Effective Transitional Plan from Secondary Education to Employment for Individuals with Learning Disabilities: A Case Study

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Abstract

One of the major goals in the education and training of individuals with special needs is to prepare them for independence. However, in the Malaysian context, parents who have special adolescents are in doubt as to what would be the future of their children soon after they have finished the vocational training. This case study explores the transitional needs and subsequently to develop an effective transitional plan from secondary education to employment for Malaysian individuals with special needs. The sample comprises two high school special educators and four persons with learning disabilities who are at work. The findings were triangulated among five co-ordinators of Non-Governmental Organisation, as well as parents for the four persons with learning disabilities and their employers. The findings reveal that transitional needs of individuals with special needs includes collaborative support system, job coaching, self-advocacy skills training, career guidance and transition assessment, vocational training, trained transition personnel and transition services. The transition process would be a collaborative process between the government and non-governmental sector. From the findings, an effective transitional plan from secondary education to employment for students with learning disabilities was drawn. Several implications have been drawn from this study.

Keywords: transitional plan, transitional needs, secondary education, employment, individuals with special needs

1. Introduction

One of the major goals in the education and training of individuals with special needs is to prepare these individuals for independence as adults. Brolin (1995) noted that it is obvious that career or vocational education and training provide the important foundation for successful transition from school to the community and place of work. There are many challenges which occur during the transition process. The transitional problems of normal children can be appeased through emotional and support in the form of reassurance but, individuals with special needs require more than that due to their inability to adjust to these natural shifts in life independently.

However, professionals in the field of special education opine that transition problems can be reduced if not solved, if parents and teachers are aware of such a need in a special child, are able to recognize it and equip themselves with knowledge that can guide the individual during transition. Hallahan and Kauffman (2000) noted that with appropriate training, persons with special needs can secure jobs successfully. Appropriate training and effective transition programs can lead to meaningful employment for adults with special needs.

Kohler and Field (2003) states that the emphasis on services as the process of transition planning and on employment as the outcome represented a somewhat narrow interpretation of the concept. With growing knowledge of the complexity of effective transition practices, many researchers adopted a much broader conceptualization of transition planning and services which are called transition focused education.

This perspective views transition planning not as an additional activity for students with special needs when they are 14 years of age but as a fundamental basis of education which guides the development of educational programs. Transition focused education is directed toward adult outcomes and consists of academic, career and extracurricular instruction and activities delivered through a variety of transition approaches and services. Kohler and Field (2003) noted that the concept of transition focused education represents a shift from disability focused