



**Manuscript Title:** THE CHALLENGES IN FACILITATING THE TRANSITION-TO-CAREER  
PROCESS SPECIAL NEEDS INTEGRATED SPECIAL EDUCATION  
PROGRAM

**Authors:** Ardzulyna Anal, Ain Syafia Qutreenie Alwi and Anis Shaari

**Accepted Date:** 19-December-2024

**Please cite this article as:** Ardzulyna Anal, Ain Syafia Qutreenie Alwi and Anis Shaari. The challenges in facilitating the transition-to-career process special needs integrated special education program. *Kajian Malaysia* (Early view).

This is a provisional PDF file of an article that has undergone enhancements after acceptance, such as the addition of a cover page and metadata, and formatting for readability, but it is not yet the definitive version of record. This version will undergo additional copyediting, typesetting and review before it is published in its final form, but we are providing this version to give early visibility of the article.

## **THE CHALLENGES IN FACILITATING THE TRANSITION-TO-CAREER PROCESS SPECIAL NEEDS INTEGRATED SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**Ardzulyna Anal<sup>1\*</sup>, Ain Syafia Qutreenie Alwi<sup>1</sup>, Anis Shaari<sup>2</sup>**

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia

Universiti Sains Malaysia, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

\*Corresponding email: [ardzulyna@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:ardzulyna@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study aims to explore the challenges encountered by Special Education teachers in implementing the Transition-to-Career Program (TCP). A case study involving districts from the states of Perak and Selangor was applied as part of the Integrated Special Education Program (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: (a) Teacher Knowledge and Skills, (b) Teachers' Attitudes and Motivation, (c) Provision of Infrastructure and Learning Environment, (d) Support from Schools, Parents, and Community. The roles of teachers, students, parents, school, socio-economic status, and forms of support are found to be the main challenges in the implementation of the program. These factors play a crucial role in regulating the success of the Career Transition Program (CTP) in Special Education at the school. The main findings of this study show that the readiness in terms of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that teachers, students, and family members need are the key aspects that support the school, along with cooperation from various parties to provide support aligned with the needs of the students. 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 Program, Integrated Special Education Program, Skills

### **EMPOWERING CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAMS 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 programs 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 future youth of this country.

When addressing employability in Malaysia, the Special Needs Persons (SNP) 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 (2024) indicates that the employability rate among SNP in Malaysia remains low. According to the report from the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2020) estimates that the overall employment rate of persons with disabilities in Malaysia is only 0.5%. The Social Welfare Department (2022) recorded 674,548

SNPs, or People with Disabilities, comprising 2% of Malaysia's total population, and approximately half of that number constituted those of working age. As of 2022, the number of SNPs employed in the public sector was around 3,724 people, while the private sector recorded 3,186 people.

According to Special Education Data (2022) analysis, a total of 92,305 students are in special education in Malaysia, where students with learning disabilities constituting the largest group at 48,524 or 52.5% of the whole population. Recognizing the increasing number of 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 SNP in securing jobs and improving their quality of life. The Special Education Division has initiated efforts starting at the school level to introduce the TCP in special education programs.

The CTP is one of the main programs implemented in the ISEP in Malaysia. This is a skill development and SENS support program conducted from Form One to Form Five. The program aims to provide psychological, emotional, and mental support to help these SENS adapt to their environment, individuals, and community at school, family, training places, and workplaces (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2020). Through this CTP, SENS receiving secondary education are equipped with skills and educational processes that can help them learn about aspects of family, community, and nurture their interest in skills as a preparation for adulthood and the workforce. Consequently, vocational subjects are embedded through the curriculum adopted in the Special Education Program and certification programs like the Modular Skills Certificate.

As a result, one of the key challenges is the ability and readiness of educators 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 program can provide solutions in the educational programs 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 Program in implementing the CTP for SENS. The aim is for this study 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: (i) SENS who are able to pursue tertiary education either in higher education institutions or public and private skills institutions or any accredited training centers like Pusat Giat MARA and their equivalents; (ii) SENS who are able to 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 (iii) 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 program. 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, with the aim of securing suitable employment opportunities.

The readiness of employers to accept SENS in the workforce, besides teacher's 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, other than 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.

Other than developing analytical, critical, and creative thinking skills amongst the students, instilling strong resilience is also vital for helping students to adapt to the 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 have to ensure that the quality of the content and activities within the curriculum truly help in achieving the goal of student development. A high-quality curriculum that focuses on career direction can be considered as the 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) found that there is a research gap in studies that focus more on the effects of the ecosystem within the school environment on students with special needs.

Secondary School Standard Curriculum for Special Education (SSSCSE) is designed to meet the new policy requirements set out 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 establishes several learning implementation processes for SENS in secondary schools, providing them the opportunity to learn and master vocational knowledge and skills while guiding them towards career transitions.

In a curriculum that highlights vocational skills, SENS can not only learn 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 one of Basic Vocational Skills (BVS) subject and one Specific Vocational Skills (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 (MSCS).

## **SKILLS CERTIFICATION FOR SENS**

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

Special Education Integration Programs offering SVS subjects must submit their application to become Certified Centers (CC) so that the Modular Certification Program can be successfully implemented, and it is compulsory for SENS to register in full-time skills programs. Through the skills program under the CC 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 Center (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 Vocational Training Officer (VTO) Certificate in accordance with the National Skills Development Act 2006 (Act 652), and more recently, the TVET Teaching Diploma Course (TVET-I). SENS must be exposed to vocational programs to help improve their employability (Rios, Park, Xiangli Chen, Tansey, 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 & 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, where 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 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 exploration relevant to the challenges that special education teachers encountered when implementing the TCP.

Besides, this study also applies a case study approach. This specific method was purposely chosen to obtain an in-depth understanding of the subject under investigation and to comprehensively investigate a particular case. This approach is also supported by Bernard dan Ryan (2010), as the goal of qualitative research is to obtain a description of a particular case. The cases studied in this research refers to behaviours, emotions, practices by humans, or phenomena occurring within the environment.

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 Special Education Data (2022), both states have the highest number of special education programs in Malaysia. The study involved 7 participants, of which 4 were females and the other 3 were males. In terms of age, four of the research participants were between 35- to 40-year-old while the other 3 were between 41 to 50 years old. They had more than 5 years of experience teaching the skills subjects for the ISEP. We selected the participants based on the heterogeneous sample, where they are 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

<b>Profession</b>	<b>Professional Qualification</b>	<b>Years of Service</b>	<b>District/State</b>
Special Education Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education	10 Years	Gombak (Selangor)
Special Education Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Special Education)	8 Years	Hulu Selangor (Selangor)
Special Education Teacher	Diploma in Hotel Management Bachelor's Degree in Special Education	9 Years	Hulu Selangor (Selangor)
Special Education Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education	12 Years	Batang Padang (Perak)
Special Education Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education (Special Education)	11 Years	Muallim (Perak)
Special Education Teacher	Bachelor of Education (Special Education) Master of Education (Special Education)	10 Years	Kinta (Perak)

Special Education Teacher	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: (a) knowledge and skills, (b) attitudes and motivation, (c) availability of infrastructure and learning environment, and (d) support and cooperation from school administrators, family members, and the community.

### **Teachers' Knowledge and Skill**

Teachers who are in charge of instructing skills-based subjects must be well-versed in the skill areas that are taught in schools. Along with imparting suitable values

within their specific skill areas, teachers should also be adept in 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's modular assessment approach, which consists of both theoretical and practical elements. Currently, this teacher is recommending:

"...since we teachers 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. Some participants 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. RP3 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 research participants, 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 Malaysian Skills Certificate (MSC). One of the research participants, 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 5 out of 7 research participants 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 participants:

"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 a teacher who has been instructing skills-based subjects for eight years:

"The 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 mentioned having to spend their own money to self-study and seek courses offered by external parties, whether in-person or online. This female educator 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"

### **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 out 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 a participant:

“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...”

Other than 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 Malaysian Skills Certification. 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 this teacher has had, this teacher 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, one participant emphasized 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" (RP1).

This issue was also shared by another study participant, 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, I think that:

"Support from colleagues, employers, all are 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 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 programs. Three research participants shared that there are some parents who refuse to let their children participate in this program. R1 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 was with regret that this educator 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 in this study, who mentioned that

“here, there is a strong focus on the restaurant business, but our program 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, Participant 5 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 provide crucial views on the complex of difficulties that special education instructors confront when putting Malaysia's ISEP's TCP for SENS into practice. There is limited research available about practitioners and their experiences working with students with disabilities (Fischer & Kilpatrick (2023).

The findings of the study 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, Jennifer & Dianne Smardon, 2019). According to Suhartika, Kasimun, and Rosadah Abdul Majid (2020) teachers' teaching skills are essential for effective education. These findings call attention to the need for special education teachers to possess certain competences in order 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 according to the MSC requirements. As noted by Gatto et al. (2021), one of the constraints in implementing training and vocational education programs 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 organized by Curriculum Development Division (CDD), the State Education Department (SED), and the District Education Office (DEO).

It is crucial for educators to have awareness about policies, training opportunities, and incentives that support students' involvement in career fields (Fischer & Kilpatrick 2023). Educators with limited or moderate knowledge and skills encounter challenges in conducting vocational curriculum teaching and learning sessions effectively, orderly, and safely, and 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 allows SENS to learn about job tasks, norms, procedures, and real 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 skills in assessment, 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 & Chan, 2022) must be given utmost priority in executing TCP. The research shows that teachers' attitude, interest, and abilities are important in TCP execution, as they bring about motivation, which enhances their involvement and self-confidence in setting the aims, developing the skills, and achieving the learning outcomes. This is stressed by Nawwar Abdul Mumen and Khairul Farhah Khairuddin (2022), who argue that with motivation, an individual may help motivate others to make efforts or accomplish certain things.

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 et al. (2021) highlights 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. Good ecosystem in an individual's life, which includes support from parents (Shawna Lee et al., 2021); school (Brown, 2021), employers (Harvey et al. 2020); and colleagues (Harvey et al. 2020), plays fundamental roles 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: (a) building trust and respect, (b) doing business differently, and (c) 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 the implementation of 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 recognize that some of the stakeholders involved may have other responsibilities they need to fulfil 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, 2017).

Plotner et al. (2017) explain that there is a lack of transition-specific training for teachers, which could be an additional factor contributing to such a 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 of schools and employment providers collaborating, it 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 and enhancing their knowledge and experience in local employers. Collaborating with school districts, such as teacher shortages, understanding of school culture, and understanding the role and responsibilities of the transition coordinator. This study illustrates that the following factors significantly influence the effectiveness of the CTP. The challenges faced by educators when implementing the program are to provide guidance and information as well as ensuring that the presence of a career coach includes the following:

- (a) 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.
- (b) A high-performing states framework that identifies effective
- (c) elements for employment systems change, and a collaborative leadership that works in engaging diverse stakeholders in conversations, mutual learning, shared responsibility, and action.
- (d) 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.
- (e) 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.

- (f) 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.
- (g) Requirements of the program included the usage of evidence-informed transition to adulthood strategies, development of networks with community-based service providers for a more collaborative service delivery, collaborations to support employment outcomes of youth with disabilities.
- (h) 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 programs conducted at each level, particularly in educational institutions, to analyse its 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 to produce students with high resilience but are also prepared to face and embrace changes.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was supported by Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris through the University Research Grant (GPUBP/2020-0076-107-01).

## REFERENCES

- Abdul Mummen, N., & Khairuddin, K. F. (2022). The importance of peer support systems on the social aspects of special needs students' learning in inclusive classrooms. *Malaysian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (MJSSH)*, 7(6), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.47405/mjssh.v7i6.1583>
- Bernard, H. R., Wutich, A., & Ryan, G. W. (2010). *Analyzing qualitative data: Systematic approaches*. SAGE Publications.
- Bonati, M. L. (2020). Preparing for post-secondary transition. In *Inclusive education in schools and early childhood settings* (pp. 257-274). Springer Singapore. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2541-4\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-2541-4_14)
- Brown, D. H. (2021). *Secondary administrators' perspectives on their involvement in and barriers to supporting secondary transition programs for students with disabilities* [Doctoral dissertation, University of South Carolina]. Scholar Commons USC. <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/6643>
- Castruita Rios, Y., Park, S., Chen, X., & Tansey, T. N. (2023). Collaborations to support employment outcomes of youth with disabilities. *Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Journal*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.52017/001c.72655>
- Charteris, J., Anderson, J., & Page, A. (2021). Psychological safety in innovative learning environments: Planning for inclusive spaces. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 28(5), 688–704. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1974108>

- Charteris, J., & Smardon, D. (2019). Dimensions of agency in new generation learning spaces: Developing assessment capability. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 44(7), 1. <https://doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2019v44n7.1>
- Chitiyo, J., & Brinda, W. (2018). Teacher preparedness in the use of co-teaching in inclusive classrooms. *Support for Learning*, 33(1), 38-51. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12190>
- Department of Skills Development. (2020). Department of Skills Development. <https://web.dsd.gov.my/>
- Department of Statistics Malaysia. (2024). Main Annual Labour Force Statistics. <https://data.gov.my>
- Fischer, S., & Kilpatrick, S. (2023). Vocational education and training (VET) career pathways for school students living with disability: Working with employers. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 14(2), 87–103.
- Fleiss, J. L. (1981). *Statistical methods for rates and proportions* (1st ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Gatto, L. E., Pearce, H., Antonie, L., & Plesca, M. (2021). Work integrated learning resources for students with disabilities: Are post-secondary institutions in Canada supporting this demographic to be career ready? *Higher Education Skills and Work-Based Learning*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-08-2019-0106>
- Grossi, T., Thomas, F., & Held, M. (2017). Making a collective impact: A school-to-work collaborative model. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 51(3), 395–407. <https://doi.org/10.3233/jvr-191054>
- Halid, H., Osman, S., & Halim, S. N. J. A. (2020). Overcoming unemployment issues among persons with disabilities (PWDs) through social entrepreneurship. *Journal of Social Business*, 1(2), 57–70. <https://doi.org/10.55862/asbjv1i2a006>

- Harvey, M. W., Rowe, D. A., Test, D. W., Imperatore, C., Lombardi, A., Conrad, M., & Barnett, K. (2020). Partnering to improve career and technical education for students with disabilities: A position paper of the division on career development and transition. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 43(2), 67-77. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143419887839>
- Instructor Training & Advanced Skills Centre. (2015). Vocational training instructor certificate (VTO). Attained from <http://www.ciastr.gov.my/v4/index.php/kursus1/2015-07-30-08-27-36/vto>
- Kasimun, S., & Majid, R. (2020). The level of knowledge and skills and the level of training of special education teachers in the teaching of special education. *5th International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (PASAK5 2020)*.
- Lee, S. J., Ward, K. P., Chang, O. D., & Downing, K. M. (2021). Parenting activities and the transition to home-based education during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 122, 105585. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chilyouth.2021.105585>
- Livermore, G., Honeycutt, T., Mamun, A., & Kauff, J. (2020). Insights about the transition system for SSI youth from the national evaluation of Promoting Readiness of Minors in SSI (PROMISE). *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 52(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.3233/jvr-191056>
- Malaysia Education Development Plan 2013-2025: Pre-school to post-secondary education. (2013). Attained from <https://www.moe.gov.my/storage/files/shares/Dasar/PPPM/Pela%20Pembangunan%20Pendidikan%202013%20%202025%20Prasekolah%20-%20Lepas%20Menengah.pdf>
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2016). Professional Circular Letter SPI 9/2016 – Implementation of the secondary school standard curriculum in stages starting from 2017.

- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2020). Guidelines for the Career Transition Program for Students with Special Needs (MBK). Putrajaya: Ministry of Education Malaysia.
- Ministry of Education Malaysia. (2022). Special Education Data Book for the Year 2022. <https://www.moe.gov.my/muat-turun/pendidikankhas/buku-data-pendidikan-khas/5570-buku-data-pendidikan-khas-tahun-2022/file>
- Mazzotti, V. L., Rowe, D. A., Kwiatek, S., Voggt, A., Chang, W. H., Fowler, C. H., & Test, D. W. (2021). Secondary transition predictors of postschool success: An update to the research base. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(1), 47-64. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420959793>
- Page, A., Anderson, J., & Charteris, J. (2021). Including students with disabilities in innovative learning environments: A model for inclusive practices. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2021.1916105>
- Porter, J. (2018). Inclusive design and schools. In H. M. Tse, H. Daniels, A. Stables, & S. Cox (Eds.), *Designing schools for the future of schooling: Contemporary visions for education* (pp. 167–186). Routledge.
- Plotner, A., & Dymond, S. K. (2017). How vocational rehabilitation transition specialists influence curricula for students with severe disabilities. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, 60(2), 88–97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034355215626699>
- Riesen, T., & Oertle, K. M. (2019). Developing work-based learning experiences for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A preliminary study of employers' perspectives. *Journal of Rehabilitation*, 85(2), 13–21.
- Whittenburg, H. N., Schall, C. M., Wehman, P., McDonough, J., & DuBois, T. (2020). Helping high school-aged military dependents with autism gain employment through Project SEARCH+ ASD supports. *Military Medicine*, 185(Supplement\_1), 663-668. <https://doi.org/10.1093/milmed/usz224>

- Yuen, M., & Chan, R. T. H. (2022). The influence of social connectedness and meaning in life on career adaptability and career self-efficacy in students with special educational needs. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Guidance*, 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10775-022-09562-y>
- Zou, B. (2016). Heterogeneous and homogeneous samples with different weights for classification. *Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/CIT.2016.108>

**APPENDIX 1**

<b>Interview Protocol</b>
<p>1. Introductory Remarks for Establishing a Good Relationship Between Researchers and Study Participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Expressing appreciation to the participants who voluntarily take part in the study and share information.</li><li>● Explaining the process of conducting the study and the purpose of the research (data collection process).</li><li>● Informing participants about the research ethics approval letter (assurance of confidentiality ethics between the researcher and participants, ensuring that their identity will not be disclosed).</li></ul>
<p>2. The researcher obtains information from participants related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Employment details.</li><li>● Educational qualifications.</li><li>● Experience in teaching or managing individuals with special needs.</li><li>● Duration of experience in teaching within the field or managing the Transition to Career Program.</li></ul>
<p>3. In implementing the Transition to Career Program, do the following aspects present challenges for you?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Creating and developing goals for the Education Plan.</li><li>● Identifying the strengths and needs of students through assessments.</li><li>● Developing transition goals and objectives with a focus on post-school outcomes.</li><li>● Developing an Individualized Education Plan.</li><li>● Involving various parties, including relevant professionals, during the transition planning process.</li><li>● Ensuring courses or programs are appropriate and relevant.</li><li>● Providing access to relevant consultants or experts.</li><li>● Providing career-related information or input to students and their families.</li></ul>

- Understanding and implementing regulations or acts that have been aligned by the relevant ministries.

4. To what extent do the following aspects pose challenges for you as an educator?

- Skills in assessing and identifying students' interests and inclinations.
- Using various forms of assessment methods.
- Interpreting and providing information based on assessment results.
- Aligning strengths, inclinations, and interests with educational and career needs.
- Interpreting student data to evaluate the effectiveness of transition teaching.
- Selecting assessment forms with an emphasis on diversity among students.
- Assessing skills based on practical training or real workplace environments.
- Exploring potential and opportunities for career placement.
- Identifying existing support systems in various environments, such as at school, home, or the workplace.
- Coordinating and providing assistive technology for assessment needs.

5. When emphasising student development, how do the following aspects create challenges for you?

- Teaching skills related to self-determination and self-advocacy.
- Social skills.
- Skills related to daily living management.
- Skills for career preparation that align with students' needs and functional limitations.
- Real-world work experience in the field.
- Use of assistive technology in daily life and career.
- Sports and recreational skills.

From a support perspective, do you also face challenges with:

*Challenges in Facilitating the Transition-to-Career Process among Students with Special Needs*

- Collaborating with parents and family members in planning, decision-making, and implementing transition programs.
- Providing and sharing information with families about the transition program and the student's direction.
- Ensuring the transition process is consistent, considering the student's family culture, beliefs, practices, and values.
- Developing good relationships and cooperation to ensure all guardians are committed to supporting the transition program.
- Identifying family needs related to the effectiveness of the transition program.
- Assisting families in building a broader network for job placement and search processes.
- Collaborating with other personnel such as educators, administrators, parents, and employers.
- Expanding networks with service providers for individuals with special needs and the surrounding community.
- Providing and allocating resources and support materials.

6. When emphasising student development, how do the following aspects present challenges for you?

- Teaching skills related to self-determination and self-advocacy.
- Social skills.
- Skills related to daily living management.
- Skills for career preparation that align with students' needs and functional limitations.
- Real-world work experience in the field.
- Use of assistive technology in daily life and career.
- Sports and recreational skills.

From a support perspective, do you also face challenges with:

- Collaborating with parents and family members in planning, decision-making, and implementing transition programs.
- Providing and sharing information with families about the transition program and the student's direction. Please describe any additional challenges or



obstacles you have experienced in implementing the transition to career programs for students with special needs at your school.

- Ensuring the transition process is consistent, considering the student's family culture, beliefs, practices, and values.
- Developing good relationships and cooperation to ensure all guardians are committed to supporting the transition program.
- Identifying family needs related to the effectiveness of the transition program.
- Assisting families in building a broader network for job placement and search processes.
- Collaborating with other personnel such as educators, administrators, parents, and employers.
- Expanding networks with service providers for individuals with special needs and the surrounding community.
- Providing and allocating resources and support materials.

- Please describe any additional challenges or obstacles you have experienced in implementing the transition to career programs for students with special needs at your school.