provide opportunities for disabled individuals to become entrepreneurs, this option is an important step toward empowering people with disabilities to

become self-sufficient and financially independent. These schools can provide specialized training in entrepreneurship and business management, as well as provide support services to help disabled individuals launch and run their businesses.

Schools can assist with developing business plans, marketing and advertising strategies, financial management and access to funding, and guidance on navigating legal and regulatory requirements (Participant in World Café).

Vocational schools can also provide mentorship programs, networking opportunities, and access to business incubators or co-working spaces to help disabled entrepreneurs grow their businesses and connect with other like-minded individuals. People with disabilities can gain the skills and knowledge necessary to start and run their businesses, creating a path toward financial stability and success. Additionally, this approach can also help to break down barriers and challenge negative perceptions about the capabilities of people with disabilities. According to a study conducted by the Faculty of Management Sciences at Dhonburi Rajabhat University, students discussed several issues that affect people with disabilities on a daily basis. Transportation obstacles, communication difficulties, and the need for others were among these issues. These results are in agreement with Sabella & Bezyak's (2019) and Murphy's (2006) research.

This study also discovered that the students emphasized the difficulties that people with disabilities confront in terms of employment prospects, restricted career growth, and unstable financial situations. These research results are in agreement with Shuey & Willson's (2019) and Sundar et al.'s (2017) efforts. Disability-related work prospects are severely lacking, which has an impact on the quality of life and social integration of these individuals. Furthermore, persons with disabilities experience limited career advancement and financial uncertainty, which exacerbates this problem and makes it even harder for them to overcome the obstacles they encounter.

The study's participants suggested some solutions to address these issues, such as opening cafes or restaurants that hired people with disabilities and vocational programs that gave them the chance to start their businesses (Wehman et al., 2018 Kalargyrou et al, 2020). Opening coffee shops

or restaurants that hire people with impairments was one solution, as was creating vocational schools that provide such individuals the chance to start their businesses. These alternatives are consistent with the social innovation concept and can be employed in the future to lessen or resolve the issue of employment for those with disabilities (Namsao & Ruanggoon, 2021; Kwan, 2020). People with disabilities were also motivated to explore entrepreneurial endeavors, including launching their businesses. This field posed additional obstacles and aspects to take into account (Littlewood & Holt, 2018; Zen et al., 2023).

Opening coffee shops or restaurants can be considered a form of social innovation that hire people with disabilities or creating vocational schools that give disabled people the chance to start their businesses are two solutions to the problems that have resulted from the opening of World Café. These choices fit with the idea of social innovation, which emphasizes finding innovative answers to societal issues (Meltzer et al., 2018; Stepanova et al., 2018).

People with disabilities are provided equal work chances in establishments like coffee shops and restaurants, which are examples of inclusive employment practices. The vocational schools would give disabled individuals the knowledge and talents to launch their firms, which is a crucial aspect of entrepreneurship. People with disabilities will gain from having access to jobs as well as the possibility to learn useful skills that will help them in the future by being given these possibilities (Hsieh et al., 2019; Krüger & David, 2020; Murzyn-Kupisz & Holuj, 2021).

## **CONCLUSION**

The World Café approach promotes originality and problem-solving. Participants can explore numerous dimensions and views by participating in multiple rounds of talks on various parts of the subject. The method's informal and conversational style fosters a friendly and judgment-free environment that encourages participants to come up with and share original ideas. The method's collaborative nature enables idea-sharing amongst groups, which promotes the formation of creative solutions that could not have been thought of otherwise. The students shared their experiences regarding various challenges they face in their daily

lives, including transportation issues, communication barriers, dependence on others, and challenges faced by people with learning disabilities. The students particularly emphasized the difficulties related to employment opportunities for people with disabilities, as well as limited career advancement and financial insecurity.

Disability-related problems and problems at work are the two primary categories into which the issues faced by people with disabilities were divided. Participants noted issues with travel, communication, dependency on others, and difficulties faced by those with learning disabilities in their daily lives. The biggest problems with work were a lack of employment opportunities, a lack of opportunities for advancement, and financial instability.

The participants offered two solutions to these issues. Opening cafes or restaurants that employ persons with disabilities was the initial option. This would entail opening up employment opportunities for people with a range of disabilities and modifying the workplace to meet their needs. The second solution was to set up vocational schools that especially assist and educate people with disabilities on how to start their businesses. To assist disabled people in starting and running their enterprises, these institutions would offer training, mentoring, and resources. The suggested solutions are in line with the idea of social innovation because they seek to address the difficulties in finding employment for those with disabilities while fostering inclusivity and independence. Individuals with disabilities can be empowered, their financial stability can be improved, and their general quality of life can be improved through opening inclusive enterprises and offering entrepreneurial possibilities.

The World Café method represents an inclusive and participatory method that promotes participation, information sharing, and innovative problem-solving. It can produce thorough insights and creative solutions to the problems encountered by individuals with disabilities by utilizing the collective intellect of various participants. By encouraging everyone to share their ideas, insights, and experiences, this strategy makes sure that all participants' voices are heard and valued. The method's focus on dialogue and interaction encourages greater participation and leads to



discussions that are deeper and more meaningful. Participants get the chance to contribute their knowledge, experiences, and understanding of the issues encountered by individuals with disabilities using the World Café technique.

The study suggested possible solutions, such as creating coffee shops or restaurants that hire people with disabilities and establishing schools that offer entrepreneurship opportunities for people with disabilities. The research findings are summarized in Figure 2.

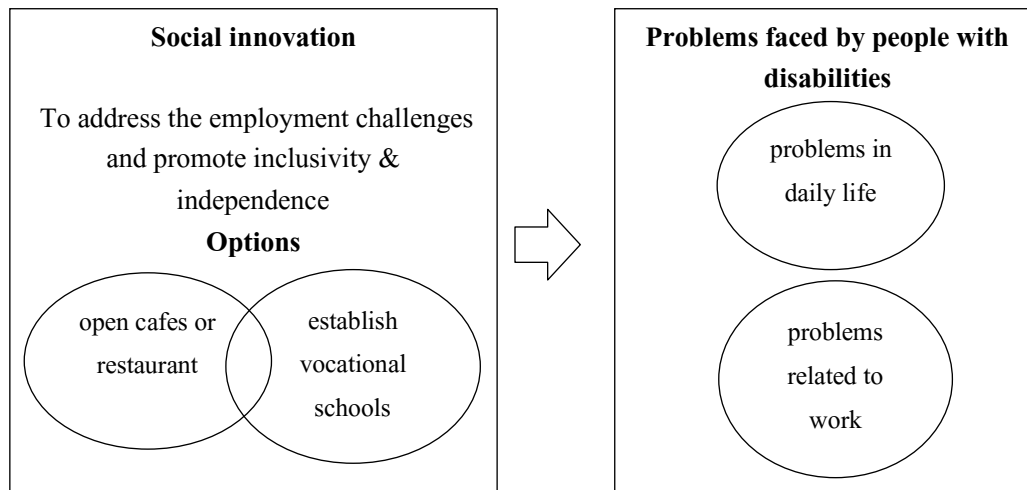


Figure 2. Social innovation to address the problems of people with disabilities

Participants in World Café can learn from one another and get a more comprehensive awareness of the problems and topics at hand thanks to this knowledge exchange. As hosts summarize prior discussions for subsequent participants, the strategy also makes it easier for knowledge to spread throughout other groups. This knowledge exchange enhances learning as a whole and provides insight for later phases of problem-solving.

Policies that encourage businesses to recruit people with disabilities and give them the opportunity to learn new skills should be put in place to support employment. To help disabled people overcome financial obstacles, government agencies and nonprofit organizations should work together to offer them financial and educational support. Employers should be encouraged to provide reasonable accommodations, such as flexible work schedules and assistive technology, to help people with disabilities do their jobs effectively. To give people with disabilities the knowledge and skills they need to launch their enterprises and become entrepreneurs; training programs must be established.

The World Café method incorporates validation methods to assess the data and guarantee its accuracy. In this situation, the researchers

employed triangulation, involving multiple researchers. Additionally, member checking was used to ensure the accuracy of the data analysis with the participants themselves. These validation methods enhance the credibility of the research findings and provide a more solid foundation for decision-making and action. However, it is crucial to understand the research results and suggested remedies within the context of the study conducted by the Faculty of Management Sciences at Dhonburi Rajabhat University. When extrapolating the findings to different contexts or groups, it is important to consider the context and limitations of the research, even though they align with the current literature on disability concerns and work challenges.

Further research is required to ascertain the efficacy of various interventions in boosting employment chances for people with disabilities, according to the research findings. Additionally, studies should pinpoint the precise accommodations that help this group of people find jobs more easily. Additionally, it's critical to comprehend how people with disabilities view job and professional growth from their perspectives and experiences. The long-term effects of entrepreneurship training programs



on the job outcomes of people with disabilities must also be researched.

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