

THE CHALLENGES IN FACILITATING THE TRANSITION-TO-CAREER PROCESS SPECIAL NEEDS INTEGRATED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by special education teachers in implementing the Transition-to-Career Programme (TCP). A case study involving districts from the states of Perak and Selangor was applied as part of the Integrated Special Education Programme (ISEP). The data collected were interviews with seven special education teachers using purposive sampling techniques. The data were analysed thematically and four themes were identified: (1) teacher knowledge and skills; (2) teachers' attitudes and motivation; (3) provision of infrastructure and learning environment; and (4) support from schools, parents, and community. The roles of teachers, students, parents, schools, socioeconomic status, and forms of support are found to be the main challenges in implementing the programme. These factors play a crucial role in determining the success of the Career Transition Programme (CTP) in special education at the school. The main findings of this study indicate that the readiness in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers, students, and family members require are key aspects that support the school, along with cooperation from various parties to provide support aligned with the students' needs. This study also shows that the ecological system influences the development and readiness of special education needs students (SENS), including their future careers.

Keywords: special education teachers, transition to career programme, integrated special education programme, implementation challenges, teacher readiness and support system

INTRODUCTION

The Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013–2025) envisions education as a strategic lever for national progress through the empowerment of human capital. As the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0) accelerates transformations across the labour market, the demand for adaptive, skilled, and future-ready graduates has intensified. Yet, despite legislative reforms and inclusive education policies, students with learning disabilities continue to be significantly underrepresented in the workforce. Data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2023) shows a rise in youth unemployment to 7.0%, with at least 366 individuals with disabilities still unemployed—a situation reflecting broader gaps in support systems, skill development, and transition preparedness.

Recent study emphasise that self-determination is a critical factor in successful postschool outcomes for students with disabilities (Mazzotti et al. 2021). Self-determination encompasses essential abilities such as goal setting, decision-making, and self-advocacy—skills strongly linked to postsecondary employment and educational success. The Self-Determined Learning Model of Instruction (SDLMI) has emerged as an evidence-based instructional approach to support these competencies, guiding students through a structured process of goal identification, action planning, and self-evaluation.

However, there are persistent challenges in implementing such interventions with fidelity, especially in diverse and resource-limited educational contexts (Shogren et al. 2020). These barriers were exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted traditional delivery methods and widened the gap in equitable access to quality transition support (Toste, Shogren and Raley 2021). As a response, technology-enhanced solutions such as the Goal-Setting Challenge (GSC) App have been developed to promote individualised, self-paced engagement with self-determination content, showing promise in building transition readiness.

Aligned with Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, this study conceptualises employability as a multi-level construct influenced by intrapersonal and systemic factors. These include programme structure, inter-agency collaboration, family involvement, and school-based support systems. While previous research has explored the direct effects of student development on postschool outcomes, fewer studies have examined the mediating mechanisms that shape this relationship, particularly in the Malaysian special education context.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the ecological factors that mediate the relationship between student development and employability among students with learning disabilities. By integrating self-determination theory, evidence-based instructional practices, and ecological systems thinking, the study offers a comprehensive model for enhancing the marketability and transition outcomes of students with learning disabilities.

EMPOWERING CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAMMES IN SCHOOLS TO ENHANCE THE EMPLOYABILITY OF INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

Recent data from 2022 to 2024 show that the employability rate in Malaysia indicates signs of recovery and significant improvement, in line with the economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic hit Malaysia. The transformation framework of academic programmes in educational institutions integrates elements of industry, community, research, and flexibility. This framework aims to produce graduates with attributes and skills acquired from experiential learning and competency-based education. Such an approach is an indicator of better employment opportunities for the country's future youth.

When addressing employability in Malaysia, the special needs persons (SNPs) should receive more attention due to the various challenges they encounter to enjoy a better quality of life. According to the study by Riesen and Oertle (2019), most employers refused to accept SNP workers because they worry about disrupting the company's potential and existing staff. Recent data from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024) indicates that the employability rate among SNPs in Malaysia remains low. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia's (2020) report, the overall employment rate of persons with disabilities in Malaysia is estimated to be only 0.5%. Recent national statistics from the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development (2022), indicate that approximately 674,000 individuals with disabilities are registered in Malaysia, representing about 2% of the population, with nearly half of them being of working age. However, employment participation remains low, with fewer than 4,000 persons with disabilities employed in the public sector and just over 3,000 in the private sector.

According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2023), there are 97,220 students enrolled in special education programmes in Malaysia, with students with learning disabilities forming the largest group, numbering 51,200 individuals, or approximately 52% of the total special education population. Recognising the increasing number of special education needs students (SENS) in Malaysia, the government, in collaboration with various other relevant ministries such as the Ministry of Education Malaysia, Ministry of Human Resources, and

Ministry of Women, Family, and Community Development, has taken various initiatives to ensure the welfare of the SNPs in securing jobs and improving their quality of life. The special education division has initiated efforts starting at the school level to introduce the Transition-to-Career Programme (TCP) in special education programmes.

The Career Transition Programme (CTP) is one of the main programmes implemented in the Integrated Special Education Programme (ISEP) in Malaysia. This is a skill development and SENS support programme conducted from form 1 to form 5. The programme aims to provide psychological, emotional, and mental support to help these individuals with SENS adapt to their environment, including their peers, teachers, and community members, at school, family, training places, and workplaces (Ministry of Education Malaysia 2020). Through this CTP, SENS students receiving secondary education are equipped with skills and educational processes that enable them to learn about aspects of family and community, and nurture their interest in skills as preparation for adulthood and the workforce. Consequently, vocational subjects are integrated throughout the curriculum adopted in the special education Programme and certification programmes, such as the Modular Skills Certificate.

As a result, one of the key challenges is the educators' ability and readiness to equip students with high resilience and capabilities. Educators play a major role in producing students who are not only highly resilient but also ready to face any current changes. Many studies focusing on the challenges of the programme can provide solutions for the educational programmes implemented. As suggested by Mazzotti et al. (2020), ensuring a successful transition-to-career process for individuals with disabilities is the best approach to empower the employability of SENS. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore the challenges faced by special education teachers in the Special Education Integration Programme in implementing the CTP for SENS. The aim of this study is to identify the factors affecting the employability of this group in the country through an in-depth exploration of information related to the implementation of the CTP carried out by teachers in schools.

THE ROLE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN IMPROVING THE MARKETABILITY OF SENS

The concept of employability among SENS in Malaysia can be divided into three categories: (1) SENS who can pursue tertiary education either in higher education institutions or public and private skills institutions or any accredited training centres like Pusat Giat MARA and their equivalents; (2) SENS who can continue their education in agencies that do not offer skills certification, such

as religious schools or participating in informal education, such as community-based skills training classes, and (3) SENS who have completed their education and taken any job that is paid for work done.

The ministry intends to implement an applied and vocational curriculum for SENS through a transition programme. This approach combines activities tailored to individual student needs, taking into account their choices, interests, and market demands. It includes guidance, community experiences, career development, and various objectives of adult life after completing schooling, to secure suitable employment opportunities.

The readiness of employers to accept SENS in the workforce, besides teachers' professional competence, continues to be widely discussed to date. Both the professionalism of educators and the willingness of employers to accommodate SENS are crucial for ensuring successful transitions from education to meaningful employment. However, the role of educators has expanded beyond teaching and guiding. Today, educators also play a role in honing and providing skills, in addition to instilling positive values in their students, so that the knowledge, skills, and positive values imparted can be applied effectively in their future work and social interactions within the community.

In addition to developing analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills among students, instilling strong resilience is also vital for helping them adapt to a changing environment, in line with the aspirations of the National Education Philosophy to produce individuals balanced in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual aspects. Hence, Page, Anderson and Charteris (2021) recommended the importance of interaction within the environment through an ecological systems approach to enhance an individual's learning process.

As curriculum deliverers, teachers must ensure that the quality of the content and activities within the curriculum truly helps achieve the goal of student development. A high-quality curriculum that focuses on career direction can be considered an alternative solution to address issues related to unemployment, life management, and opportunities for furthering higher education after completing school (Bonati 2020). Additionally, the education and training system needs to be improved to enhance the quality of education, ensuring better educational outcomes among students. Porter (2018) identified a research gap in studies that focus more on the effects of the school environment's ecosystem on students with special needs.

The Secondary School Standard Curriculum for Special Education (SSSCSE) is designed to meet the new policy requirements outlined in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (MEDP) 2013–2025 for SENS. The implementation of SSSCSE has also transformed the learning patterns of SENS in line with

current policies outlined in Special Circular (SPI) No. 9/2016. This policy outlines several learning implementation processes for SENS in secondary schools, providing students with the opportunity to acquire and master vocational knowledge and skills while guiding them towards career transitions.

In a curriculum that highlights vocational skills, SENS can learn not only core subjects like Malay language, Mathematics, and other essential life skills, but they are also exposed to basic and specific skills subjects tailored to their abilities, enabling them to live independently within society. At the secondary school level, SENS with moderate and lower functionality are offered the option to follow skill-based subjects from a selection of courses provided by their respective schools, with the support of teachers and guardians. The vocational skills curriculum involves eight core subjects. This consists of one basic vocational skill subject and one specific vocational skill (SVS) subject, offered by schools prior to sitting for the Malaysian Skills Certificate or Modular Certificate assessments. These assessments are part of the certification procedures under the Malaysian Skills Certification System.

SKILLS CERTIFICATION FOR SENS

The skills certification from the Department of Skills Development aims to provide more opportunities for SENS to be recognised for their skills and to produce more skilled workers among SENS in Malaysia after they complete training and are certified in the accredited modules (Department of Skills Development 2020).

Special Education Integration Programmes offering SVS subjects must submit their application to become certified centres so that the modular certification programme can be successfully implemented, and it is compulsory for SENS to register in full-time skills programmes. Through the skills programme under the certified centres method, theory learning accounts for 40% of the training time, while practical work contributes 60% (Department of Skills Development 2020).

Hence, according to the Instructor and Advanced Skills Training Centre 2015, before someone is certified as a vocational training officer (VTO) at any training institution, all vocational training instructors in the Malaysian Training System are required to obtain a VTO certificate in accordance with the National Skills Development Act 2006 (Act 652), and more recently, the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Teaching Diploma Course (TVET-I). SENS must be exposed to vocational programmes to help improve their employability (Rios et al. 2023).

Special education teachers are bound by Act 652, which requires those teaching SVS subjects to complete additional skills training to meet the vocational training requirements outlined in the act. This situation emphasises the importance of teacher readiness in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In the teaching framework, three key principles are considered: maximising curriculum engagement, pedagogy, and assessment (Page, Anderson and Charteris 2021).

However, there is a concerning issue where some special education teachers are reluctant to take on the responsibility of teaching skills subjects, as they feel it is beyond their area of expertise. Some are worried that this situation could negatively impact the development of the SENS students they teach. Whittenburg et al. (2020) stress that teachers need to be prepared to deliver instruction that can develop broad future skills in students, such as communication and social skills, and, most importantly, employability skills.

If they are reluctant to take on these responsibilities, it may affect the students tremendously. Teachers should adopt a positive attitude towards accepting these responsibilities and strive to improve their competencies to meet the demands of today's education. The reality is that teaching skills-subjects is very different from teaching other subjects. Skills-based teaching cannot rely solely on classroom theory; it must also include practical knowledge and assessment. This means that the teacher delivering vocational-related instruction must be highly capable and meet the National Occupational Skills Standard (NOSS). Therefore, students with special needs require a quality career-based learning approach.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a qualitative study, which it involves an in-depth exploration of the nature of a phenomenon. It allows researchers to explore issues and obtain deeper insights into a problem that emerges in the real world. According to Bernard, Wutich and Ryan (2010), in social science research, researchers can explore aspects involving human actions and environmental situations to obtain appropriate qualitative data. In this study, researchers also conducted an exploration relevant to the challenges that special education teachers encountered when implementing the TCP.

Additionally, this study employs a case study approach. This specific method was purposely chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subject under investigation and to investigate a particular case comprehensively. This approach is also supported by Bernard, Wutich and Ryan (2010), as the goal of

qualitative research is to obtain a description of a particular case. The cases studied in this research refer to behaviours, emotions, practices by humans, or phenomena occurring within the environment.

The purposive sampling technique was employed in the selection of teachers teaching in the ISEP that serves students with learning disabilities in several districts in Selangor and Perak. According to Ministry of Education Malaysia (2022), both states have the highest number of special education programmes in Malaysia. The study involved seven participants, of which four were females and the other three were males. In terms of age, four of the research participants were between 35 and 40 years, while the other three were between 41 and 50 years. They had more than five years of experience teaching the skills subjects for the ISEP. We selected participants based on a heterogeneous sample, which is varied across a wide range of dimensions, including age group, experience levels, and perspectives. In this regard, Zou (2016) defined it as follows “heterogeneous sample refers to diversity such that each individual brings a unique perspective or set of attributes to the table”.

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews to enable participants to speak their minds at length about the topics under discussion. Interview data was obtained from voice recordings. Then, the transcription process was carefully done for each participant. It took at least 6 hours to transcribe each participant’s interview to ensure no input was overlooked, and the data verification from the study participants was also obtained. Firstly, verbatim transcription was conducted. Then, the data was analysed to search for the related themes.

Interview protocols were also applied to maintain the required levels of uniformity in data collection across each session. The interview questions were developed based on a thorough review of the literature and field studies that have been conducted by researchers previously. These questions focused on areas such as teacher preparation, curriculum challenges, infrastructure needs, and the support systems required for effective TCP implementation. Table 1 shows an overview of the profile of the research participants.

Table 1: Overview of research participant profiles

Research participant	Professional qualification	Years of service	District (State)
RP1	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education	10 years	Gombak (Selangor)
RP2	Bachelor of Education (Special Education)	8 years	Hulu Selangor (Selangor)
RP3	Diploma in Hotel Management Bachelor's Degree in Special Education	9 years	Hulu Selangor (Selangor)
RP4	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education	12 years	Batang Padang (Perak)
RP5	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education (Special Education)	11 years	Muallim (Perak)
RP6	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education (Special Education)	10 years	Kinta (Perak)
RP7	Bachelor of Education (Special Education)	13 years	Kerian (Perak)

To ensure the reliability and validity of the themes derived from the interview data, the kappa coefficient value determination strategy was used to obtain panel agreement on the formation of these themes (Cohen 1960; Fleiss 1981). Each panel member independently applied the kappa coefficient value to the coding process, and the researcher then obtained a consensus from the panel. For the theme construction, the kappa coefficient value achieved was 0.7. In summary, the use of a structured interview protocol facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the challenges encountered by teachers, while the application of the kappa coefficient value ensured a high level of agreement among the panel members regarding the derived themes. This rigorous approach enhances the credibility and reliability of the findings.

FINDINGS

The study reveals multiple challenges identified by researchers from the educators' perspective through in-depth interviews. Experiences from the educators' viewpoint in implementing the CTP identify four main themes related to the challenges encountered when carrying out the CTP: (1) knowledge and

skills; (2) attitudes and motivation; (3) availability of infrastructure and learning environment; and (4) support and cooperation from school administrators, family members, and the community.

Teachers' Knowledge and Skill

Teachers who are responsible for instructing skills-based subjects must be well-versed in the skill areas taught in schools. Along with imparting suitable values within their specific skill areas, teachers should also be adept at delivering tactics, approaches, and teaching methods. According to the study's first participant, a seasoned skills-based educator, teachers face a major obstacle if they are not prepared to administer tests in skills-based domains. Another educator who has only been in the classroom for three years admitted that they are not very good at evaluating pupils using the Malaysian Skills Certificate (MSC) modular assessment approach, which consists of both theoretical and practical elements. Currently, this teacher (RP1) recommends, "Since we are not trained to conduct readiness assessments, it is difficult to ascertain students' skill preferences."

According to RP4, since many special education teachers lack professional qualifications in skills development, the special education division needs to provide in-service courses to ensure that teachers are qualified to teach skills-subjects. RP7 in the study reported that due to lack of knowledge, they have no idea and are not skilled in teaching skills-based subjects, which can ultimately affect the effectiveness of the skills-based subject implementation process. This issue becomes more acute as most participants indicated that they are not provided with ongoing courses or training related to the skills being taught. RP2 also expresses concern that a lack of skills among teachers may have implications on the quality of preparation for the instructional plans, collaboration with industries, skills in marketing students' products, and the integration of entrepreneurial values among students. For example, this teacher stated, "I need to know how to plan teaching content that is aligned with activities and assessments according to the level of abilities and functionality of the students."

According to RP1, teachers' teaching skills not only need to ensure that what students learn can be mastered well, but they also need to make sure that students can reach the expected level of competence to qualify for the MSC. RP2 stated that teachers need to have knowledge and skills to apply work operations in the field as practised in the industry by ensuring that safety and cleanliness aspects follow the procedures set by the Malaysian Skills Department. This is supported by the view of RP3, who stated, "We ourselves have to ensure that our students meet the specifications based on the criteria set by NOSS to enable them to be awarded Level 2 MSC certification."

The findings revealed that five out of seven research participants (RP1, RP3, RP4, RP5 and RP6) encountered challenges in teaching and learning, particularly in delivering the new curriculum based on the Curriculum Standard Document and Assessment (CSDA). The following are the challenges shared by the RP6:

I lack knowledge in understanding skill-based learning according to the requirements of NOSS and DSD. Therefore, I have limited ideas on how to incorporate the teaching of mathematics with training and practical applications into my lessons...very difficult to apply elements across the curriculum in teaching and learning when we don't have experience.

From another perspective, most study participants encountered challenges in implementing intervention plans in the Individualised Education Plan, particularly in the aspect of CTP. The difficulty in planning and modifying interventions that align with each student's needs has led teachers to struggle in setting activities, goals, and identifying the individuals involved in the career transition process. As explained by RP1 who has been instructing skills-based subjects for eight years:

The Individualised Education Program (IEP) should really be a plan that focuses on career direction, but when teachers don't know how to write and design interventions that clearly focus on the required skills, it becomes more challenging.

Teachers' Attitudes and Motivation

It is discovered that the lack of training was the major hindrance for most teachers to implement learning effectively and efficiently. In fact, some reported that they had to adhere to administrators' directives due to career demands. The researcher found that four of the participants (RP1, RP3, RP4, RP5) mentioned having to spend their own money to self-study and seek courses offered by external parties, whether in-person or online. RP2 made the following statement in light of her experience:

Since I'm not a skilled individual, it's challenging to teach massage all at once without any training, so I looked for outside courses to study on my own. I am a teacher who imparts skills. At the same time, I, too, have spent too much money learning the skills outside, I have to assure I have MSC Level 3.

According to RP7, teachers must take the initiative to learn certain skills using their own pocket money. They, too, have to enrol in specific courses on their own to enhance their own competency level so that they can secure the required MSC. In relation to this, one of the participants shared, "We have to choose and we need to force myself and we need to have high self-confidence (RP6).

Provision of Infrastructure and Learning Environment

Based on the research findings, effective skills-based learning requires the availability of complete equipment and skills workshop facilities. From the interview results, it was found that most special education teachers stated that many schools lack facilities such as skills workshops and adequate equipment to carry out skill training for students. This issue has become a burden for most teachers in implementing skills-based teaching. Teachers are forced to find solutions, as mentioned by RP1, “I need to prepare a proposal and seek approval from the school administration to obtain a room to be used as a skills workshop, but it’s difficult to get approval.”

In addition to the skills workshop facilities, learning also requires materials and equipment, especially those used for operating the skills as outlined in the NOSS. RP2 mentioned that the tools and facilities provided to schools are inadequate and inefficient in supporting the implementation of skill subjects towards MSC. RP5 noted that although the special education division has allocated funds for the purchase of equipment for ISEP throughout Malaysia, not all schools receive this allocation. Based on the experience, RP3 stated:

My school doesn’t even have enough classrooms, and they are divided in such a way that it’s difficult to set up a complete workshop. Currently, I teach both theory and practical skills in the classroom, which is really not suitable for practical work. Additionally, we don’t have all the necessary equipment.

Support from Schools, Parents and Community

The findings from the interviews highlight several key perspectives from research participants regarding these challenges. For instance, RP6 emphasised the necessity of administrative support and collaboration with local agencies for infrastructure modifications, stating:

Administrative support is crucial in terms of providing infrastructure that aligns with industry specifications, and [it] requires many collaborations with agencies such as local councils and municipalities for space modifications and others.

This issue was also shared by RP3 who mentioned, “We need conducive space to work in cooking workshops, and it needs a high cost to renovate according to the specifications given by the Malaysia Skills Department.” Interviews revealed that the administration has still not approved requests to convert academic classrooms into skills workshops. There are also administrators who do not grant permission to use classrooms as workshops, even though there are empty classrooms available. These issues have become obstacles and sources of

stress for teachers in conducting skills-based learning. In addition, RP4 stated, “Our challenges here are the support from the school administrator and the higher authorities.”

Having worked as a teacher for almost nine years, RP5 think that:

Support from colleagues, employers is important, that's why I work harder. I need support from the administrators, senior assistants, and colleagues as motivational support, and to help me with monetary resources, especially in purchasing inventories, all need paperwork before being presented to the higher authorities.

From the research findings, all research participants agreed that parental roles and involvement serve as fundamental elements in skill-based programmes. Three research participants (RP3, RP4 and RP7) shared that there are some parents who refuse to let their children participate in this programme. RP1 said, “We have taught the basic skills for two, three years, and things seem okay... however, the parents don't allow the children to join the industrial training, while the children are interested to it.”

It was with regret that RP2 said:

Parents do not monitor and give moral support. So, the students are not confident to be within the society. They think their children cannot manage themselves. There are parents who said, no need to teach... later he will only stay at home.

Additionally, most participants agreed that the locality influences the readiness of educators to collaborate with employers and the local community. This was shared by one of the participants (RP6) in this study, who mentioned that, “Here, there is a strong focus on the restaurant business, but our programme only focuses on skills like farming and sewing, so it's difficult to collaborate with employers involved in sewing and farming enterprises.”

In a comparable context, RP5 further clarified that, “In this area, there aren't as many bakeries as in the city, so it's difficult for me to find employers or places for my students to undergo industrial training.”

DISCUSSION

The study's conclusions offer valuable insights into the complex challenges that special education instructors face when implementing Malaysia's ISEP's TCP for SENS. There is limited research available about practitioners and their experiences working with students with disabilities (Fischer and Kilpatrick 2023).

The study's findings highlight that teachers face challenges in planning instruction and managing vocational learning effectively due to a lack of knowledge in specific skill areas offered in schools. Teachers with limited teaching pedagogy can pose a risk to student learning achievement (Charteris and Smardon 2019). According to Suhartika and Rosadah (2020), teachers' teaching skills are essential for effective education. These findings call attention to the need for special education teachers to possess specific competencies to improve educational outcomes. Chitiyo and Brinda (2018) believe that lesson planning is crucial for a teacher to determine the most appropriate teaching approach, strategy, method, and technique to meet the teaching objectives. The challenges encountered in the TCP execution require teachers to be skilful in innovating the teaching and learning process, with special attention being given to activity planning, time allocation, and the use of teaching aids suitable to students' needs.

Issues related to readiness and limitations regarding in-depth knowledge in the field of skills are particularly concerning when there is no standardised guideline for the teachers involved in managing and implementing skills subjects in ISEP. This can lead to issues related to teacher preparation, workshop provision, materials and equipment, and assessment methods, as required by the MSC. As noted by Gatto et al. (2021), one of the constraints in implementing training and vocational education programmes is the lack of guidelines that align with national policy systems. Based on the findings of this study, the existing guidelines are merely based on the National Occupational Skills Standards (NOSS)/SKPK guidelines and periodic training courses for SSSCSE organised by Curriculum Development Division, the State Education Department, and the District Education Office.

Educators must have awareness about policies, training opportunities, and incentives that support students' involvement in career fields (Fischer and Kilpatrick 2023). Educators with limited or moderate knowledge and skills encounter challenges in conducting vocational curriculum teaching and learning sessions effectively, orderly, and safely. They may not be able to convey knowledge, skills, and information effectively. This will result in SENS not receiving quality skill training, and ultimately, they may lack confidence in pursuing careers based on the skills learned at school. Effective career-based learning enables SENS to gain knowledge about job tasks, norms, procedures, and real-world work experiences in the workplace.

In this aspect, the findings of this study will inspire special education teachers involved in skills-based subjects to enhance their preparation for teaching, master the content of these subjects, develop assessment skills, and maintain an open-minded attitude towards curriculum changes. It is undeniable that a high level of teacher proficiency and readiness to teach a subject will positively

impact their teaching quality and can boost motivation and enthusiasm. Emotional and behavioural support for the students to undergo the career adaptation process (Yuen and Chan 2022) must be given utmost priority in executing TCP. The research shows that teachers' attitudes, interests, and abilities are important in TCP execution, as they bring about motivation, which enhances their involvement and self-confidence in setting goals, developing skills, and achieving learning outcomes. This is emphasised by Nawwar and Khairul Farhah (2022), who argue that with motivation, an individual can help motivate others to make efforts or accomplish specific tasks.

According to Mazzotti et al. (2021), to enable a successful transition-to-career process for an individual with disabilities, all parties, including the policy makers, teachers, and the community, must together ensure that the curriculum used in the educational institution, which emphasises life-long learning, can be inculcated effectively. Page, Anderson and Charteris (2021) highlight the importance of collaboration from students, infrastructure facilities, the physical design of school buildings, school factors, the level of flexibility, and practices within the community, besides the role of the ecological system in the environment. A good ecosystem in an individual's life, which includes support from parents (Lee et al. 2021), school (Brown 2021), employers (Harvey et al. 2020), and colleagues (Harvey et al. 2020), plays fundamental role in the execution of TCP.

Schools also need to ensure that all necessary infrastructure and facilities are in place to facilitate the teaching and learning process of skills-based subjects. The three critical elements in building and sustaining a collaborative building included: (1) building trust and respect; (2) doing business differently; and (3) having effective structures and processes (Rios et al. 2023). According to Fischer and Kilpatrick (2023), sharing information and having an effective communication system among parties within the school environment, family, and community, including potential employers who are willing to accept students with special educational needs, is essential.

The data obtained can serve as a guide for schools to establish forms of cooperation in education and build a community with relevant parties in implementing the curriculum. Despite the benefits of collaborations, engaging in partnerships can be challenging for some stakeholders due to the time and continued effort needed to form collaborative relationships (Livermore et al. 2020). Hence, it is important to recognise that some of the stakeholders involved may have other responsibilities they need to fulfill outside of the collaboration, thus resulting in having a limited capability of committing to a collaborative partnership.

The collaboration amongst schools and employment providers can help to identify more adequate accommodations and experiences for students and allow providers to enhance work-based learning experiences (Rios et al. 2023). This can be done by offering schools information on best practices in employment services and enhancing their knowledge and experience in local employers and labour markets (Grossi, Thomas and Held 2017).

Plotner and Dymond (2017) explain that there is a lack of transition-specific training for teachers, which could be an additional factor contributing to this knowledge gap, thus further limiting the improvement of interagency collaborations. Additionally, administrators at schools should be more supportive of teachers, working together to build and sustain a collaborative effort. School administrators should strive to identify the level of teachers' current knowledge and the types of training and skills required to upgrade their competency in teaching vocational subjects.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

In relation to the challenges facing teachers, several considerations should be made when thinking about schools and employment providers collaborating. This collaboration can help identify more adequate accommodations and experiences for students and allow providers to enhance work-based learning experiences. This could include offering schools' information on best practices in employment services, improving their knowledge and expertise in local employers, and collaborating with school districts to address teacher shortages, understand school culture, and comprehend the role and responsibilities of the transition coordinator. This study demonstrates that the following factors have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the CTP. The challenges faced by educators when implementing the programme are to provide guidance and information, as well as ensuring that the presence of a career coach includes the following:

1. Serve as a liaison between student and adult agencies and work experiences, and be the main point of contact for schools, families, community, and providers.
2. A high-performing states framework that identifies effective elements for employment systems change, and a collaborative leadership that works in engaging diverse stakeholders in conversations, mutual learning, shared responsibility, and action.
3. Work-based learning, postsecondary education, paid apprenticeship components, and ongoing self-determination training are areas that need to be implemented in the delivery of teaching and the curriculum.

4. Establishing state-wide partnerships between the Division of Developmental Disabilities, counties, and schools to ensure students use the needed, available supports while in school and thus enhance their likelihood of obtaining employment.
5. Teachers supported transition-age youth and adults with disabilities in developing a 'Blueprint for Employment' to help them discover their interests, skills, support network, and potential employers.
6. Requirements of the programme included the usage of evidence-informed transition to adulthood strategies, development of networks with community-based service providers for a more collaborative service delivery, and collaborations to support employment outcomes of youth with disabilities.
7. Teachers also received the same training as job coaches and employers. The selected quality job indicators for this project were in the areas of safety, productivity, attendance, acceptable behaviour, punctuality, on-the-job training, job coaching, and writing and/or communication-related accommodations.

CONCLUSION

Despite having improvements compared to previous years, issues of discrimination, employability among SENS, and lack of opportunities remain major concerns. Factors contributing to these issues need to be addressed at the base level, including examining the effects of planning and implementation of programmes conducted at each level, particularly in educational institutions, to analyse their impact on SENS. The capability and readiness of educators today to prepare students with high resilience and ability is a challenge to their profession. Educators today play a significant role in helping the country produce students with high resilience, while also being prepared to face and embrace changes.

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