



Research on Assessment of Work Difficulties (Vocational Readiness and Work Difficulties) -Development of the Assessment Sheets for Work Support-

(Research Report No. 168) Summary

[Key words]

Assessment Assessment tool Wishes and needs for work Basic matters for work
Environment for continuation of work Interaction between the individual and the environment
Cooperative assessment Strengths

[Abstract]

The purpose of this research study was to develop an evaluation tool for assessing work difficulties (vocational readiness and work difficulties) that would be useful in connecting persons with disabilities to appropriate places of employment and necessary support services in the field such as consultation support prior to work transition (assuming situations where persons with disabilities face employment difficulties after transitioning to employment and consider necessary support), based on a survey of the needs for using the tool.

The development process involved various activities, including a needs assessment survey to understand the requirements for utilizing the tool, a study conducted by an expert group established within the Research Committee, questionnaire surveys targeting employment support providers and companies employing individuals with disabilities, and a trial evaluation of the assessment tool's prototype version at employment support providers.

As a result of these efforts, the "Assessment Sheets for Work Support" and the accompanying "Guide to utilizing the Assessment Sheets for Work Support" were successfully completed."

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2 Research Period

FY2020 - FY2022

3 Composition of the Research Report

Introduction	Background and Purpose of the Research and Method
Chapter1	Study on the Concept of Assessment Tool Development Based on the Opinions of a Group of Experts
Chapter2	Survey on Assessment in Employment Support Providers
Chapter3	Survey on Matters that Companies Consider Important when Hiring Persons with Disabilities and Factors that Prevent Them from Continuation of Work
Chapter4	Development of the Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version)
Chapter5	Improvement of the Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version) through Trial Evaluation
Chapter6	Overall Discussion
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4 Background and Purposes of the Research

Work support for individuals with disabilities in Japan is the result of collaboration between vocational rehabilitation, an employment policy for persons with disabilities, and employment-related welfare services, a welfare policy for persons with disabilities. In recent years, as the number of persons with disabilities who wish to work has been increasing, the work support system has been expanded and improved. However, a significant challenge arises during the transition from education and welfare to employment, which involves conducting assessments to comprehend the support needs and current work abilities of persons with disabilities and effectively connecting them to appropriate support services.

Assessment tools that contribute to the accommodation of necessary support for persons with disabilities include, for example, the Checklist for Work Transition Support (National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2007) and the Checklist for Work Support (Checklist for Trainees for Work Support and Checklist for Employees for Work Support) (National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation, 2009) developed by the National Institute of Vocational Rehabilitation for Persons with Disabilities, and various initiatives related to assessment are being implemented at employment support providers. However, in an interim report compiled by the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare in September 2020 on strengthening cooperation between employment policies and welfare policies related to work for persons with disabilities, it was pointed out that objective evaluation methods to assess work ability and aptitude have not been established. As a result, the decision to provide support is often left to the discretion of the service providers in the field. Given these current conditions of work support, it was considered necessary to develop a new evaluation tool to understand the support needs of persons with disabilities and the current state of their work abilities, etc., and to link this to appropriate support.

The purpose of this research was to develop an evaluation tool for work difficulties (vocational readiness and work difficulties) that will be useful in connecting persons with disabilities to appropriate places of employment and necessary support services in the field such as consultation support prior to work transition (assuming situations where persons with disabilities face work difficulties and consider necessary support after their work transition), based on a survey of the needs for using the tool.

5 Method

(1) Establishment of Research Committee, etc.

A Establishment of research committee

To gather opinions on the development of evaluation tools from experts who are familiar with work support for persons with disabilities, a research committee was established in August 2020 consisting of 13 members: academic experts, persons involved in employment support providers, persons involved in companies employing persons with disabilities, persons involved in special support education, and Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare officials. Over the course of the research, seven committee meetings were conducted to facilitate discussions and gather insights from these diverse perspectives.

B Establishment of a study team to develop an evaluation tool

To gather opinions on the development of evaluation tools from vocational counselors for persons with disabilities who are experts in vocational rehabilitation, a study team for the development of evaluation tools was established in June 2021. The team consisted of 10 members, including vocational counselors for persons with disabilities at regional vocational centers for persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "regional centers") and national institute of vocational rehabilitation and vocational centers for persons with disabilities, as well as researchers in charge, and three meetings were held in conjunction with the discussions in the Research Committee.

(2) Questionnaire Survey of Employment Support Providers

To develop an assessment tool that aligns with the current implementation of assessments in employment support providers, it was crucial to understand the status of assessment practices conducted using the existing checklist. Therefore, we conducted a questionnaire survey of employment and life support centers for persons with disabilities (hereinafter referred to as "employment and life support centers"), work transition support providers (hereinafter referred to as "transition support provider"), and regional centers nationwide, with the aim of gathering information on assessments that will contribute to the development of tools. The survey was conducted from January to February 2021. Questionnaires were sent to 3,387 locations and collected from 1,373 (collection rate: 40.5%).

(3) Questionnaire Survey of Companies Employing Persons with Disabilities

A questionnaire survey was conducted on companies (10,000 companies) that employ persons with disabilities. The purpose of this survey was to gain clarity on the specific items that are checked during the employment process and the level of importance given to factors such as skill mastery when hiring individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the survey aimed to understand the occurrence of issues that may hinder the continuation of work for individuals with disabilities and how these issues are addressed. The survey was conducted from September to October 2021, and responses were received from 2,960 companies (29.7% response rate).

(4) Development of the Assessment Sheets (prototype version) for Work Support

The "Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version)" were created by the researcher in charge of the study in Microsoft Excel. In addition, a "guide to utilizing the Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype

version)," which explains explicitly the development concept, contents, and assessment method of the assessment sheets for supporters, was created in Microsoft Word. The "Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version)" are intended to be used to collect and organize the following information on employment for persons with disabilities who wish to work (hereinafter referred to as "eligible persons"), in cooperation with supporters and eligible persons, so that both sides can appropriately understand the eligible persons' strengths, growth potential, and challenges in work, and deliberate on necessary support and accommodation toward finding employment.

- (1) Wishes and needs of the eligible persons with regard to work
- (2) Current status of the eligible persons' work performance, occupational life, and interpersonal relationships (basic matters for work)
- (3) Desirable environment for continuation of work from the viewpoint of interaction between the eligible persons and the environment

< Key points for utilizing the Assessment Sheets (prototype version) for Work Support >

- Assessment is conducted comprehensively, utilizing multiple sources of information. This includes the information provided directly by the eligible persons themselves, as well as the assessment of their adjustment status by supporters through methods such as on-site observations and workplace interactions. Additionally, input from family members, related service providers, and other stakeholders is taken into consideration. Furthermore, information from various sources, such as other checklists, work samples, and tests, is incorporated into the assessment process.
- The supporter and the eligible persons shall cooperatively collect and organize necessary information through individual interview situations, and the supporter shall cooperatively conduct the assessment while confirming the eligible persons' opinions and self-assessment.

(5) Improvement of the Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version) through Trial Evaluation

The assessment sheets for work support (prototype version) underwent practical testing involving both work supporters and eligible individuals. The prototype version was evaluated, and improvements were considered based on the feedback and results of the evaluation. For this purpose, 15 centers were selected, including employment and life support centers, transition support providers, regional centers, vocational centers, and the national institute of vocational rehabilitation vocational centers. From May to June 2022, these centers conducted a trial evaluation of the assessment sheets for work support (prototype version) and the guide to utilizing the assessment sheets for work support (prototype version). Data related to the trial evaluation was collected during this period. In July of the same year, an online interview survey was conducted with the supporters responsible for the trial evaluation to gather their insights and feedback on the trial results.

6 Summarized Results of the Study

(1) Studies by Research Committees, etc.

After the Research Committee discussed the basic concept for the development of the evaluation tool, based on the results of a questionnaire survey of employment support providers and companies employing persons with disabilities, the Research Committee and the evaluation tool development study team discussed the overall structure, evaluation items, evaluation methods, etc. of the evaluation tool, and the following development concept was formed and finalized.

- Developing assessment tools to consider necessary support and accommodation based on the eligible persons'

wishes and needs

- Examining of methods to identify and reliably share with the eligible persons' wishes and needs regarding work
- Revision of existing checklist for vocational readiness
- Examining factors preventing continuation of work that are difficult to predict with existing checklists for occupational readiness
- Conducting assessments using a collaborative assessment method between supporters and the eligible persons
- Considering assessment from the perspective of the interaction between the eligible persons and the environment
- Introducing a system that focuses on the eligible persons' strengths

The name of the assessment tool was changed to Assessment Sheets for Work Support because it was developed for the purpose of examining necessary support and accommodation for employment, and was fully updated with new assessment items and assessment methods as a successor assessment tool to the Checklist for Work Support, which was developed in 2009.

(2) Questionnaire Survey of Employment Support Providers

The main findings from the survey are as follows.

- Of the 78 evaluation items on the existing checklist, 16 of the items were "basically evaluated" by more than 80% of respondents for all types of disabilities. Of the evaluation items on the existing checklist, the item that the largest number of respondents indicated was "difficult to evaluate" was "the ability to take paid leave in a planned manner."
- When asked respondents to write freely about factors that prevent them from continuation of work, which are difficult to predict in pre-employment assessments, we found that in addition to [physical and mental condition], [basic abilities and understanding], [daily life], and [motivation to work], which are often considered as individual factors, there were also environmental factors such as [home environment], [work environment], [job and working conditions], [commuting relationship], and [work support], as well as [workplace behavior] and [workplace relationships], which are an interaction between the individual and the environment.

(3) Questionnaire Survey of Companies Employing Persons with Disabilities

The main findings from the survey are as follows.

- With regard to the 56 items in the four areas (work ability, attitude toward work, occupational life, and interpersonal relations) selected through discussions by the Research Committee and the evaluation tool development study team as matters of importance when hiring persons with disabilities, the number of items that more than 50% of responding companies answered "checked or emphasized" were two items in the "work ability" area, one item in the "attitude toward work" area, eight items in the "occupational life" area, and six items in the "interpersonal relations" area, for a total of 17 items (if no distinction is made between disability types).
- The number of items that more than 50% of the responding companies answered "checked or emphasized" or "checked or differed depending on the eligible persons" was 46, including 18 items in the "work ability" area, three items in the "attitude toward work" area, 14 items in the "occupational life" area, and 11 items in the "interpersonal relationships" area (if no distinction is made between disability types).

- We calculated the percentage of 17 issues that arose after hiring persons with disabilities that were problematic for them to work, by disability type, and found that the percentage of each item that arose as a problem differed by disability type. The results also suggest that even items with low percentages of problems when the disability type was not distinguished could be problems depending on the disability type.

(4) Improvement of the Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version) through Trial Evaluation

The Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version) consisted of the following contents.

I. Wishes and needs relating to work (33 items in 10 areas)

II. Basic items for employment (44 items in three areas): Items to understand the current situation regarding basic work performance, occupational life, and interpersonal relationships required in many workplaces.

- In the above company survey, 17 items were considered mandatory (recommended for all eligible persons assessments), which more than 50% of responding companies indicated were "checked or emphasized" when hiring persons with disabilities.
- The 27 items that more than 50% of the companies that responded indicated that they "checked or emphasized" or "checked or differed depending on the eligible persons " when hiring persons with disabilities were selected items (the assessment was selected based on the eligible persons' situation.)

III. Environment for continuation of work (53 items in 10 areas): To clarify the desirable environment for continuation of work by considering the outlook for factors that hinder continuation of work from the perspective of the interaction between the eligible persons and the environment from a preventive perspective, based on the eligible persons' current disability status, wishes, and needs, basic items for work, etc.

IV. Assessment result sheet: The main assessment results entered in the three sheets from I to III above are automatically displayed. In addition, there is a " general cooperative findings" column for inputting comprehensive findings obtained from multiple assessment items, such as willingness to work, basic items for work, and the degree of the eligible persons' self-understanding regarding necessary support and accommodations, and for focusing on particularly important points among strengths, challenges, and necessary support and accommodation.

The main results obtained from the trial evaluation are as follows

- We asked supporters to what extent they were able to practice support related to assessment by using the prototype version. The combined percentage of "fairly well" and "somewhat well" responses by supporters exceeded 80% in seven of the nine items. The remaining two items, "Identify the desirable environment for the subject to continue working based on the findings on the interaction between the eligible persons and the environment" was 67.3%, and "focus on strengths (strengths of the individual and the environment) rather than what the eligible persons cannot do or is not good at or what the eligible persons' problems are" was 78.2%.
- The time spent on individual interviews for the assessment using the prototype version ranged from 1 to 6 hours, resulting in a between- eligible persons mean (SD) of 3.2 hours (1.2).
- We asked the eligible persons about the extent to which they were able to achieve their assessment objectives by using the prototype version, and the combined percentage of "fairly well" and "somewhat well" responses exceeded 80% of all valid responses in four of the five items (Figure 1). The only item that did not receive more than 80% of the total valid responses was "asserting my opinion based on specific information when my opinion differs from that of my supporters," which accounted for only 60% of the total number of valid responses.

- The eligible persons' free statements regarding "changes that occurred to me as a result of using the prototype version" were categorized according to the similarity of semantic content, and were classified into the following categories: [deepening understanding of my own characteristics], [forming an image and outlook on work], [reaffirming myself], [deepening understanding of the value of support], [increasing confidence], [increasing motivation to work], [building trust with supporters], and [arousing anxiety about work].
- The "changes that occurred in the supporters" reported in the interview survey of supporters were categorized according to the similarity of semantic content, which could be organized into the following three categories: [acquisition of an assessment perspective], [focus on strengths], [implementation of a convincing assessment], and [building a relationship with the eligible persons].
- The main issues of the prototype version reported in the interview survey of supporters were: [high volume], [conditions for implementation], [need for explanations by supporters], [response in case of discrepancy between the eligible persons and the supporter's evaluation], [follow-up regarding consideration of support and accommodation], and [explanation to the eligible persons].

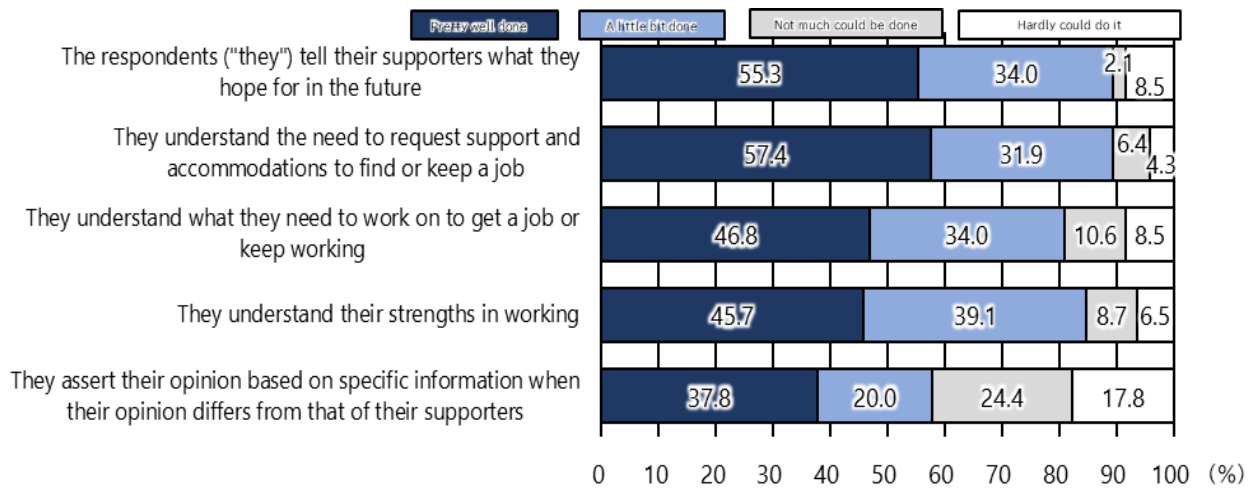


Figure 1: Achievement of assessment objectives

<Main improvements in the Assessment Sheets for Work Support (prototype version)>

In order to promote the flexibility and customization of the assessment process based on the individual circumstances of eligible persons, certain changes were made to the assessment items. Within the "II. basic items for work" category, 17 out of the 44 items were modified from mandatory to recommended items. This adjustment allows supporters to have more discretion in selecting the appropriate assessment items based on consultation with the eligible persons. To facilitate the selection process and clearly identify the areas to be assessed, separate lists containing only the item sentences were created for both the "II. basic items for work" and "III. environment for continuation of work" categories.

To enhance the ease of utilizing reference materials for considering support and accommodations in the "III. environment for continuation of work" section, specific improvements have been made. The assessment sheets now include clear indications of the pages that contain reference materials. Additionally, a hyperlink function has been implemented, enabling easy access to the relevant reference materials.

(5) Overall Discussion

The strengths, limitations, and future challenges of the developed evaluation tool are as follows.

< Strengths of the developed evaluation tool >

- The new basic settings and components not found in existing evaluation tools were adopted, such as the adoption of a cooperative evaluation method between supporters and eligible persons, the introduction of a system focusing on the eligible persons' strengths, and the identification of factors that prevent the continuation of work, which is difficult to predict with existing checklists based on the perspective of the interaction between the eligible persons and the environment, and the consideration of support and accommodation aimed at preventing the occurrence of such factors.
- The quality of the evaluation tool has been ensured to a certain degree through revisions and modifications based on studies conducted by the Research Committee, surveys conducted at employment support providers and companies, and trial evaluations of the evaluation tool (prototype version) conducted at employment support providers.

< Limitations of the developed evaluation tool >

- Insufficient accumulation of practical knowledge for efficient use of assessment tools, such as appropriate selection methods for assessment items
- During the trial evaluation, the number of eligible persons involved was limited, and there are still challenges in applying the assessment sheets to a wider range of individuals. In particular, while the introduction of the cooperative evaluation method has been shown to have advantages, such as building relationships between supporters and eligible persons, the state of subjects who can smoothly undergo cooperative evaluation, the effective timing of cooperative evaluation, and points to keep in mind when conducting it are not fully organized. Therefore, it is necessary to accumulate practical knowledge that contributes to the improvement of the qualifications of supporters who conduct cooperative evaluation.

< Challenges for the future >

- It is necessary to promote an appropriate understanding of the development concept and usage points of the evaluation tool.
- It is necessary to implement initiatives to improve the assessment skills of supporters to effectively use assessment tools and conduct high-quality assessments.
- It is necessary to verify outcomes from the use of the assessment tool, such as whether the results of the assessment on the environment for the continuation of work, which is a new component of the assessment tool, contribute to the continuation of work of the eligible persons.

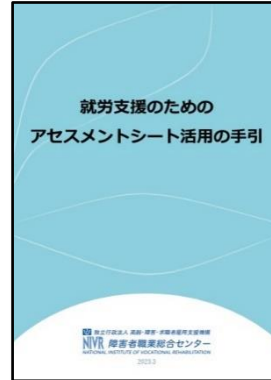
We hope that the assessment tool developed in this research study will be effectively utilized in the field of work support, and that it will help as many persons with disabilities as possible to become aware of their own strengths and organize the support and accommodation they need so that they can achieve the employment they wish.

7 Related Research Deliverables

- Assessment sheets for work support, 2023
- Guide to utilizing the assessment sheets for work support, 2023



Assessment Sheets for
Work Support



Guide to utilizing the Assessment
Sheets for Work Support

Assessment Sheets for Work Support and guide to use for download URL
<https://www.nivr.jeed.go.jp/research/kyouzai/kyouzai78.html>