



**CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS  
LEARNING DISABILITIES STUDENTS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Career transition program is helpful for vocational training that significantly contributed to the career development of disable students. These programs extensively are used in different countries for fulfilling the educational and learning needs of special students. The study aims to explore, understand and explain the career transition program of special educational and learning needs in disabling students. The investigator has used qualitative research methodology for collecting the primary data from six participants. The data has been collected through semi-structured interviews, case studies, document analysis, and observations. The retrieved outcomes revealed that the current scenario, concerning the implementation and utilization of Career Transition Program, has been presumed and implied. In order to implement career transition program for special educational needs learning, it is essential that student-centered planning, student readiness, student development, family involvement and collaboration between agencies and various disciplines should be integrated. A career transition program is specifically designed to transform the education and learning of special students by using and implementing the primary document of Response to Intervention. There is a possibility that it might create understanding between the parties involved, such as industry and the student's family. The process of planning is also happening to progress advocacy skills of special educational needs learning students with a purpose to involve interest factor along with the age of students.

**INTRODUCTION**

Special education plays an important role in helping the Special Educational Needs Learning Disabilities (SENLD) group that challenges in learning and into the working life. More than 738 mainstream secondary schools implement the Special Educational Integration Program (SEIP) (MOE, 2013). Therefore, the ministry is aware of the importance of providing appropriate education to students with special needs in which this group may be more appropriate to use the vocational curriculum to provide these people with life skills, compared to the existing academic curriculum. In general, students who face difficulties in learning seem to have the physical ability that can be trained through vocational education, so that it can be used in certain jobs (Daros, Nordin & Saud, 2012; Blackmon, 2007).

MOE (2012) also believed that vocational education is an alternative educational pathway to support improvements in other areas for groups with special needs. These programs exposed the realities of life, after leaving school through a systematic program. The coordination between the jobs and transition from the school to after school was a perceptive step in producing students who are skilled (William-Diehm & Linch, 2007). These students should be supported and guided as

it enables them to enhance their capabilities and talents that inherent in themselves.

Special children have the abilities that make them different from other people. It is essential that practitioners should realize that special children must be treated and educated in the same manner as other children are developed. There are various aspects of child's development that include personality, the ability to interact and communicate, strength and resilience, ability to participate in the daily life activities and desire to learn new things (William-Diehm & Linch, 2007).

Since the creation of Education of the Handicapped Act (EHA) 1975, the planning of education for disable students has undergone radical changes. This Act stated that education is mandatory for all children who are suffering from any disability (William-Diehm & Linch, 2007).

Under the supervision of this Act, different vocational training and career transition programs have been initiated that solely focused on the education and career development of special children (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001). Previous studies revealed that disable children have achieved more post-school outcomes at

lowest rate as compared to the students without disability (Bari, Yasin & Yusof, 2013).

Another study revealed that disable students earned less in wages and had more difficult in searching the job. Moreover, students that faced the difficulty in learning are experiencing more inappropriate decision in their career lives because they do not realized that what are their personal capabilities and how they fit it in their career life decisions (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

National longitudinal Transition Study (NLTS) concluded that only 22.5% of disable students can access to post-secondary education as compared to 56% of the general population of students. However, the recent survey have improve the findings and revealed that 31% of the disable students can access to post-secondary education within two years of after leaving the high school (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

Through a Careers Transition Program (CTP), the relevant vocational training can be provided with requirements of the current job market and by the ability level of student themselves (Daros *et al.*, 2012). As far as the case of Malaysia is concerned, it has been observed that the implementation of the curriculum through the CTP for SENLD students still remains unclear (Bari, Yasin & Yusof, 2013). However, efforts towards implementing this career transition have been carried out in Malaysia Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013-2025. The CTP of SENLD students is enforced by some teachers as there is no basis in implementation of the program and there are no specific guidelines that can be used as a reference to implement it (Hamdan, 2003).

It demonstrates that when leaving school, the students of SENLD did not have the skills to work, due to which they face difficulties in pursuing a job. Furthermore, the employer does indeed have a negative view of this group (Ng Lee & See, 2011) by providing the reason that this group lacks in the working abilities and skills, and this is the reason due to which they cannot be hired. It is imperative that students-centered planning approach must be implemented in different career transition programs (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

This approach has full potential to develop the special students in such a manner so, that they can easily be competed in market with other students. It was also found that disable students faced more personality clashes and complexes that make them reserved from their surroundings (Hamdan, 2003). Hence, this research is aimed to investigate the implementation of CTP based on the successful SEIP of secondary school by focusing on the graduated students who were working in different industrial sector (Hamdan, 2003).

### **Related Work**

The evolution of transition program for the career development of SENLD students has been done on the

basis of vocational training in technical and vocational secondary school. This program has been executed specifically to take into consideration the capabilities and skill of individuals with special needs (Hamdan, 2003). A study has been performed in regard to the education of students with special needs (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001), in which the researchers have determined eight distinctive types of vocational training that can be applied in the transition program in today's working environment on global basis (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

These training include regular vocational training, community vocational training, and adaptations vocational training, distributive training, job training, work experience, job support and job training campus. School-based vocational training has been found to encompass the aspects, which are likely to be provided in training (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001). He found that ordinary vocational training implemented through the teaching and learning process by the prescribed curriculum. It has been suggested by the training community that training should be provided on matters related to jobs. Training should also be based on their availability in the community or an appropriate environment to the level of ability, potential, and interests of students with special education (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

Adaptations vocational training is a modification of the skills that should be taught according to ability and capacity of individual students with special education (Polloway *et al.*, 2001). Next, they will be given the distribution according to their interests and their capacity through training of distributive practice to master a skill, which is dependent on an on-going basis. The study also found a school-based vocational training, which will enable them to job training and work experience; thus, it will also help them to adapt to the job (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

Students also found that vocational training provides them the opportunity to learn about their field of interest before going in any professional environment. In addition, the campus works to provide training as implemented by the MOE, which include the program of buying seats for SENLD students. This project has been carried out in collaboration with the college for the purpose of training. It will also enable them to train themselves to be able to adapt to the workplace so they can maintain the job. This program develops self-confidence in students and assists them to behave according to the office environment, which is helpful for the career growth of the students (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

A study has been conducted by Kohler & Field (2003), which has shown that taxonomy of transition programs, which form the basis of a successful career transition program for students with special needs in the United

States. The study refers five practices that will determine the success of a career transition program for special education students in the United States, named as student-centered planning, the development of pupils, inter-agency collaboration and multidisciplinary, family involvement and program structure. In addition, the transition standard and quality indicator for secondary education and transition (maturity) is based on the research conducted by Blackmon (2007) in which he focused on the special education in California. This study also played a vital role as reference to support the implementation of the transition program designed for students with special needs, enabling these students in enhancement of their careers (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

The principles and specifications have outlined some of the standards, which are framed around five fundamental areas, and are being determined as critical to successful post-school transition. These areas includes: schooling, career preparatory experiences, youth development and leadership, family involvement, and connecting activities. Therefore, this research can refer to these theories that are vital for collection of the data because it involves the CTP for students with special educational needs (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

A set of guidelines has been delineated by the Education Department of Virginia (2014) as an initiative for the administrators and teachers in placing an emphasis on the educational needs of students with Specific Learning Disability (SLD) in Virginia. This research has proposed three various methods to evaluate whether a student is an SLD student or not. These three methods include Response to Intervention model (RtI), Severe Discrepancy Process model and Alternative Research Practice model to examine the possible needs of students in relation to special education. It is a multi-tiered intervening procedure, which comprise of observing the progress of students, tiered support and intervention and reliability of interposition (Polloway, Patton & Serna, 2001).

The data of RtI model helps in determining if more data is required for evaluation. A fact which is associated with this model of RtI is that it is an instinctive procedure with unclear objective or guidelines to examine what should not be designed relevant levels or types of intervention. Another model, which has been determined by the Department of Education, is known as Alternative Research-Based model. This procedure or model leads to determine the performance of students by considering the target to identify the strengths and weaknesses in those areas that are compatible with SLD definition. The idea which is essential in this procedure is that a standard level of general intelligence is likely to be existed in student (Flanagan, Fiorello, & Ortiz, 2010 a, b; Flanagan, Ortiz, Alfonso, & Dynda, 2006). This identification procedure has been proposed by below mentioned statement of IDEA.

A sequence of strengths and weaknesses has been presented by the student in terms of achievement, performance, or both, referring to the standards of grade-level, which are certified by State, age, or intellectual advancement, usually examined by the group to be persistent and compatible with the determination of Specific Learning Disability by considering some accurate evaluations, in accordance with 34 CFR 300.304 and 300.305.

### Methodology

This research was conducted using qualitative case study approach to explain the implementation of a career transition program for SENLD students in SEIP secondary schools. The case in this research is the implementation of the CTP for SENLD students in a secondary school. This school has been chosen to conduct this research as it is successful in enabling six students to acquire and maintain their jobs by the execution of CTP. The purposive sampling technique has been used for the collection of data in this research, followed by various methods such as observations, interviews, and evaluation of relevant documents. There were six participants in semi-structured interviews.

In order to support the collected information and data by using semi-structured interviews, the researcher also performed analysis of documents and observation. The data collection for observation has been done with the help of photographs, videos and field notes. The analysis of documents has been done by considering the data and information, which was retrieved from interviews. In this research, data analysis was performed using a continuous process from the start of the study and use of the NVivo software in the store and encodes the data, forming a system of classification, to find relationships and generate charts. Process analysis also refers to the three main tasks of screening data; understand the data and the formation of analytical categories and concepts.

### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on this research, there are seven categories of the CTP practices that have been applied. These categories include school practices, the design of the program, student-centered planning, student readiness, student development, family involvement and collaboration inter-agency and multi-disciplinary.

**School Practices:** On the basis of research, which has been performed, the school administration is responsible for ensuring that SEIP of this school is running appropriately by regulating the program of career transition that has been designed. In addition, to executing the program, schools are responsible for providing skills, which are essentially required in a working environment, provide support and monitor the progress of SENLD students through the transition program. The transition program means the program that will provide students with the skills to work. The transition is the school period to provide the skills, the

school will monitor and the school will ensure that the students have mastered the skills so that the ultimate goal remains and the students can work in a place that has been decided by a school. The school only supplies in terms of the consultant to encourage parents. The school will be organizing the courses that are aimed at providing training of skills with community college so that parents will know the talent. We actually run the program on entrepreneurship to train our children to be independent after school and can mingle with society under KH subjects and handicrafts. Teachers will look and give guidance, like at the workplace as well, the teacher became a manager.

While performing semi-structured interviews, it has been reported by the participants that the school is responsible for providing the skills and ensuring that students must have the working skills so that they can become permanent employees and dominated in the field to endeavour. Thus, they are able to master any field of work, even after switching the field. Apart from that, the school administration supports the transition program related to the working environment, which has been executed by SEIP. The administration of the school is providing good cooperation in terms of meetings and discussions with the SENLD families and agencies through related letters, minutes of meeting and paperwork program. The participant also reported that SEIP of this school only helps as a consultant and facilitator for families and SENLD students to unearth talent through skilled training courses conducted with external agencies.

The management of school also said that special education teacher will also play a role as a facilitator and acts as a manager to provide training in such a manner, which enables the students to use those skills in their job, by virtue of an Entrepreneurship Program. Therefore, SEIP of this school is very successful in rapidly moving towards a career transition program through practice as implementers, facilitators, consultants, and supplies. They also ensure that students should become proficient enough in using their abilities in working environment, provide support as facilitators and managers with systematic planning with family and industry (Ministry of Education, 2012).

All these things are proved that students are able to send SENLD for training as per the requirements of industry and students are also eligible to be absorbed into permanent employment. These findings are supported by Dupoux (2008), which states that a plan will be successful if the parties involved have a lot of knowledge in these fields, coupled with the preparation and focus on the strategy and learning management of SENLD students.

### ***The Design of Career Transition Program for SENLD Students***

SMK Mawar was inspired to carry out the transition program towards SENLD student career through a master program of PK Possible Program (Program of Special Education Skills: Potential of Individual Quality Distinction). This program was introduced by the State Education Department (SED) Johor to be extended to all SEIP in Johor either at the primary or secondary level. PK Possible means we believe all special education students have the talent, skills, and expertise that can enable them to direct towards their professional life. Therefore, our students who have the potential will be sending for industrial training. The actual transition program in the school is from PK Possible. PK Possible program is wider, as it encourages us to run training courses for NGOs.

It has been observed by the participants that PK Possible Program is a program that gave way to broader SENLD students towards their career. It provides an opportunity to conduct training courses with various agencies and private entities and can lead students into a field of SENLD on the basis of their talent, potential and existing skills. Based on the findings, PK Possible Program of SMK, which is proposed by Mawar, seems to act as a transition program under the Entrepreneurship Program, Job Coaching Program, Buying Seats Program and Skills Training Program Joint Multi-Agency. Ofoegbu & Azarmsa (2010) support these findings as a transition program, which has been carried out for each category of disability and proposed that each category should have its own design and adoption in the environment.

### ***SENLD Student-Centered Planning***

Student-centered planning is the establishment of goals SENLD school students conducted by the relevant assessment information such as Individual Education Plan (IEP) as the basis for planning, student participation in planning and decision-making and the evaluation of progress towards the achievement of goals in their career transition program.

*“The scope of the school’s career is to have students’ self-advocacy as communication skills and know how to manage themselves for life in the community. We want to help the transition, we want him to be ready to become an adult in terms of the work and become productive members of society that can contribute to the country.”*

According to the participants, the role of SEIP secondary school is to develop students who have self-advocacy and volunteered to live in a society of the transition from school to career. The participants also noted that the transition program is in place for SENLD students who seek to be an employee and self-reliant members of society and contribute to the country. These findings are supported by a study conducted by Test *et al.* (2005), which states that knowledge about the rights, self,

communication and leadership are four key points in the advocacy skills of students with or without disabilities.

### ***SENLD Student Readiness***

This study focuses on the readiness of SENLD concerning their learning as well as the work experience. Career transition program that is run in this school is to develop SENLD students' readiness for their physical, mental, emotional and working skills. The students are found to be busy in their career and school life. So, in the middle, there are preparations from the mentality, from attitudes and working skills. So in actual, this is the prime purpose of transitions.

According to the participant, the transition program is charging for SENLD students for preparing their terms of attitude, mental and skills. Based on observations during the teaching and learning process conducted by Entrepreneurship Program, students are exposed to physical readiness through the assignment according to their ability level and provided guidance on a continuous basis through individual learning. Mentally, they are exposed to a way of thinking based on each assignment. Teachers will often ask about things and why things are made even repeatedly.

Thus, it has been observed that students are much focused and understand their assignments properly. Emotionally, they are exposed to work in group activities. With it, they will easily adapt the culture of workplace and willing to work with colleagues. In terms of skills, the approach adopted by the SENLD students of this school is a theoretical and practical way made repeatedly and individual tutoring. These findings are supported by Amiruddin, Sombuling & Voo (2014) stating that the level of preparedness of students in a particular case can be applied to mental preparation, attitude, and emotion.

### ***SENLD Student Development***

SENLD student development was analyzed by Individual Transition Planning (ITP) through task analysis and SENLD students' document achievement levels that have gone through Entrepreneurship and Job Coaching Program. Based on the analysis of documents from ITP of students undergoing the CTP, the document contains information about the student's strengths and weaknesses, long-term goals, short-term objectives, time frame, activities, training places and individuals involved. ITP is supported by task analysis, and document of student achievement levels to assess the progress of students in terms of basic skills and ability to everyday life, ability to work, and the characteristics of behavior and social life.

Records of student achievement based on documents created on a monthly basis and plotted into graphs developments, which will then be listed in the ITP on completion of a probationary period of three months. If based on an assessment, students still do not achieve the

required score; the student will continue to receive training and guidance in schools or they are qualified to work with early guidance. From the findings, it has been observed that the working capabilities, as well as skills, have been enhanced in the students of SENLD in all three aspects. They are not only able to get a job, but also capable of maintaining and continuing with the same (Ministry of Education, 2013).

Paul (2011) also supports findings by claiming that the individuals involved with the combination of academic and vocational educational programs can have a positive effect on the characteristics of employment, so as to maintain the jobs for improving the behavior towards positive social engagement and the ability to work fine.

### ***Family Involvement***

Family involvement is the participation of parents and family in planning education, services, and the transition. From the results of this research, it has been observed that in practice, three various aspects are considered by both the family and school, which are rights, roles and involvement and training. Practice focuses on the role of organized involvement to the extent to which the family is involved in the planning and career transition course of SENLD students, policy formation, and decision-making as well as a coach.

These practices can be proved through meetings between the schools, industry and households in which the family is directly involved in planning, decision-making process. This will help their children in order to undergo further training and decent work in the industry. In career transition program, a decision will be made by the parents to take responsibility for and disclaims any risk of their children, and then we will deal with agencies. There must be parental involvement in this matter as family commitment is very important.

According to the responses given by the participants of this research, parents and families are responsible for making the decision to incur any risk and release their children to undergo training by the planned transition program. By consent, the parents will be responsible for the ongoing training program to ensure the welfare of their children to become an employee. This is the right strategy to include in practice that facilitates the full participation of parents in the career transition program activities. The family took the responsibility to send their children to work and willing to take the risks that may occur during the industry training. Parents also need to assist teachers in providing skills to these students.

Based on observations and video recordings made during a Job coaching briefing session with representatives of the Special Education Department (SED), MOE, and SENLD parents in this school; the parents showed good commitment during the program and provide a good response. Therefore, the plans made by the school to involve family enable collaboration. These findings are

supported by Kohler & Field (2003), which states that there are three aspects focused in transition practice. It is involvement and the roles, rights, and training that coincides with the findings.

**Collaboration between Agencies and Various Disciplines:** Based on research carried out, SEIP of this school has run a career transition program for SENLD students through collaboration with agencies and various disciplines of private, government and industry food preparation. An industry that can provide training and employment opportunities to SENLD students in this school are mainly manufacturing and food service industries. They also carry a wide range of skills training in partnership with various skills colleges. There are several factors that play a role in involving the various agencies and disciplines. That is in terms of management of time, place and finance in giving the chances of skills training for SENLD through the collaboration.

*“In terms of time, we sent the student to industrial training for a trial period of 3 months. In the first week, they will make practical in 4 hours, then go back to school, so teachers have to send and take them. When he’s adapted, he will make a full-time practical there. After that we will make an assessment, however, the one who is at school, will assess through ITP, usually 3 to 6 months of time.”*

According to the research participant, they will go through a probationary period of three months, four hours a day and went back to school and it is usually the responsibility of a teacher to send and retrieve them. If the student has been able to adapt, they will be given training on a full-time. Then, the assessment will be based on the level of student achievement. If the student is eligible to be employed, the school will make discussions with the industry and the family. While for Entrepreneurship Program conducted internally at the school, students will be evaluated based on task analysis and ITP in the next mid-term, or three to six months of schooling. For Buying Seats Program, the probation period for SENLD students is also a three-month. After passing period, students will follow the program for two years in order to qualify Malaysian’s Skill Certificate (SKM).

*“Financial terms usually involve their own costs when they make practical outside. But if the transition programs are likely to be conducted in the school; like entrepreneurship, we will give some capital or SEIP deposit. That money can be used to produce and sell the product. If we take our students on the course, we will use the provisions of their school allowance. In terms of place, we will just create an internal program in schools. But if it involves other agencies, it is through the school and we have to do the paperwork and meetings with school administrators. Then, we will call parents and send a letter to the agency or the college. Agencies will give a place. Whereas for the Program of Buying Seats,*

*MOE will determine that we just submit to screening process only.”*

Participants said that in the transition program conducted at this school, like Entrepreneurship Program, they use their capital through fund classes. For program by conducting training skills outside of school, they will use the allocation provisions from school. While for training in the industry, students should use their own money. For Buying Seats Program, the financial allocation is from the MOE. In terms of management of the transition program for SENLD students, Entrepreneurship Program conducted in schools; whereas, training programs involving external agencies, SEIP will create paperwork and make discussions with school administration and parents.

The agencies who are involved in Buying Seats Program are responsible for determination of the place; however, MOE bears the responsibility of making necessary arrangements. These findings are supported by Ng Lee & See (2011), which states that employers must provide opportunities for people with special needs to work, try to train them and focus on their strengths.

#### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Obviously, a career-oriented program for which a combination of vocational education is a concept, that applies to SENLD students through the CTP such as PK Possible Program that is conducted at this school. Apart from that, a career transition program is designed to make SENLD student-centered using RTI as an official document on the implementation of the program. Perhaps it will create understanding between the parties involved, such as industry and the student’s family. Planning is also afoot to improve advocacy skills of SENLD students, in addition to the interest factor and the age of students. Career transition program can also be carried out to establish the readiness of SENLD students from physical, mental, emotional and work skills to become an employee and independent individuals.

The research findings can prove a career transition program capable of generating positive SENLD student development in everyday life and as a member of society. Therefore, all parties involved in the program especially school, family, and the multi-disciplinary agency should have the awareness, knowledge and exercise of their responsibilities and roles. They also ensure that the program can be implemented successfully and it should play a beneficial role in the life of SENLD students. In addition, the strategy used in the collaboration has also been determined as a major factor in examining the success of a career transition program that applies to the SENLD students.

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