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## **TEACHER'S PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR CHILDREN ON THE PATH TO ADULTHOOD**

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### ***Abstract:***

*This study aims at describing the teachers' perception on the transition program into adulthood of the children with intellectual disability. The research data were collected through an open questionnaire and interview administered by the teachers of five special school in Yogyakarta Province. Categorical analysis technique was used to analyze the data. The result of the research shows that the teachers' orientation of the transition program into adulthood is closely connected to achieving a vocational program with appropriate guidance to the chosen program. The teachers have not yet thought about the importance of self-determination aspect within the transition program into adulthood.*

*Keywords: teacher perceptions of transition into adulthood program*

### **Introduction**

The term intellectual disability refers to an individual who needs life skills in order to be independent. The individual needs an intensive and specific training. The training specification should be in line with the individual's potential barriers. However, the individual's limitation, be it physical or emotional, often leads to a negative perspective from the society. Such perspective implies a psychological effect for the individual with intellectual disability. The society is likely to assume the individual as a person who cannot involve totally in the social life. Such social stigma becomes a big problem when the individual with intellectual ability is in his or her transition into adulthood. The problem covers the skills needed by the individual to earn a living for him or herself and the skills required to live well in the midst of society. Fisher & Sax's research shows that in order for the individual to be a better person and citizen, she or he is to be trained after school hours within a natural setting of society. The research finding implicitly emphasizes on the useful skill for the individual with intellectual disability is to be trained within a natural atmosphere.

### **Purposes of the study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the teacher's perception of the needs of the transition program into adulthood for the children with intellectual disability in Yogyakarta. It also highlights the guidance program needed by the children.

## **Perspective frame work**

Self-determination is a central skill to the disability of intelligence, because the decision in choosing the activities that need to be done everyday lies in this ability. Wehmeyer (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2011: 560) defines self-determination as "volitional actions that enable one to act as the primary causal agent in one's life and to maintain or improve one's quality of life." These skills form the ability to decide the activities on the basis of their own accord and as the main actors in the life and enhance the quality of life. The skills are required by an individual in life in adulthood. To that end, intelligence disability also needs to have coaching on self-direction skills so as to support independency, in addition to the skills that made vocational field.

Intellectual disability or mental retardation, according to American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) through Schalock et al., 2010 (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011: 176), is "characterized by significant limitation both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as Expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills." Such definition has almost similar substance to the previous definitions of the barriers experienced by intellectual disabilities. Yet, it emphasizes on the appearance of conceptual skills, social, and adaptive. Such constraints have implications for the transition to adulthood further intensify their solutions to the barriers that can be applied in the community. Conceptual barriers needed solution to learn about the way of life in the communities directly with the practice of concrete setting; social barriers with solutions focused on behavior management according to the manners in society and adaptive communication skills. All the hindrance of adaptive communication need to be solved, particularly through education system that focuses on problem solving.

Urgent milestones of the transition program into adulthood for children with intellectual disabilities is the competence to carry out daily life activities, including for activities that require vocational skills. Arnett, 2007; Gutmann et al., 2002; Steinberg 2007 (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011: 624-625) suggests that when young children have finished high school they did not achieve community living outcomes. To that end, a milestone to be able to explore opportunities and overcome challenges in community transition programs to adulthood, including the ability to steer themselves (self-determination). Young children with intellectual disabilities are expected to gradually be responsible to live their life. The responsibilities include managing finances and making legal decisions, organizing their health and health care-seeking; choosing recreation and leisure time settings; developing relationships with friends and work together, and managing their transportation needs. Based on these studies, the program assumes that the needs of the transition to adulthood is not just a matter of vocational course, but also a useful program that support the intended competencies.

Schools will be able to carry out the public trust if they can conduct "Best-Practice". The concept for people with intellectual disabilities by the Individuals with Disabilities proposed Education Act (IDEA, 2004) through (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011: 625) "best practice transition services correlate with enhanced

community living outcomes". The services include: (1) knowledge of the relationship of education and philosophy of available life choices; (2) the development of the ability of self-determination; (3) the availability of public participation and build skills; (4) a flexible, comprehensive, and inter-agency relationships that support life. Furthermore, the experience of community participation will be meaningful as a source of ideas about post-school program, which includes: making choices, making decisions, solving problems, setting goals, self-reliance, overcoming risk, security, self-evaluation, self-advocacy and leadership, internal locus of control, positive-attributes of efficacy outcomes expectancy, self-awareness, and self-knowledge. So the transition programs to adulthood not only about developing vocational, but also being supported by the source of their life personality to get along with the community. It takes the ability of self-direction.

The effectiveness of the transition programs into adulthood for intellectual disability is indicated by the ability to direct to community living outcomes. The direction by Wehmeyer & Palmer (2003) in the form of employment and housing competencies, while McConkey, R., Sowney, M., Milligan, V., & Barr, O. (2004) is widely expected independence in managing life in adulthood. Furthermore, the research conducted by Mc.Grew and Bruininks, 1994 (Smith, Ittenbach, & Patton, 2002: 443) shows that someone will reach adjustment in the community if she or he reaches eight main aspects, namely: social integration, employment integration, recreational/leisure integration, residential integration, personal satisfaction, community acceptance, and need for support services. Some explanations supporting it shows that the post-school program will be directed to the competence effectively manage adulthood life in society with aspects of being: able to integrate with society, able to work, able to manage free time with leisure activities, integration with society in residence, satisfaction in life personally, socially acceptable, and can meet the needs of support services.

The transition program into adulthood becomes urgent for special schools that teach the students with intellectual disabilities. The program still needs to be intensified through post-school particularly in within the context of senior high school. The period is also called the transition period between the world of school and the world of work in the community. Both have a context and a world that demand a different life. To that end, the world of school to the world of work in the community is a transition that demands independent intellectual disabilities. The students are to be able to govern themselves, to make decisions, and to direct themselves in work and life activities. In addition, the category of intellectual disabilities are also able to help themselves and to do the domestic work.

The demands for the transition program into adulthood after the school hours are various in natures. The variety is due to the different intellectual needs and hindrances as well as the expectations from the headmasters, teachers, and parents. Besides, such variety is also influenced by the trainers' skills and perspectives. From the teachers' views, some trainers, both in the vocational programs and supporting programs, have a clear vision on the future world that the trainees are about to live in, while some trainers do not. This phenomenon

leads to the teachers' perception variety. Thus, it becomes a point of interests to be research in the context of special schools in Yogyakarta.

### **Methods of inquiry**

The study was conducted through a survey in five Special Schools in Yogyakarta. The schools, which are categorized as having a majority of mentally retarded students/intellectual disability, are: the Extraordinary School Marsudhi Son II Bantul, Special School Rela Bhakti Sleman, the Extraordinary School Consecrated Kencana Berbah Sleman, Special School Yogyakarta State Trustees, and Special School Renaring Dharma Putra II Yogyakarta. The data were collected through an open questionnaire and interview conducted as to the strengthening of the open questionnaire results. The data were analyzed by using the categories on the basis of the aspects that are used for program development-adulthood transition.

### **Results**

The results show the variety of the effectiveness of the program-adult transition period. Yet, one common orientation among the subjects is the use of trained skills to persons with intellectual disabilities. Likewise, the skills given depends much on the schools' effort in providing the resources to support the implementation of the skills. Some things are perceived by the teacher who teach life skills to support future-adult transition program are:

#### **Program 'Marsudhi Putra Bantul's of special school.**

"While still in school, students have received vocational education work while in high school in the form of vocational education. In this school there are some skills that are taught to children with intellectual challenges such as making *mlinjo* chips, salted egg, *mendoan*, quail and cattle farming. The program was elaborated by the children in accordance with their interests, a way to know at first the child was told to try all kinds of skills being taught in school. Then the teacher have to see the children's work and interest. The children's work and their pleasure in doing the work become the basis for selecting the child occupied skills program. Generally, the parents already know and agree on the occupied skills that the children choose, because the parents had previously been invited by the school to discuss about their children's interests."

#### **Program at 'Rela Bhakti Sleman's of special school.**

The school has provided the students with workshops, cooking skill, sewing skill, brick making, carpentry, and *batik* skill in order for them to be successful and independent. The school train the students through skill subjects, 75% vocational every day, 17 hours/week course every child that has different characteristics, so that adjusted only with the ability and interest of the child himself. Assessment has also been carried out so that the skills practiced in accordance with the child's ability, as well as choice programs have been based on a checklist of skills from parents.

### **Program at 'Bhakti Kencana Sleman's of special school**

The types of vocational skills provided by SLB Bhakti Kencana include wood craft, batik, weaving, and sewing. Basic vocational education students starting in elementary school. In junior high school, the students have to learn all kinds of vocational skills. This is conducted for the preparation for elections in high school majors that are tailored to the talents and interests of students. In high school level, the students will focus on learning vocational skills and nearly 60% -65% of high school students study in the vocational field.

In the field of fashion or tailoring, the design is made by teachers while students are guided to cut the design pattern, and then sew. The students' results of sewing skills include pillowcases, bags and sheets. In terms of batik skills, the students intricate designs created by a teacher and a simple design created by students. However, the process of *batik*, students works by themselves in the completion of the process. In weaving skills, the students focused on the manufacture of mats. The safety aspect within the wood craft vocational skills in SLB Bhakti Kencana are becomes a top priority. This includes the use of safety masks, work clothes, glass eyes, the presence of working procedures, safety in the use of tools, and installation of signs in places that are considered dangerous. Results of wooden craft skills can be carved calligraphy, and nameplate."

### **Program at 'Pembina' of special school**

Preparation through education skills since high school. Here there are culinary majors, salon, IT, agriculture (ornamental plants), clothing, timber, automotive and ceramics. Program is selected according to the interests and abilities of children and parents decision. Parents are given two options for their children's majors, such as choosing IT and catering, if a child is not that good in IT, she or he will be directed to the catering. Sometimes there is a discrepancy interests of children with parental wishes. Assessment conducted after the child finish his or her elementary school exams. In accordance with the choice of his parenting skills, the child was tested on two skills to junior high. Then the teacher is to assess the ability of the child and the child's work is better suited to take the skill which.

### **Program at Dharma Renaring Putra II of special shchool Yogyakarta.**

Schools prepare a program that suits the students' talents and interest such as making salted eggs, tailoring, and food science. After the children graduated from high school, if the child has not worked the school offers several skills to be taught. Given program must be adjusted to the students' abilities and the parents' agreement. Assessment is done by looking at the students in terms of physical condition, mental state, psychological state and the interests of children. The results could be the basis of an appropriate vocational for the children.

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The research has a very fundamental level surveys to map the needs of programs and business schools and to equip the students toward intellectual disabilities transition into the adult world. Each school has its own characteristics in planning and implementing the program. The program's transition to adulthood is still limited to providing the skills to understand, but there are also schools that

have attempted to send off their students for a field work. Likewise, there is one school that still accept students for activity skills before they get a job. The answer from the school, especially just coming from one source of teachers, shows that the life skill teacher interpretation cannot stand alone as the basis of a comprehensive need.

The limitations of the data obtained can already be used as a map of the initial requirement that the program's transition to adulthood. The research from Arnett, 2007; Gutmann et al., 2002; Steinberg 2007 (Kauffman & Hallahan, 2011: 624-625) suggests that when young children have finished high school and they did not achieve community living outcomes, there needs to be a milestone for it to be able to explore opportunities and overcome challenges. So the research is limited on the skills that have not been accompanied to look for opportunities and challenges in the community. This implies that the program's transition to adulthood is necessary towards apprenticeship outside of school but still under the supervision of the school. The next alternative schools need to make the studio work for the workplace protected (sheltered workshops).

The teachers are convinced that the transition program into adulthood of the children with intellectual disability will be successful when the special training available. In addition, the program should be followed by a personality training to foster work sustainability. It has been such an established view in the midst of the society that those with intellectual disability will never be able to be totally independent. The schools have not yet designed some breakthrough programs to support the transition program into adulthood. Apparently, such condition could be understood in terms of limited resources. Fortunately, two special schools, Sekolah Luar Biasa Bhakti Kencana Berbah Sleman and Sekolah Luar Biasa Negeri Pembina Yogyakarta, have built a cooperative network with home industries. It is hoped that the special schools will someday build a good affiliation with national industries.

The result of this survey is to be a starting point for a more comprehensive enhancement and refinement of the transition program into adulthood. In addition, the curriculum for special schools should prioritize the life skill development of those with intellectual disability. The 60-65% of life skill component in the current curriculum should be increased up to 90% and be designed so as it would integrate other needed competencies in the students' future life. Meanwhile, the rest 10% of the curriculum component is likely for recreation activities. The curriculum changes will encourage the teachers' creativity in that they will be conditioned to design a life skill program that covers both functional academic skill and self-determination development. At the meantime, the evaluation on the life skill program should go along with the criteria existed in the other fields so that the students might be able to apply the skill within a certain field in their future life.

As a matter of fact, the school's resources are available and could be utilized for implementing the program. However, most of the program managers have not yet involved the participation of the society. They are not well-trained to build a flexible, comprehensive, and synergetic cooperation among the institution.

Therefore, the managers should build inter-institution network to support the sustainability of a program so as to respond the rapid change of the society's needs.

That some schools have tried to improve their programs and supporting resources are stimulating effort for the transition program into adulthood. It has been widely accepted that those with intellectual disability would not be able to live independently after the graduated from the special school. It is due to the program they experienced in the school are not effective. Therefore, the studies on the effective program for the children with intellectual disability are central to special school. The studies will, in turn, bring fresh air for the human resources.

The teachers have not yet seen that self-determination skill is another part of the transition program into adulthood. They have been thinking that life skills are the only component of the program. However, the students with intellectual disability need self-determination skill as they are not accustomed to organizing the information they perceived. A good skill of information organization will lead to a better action. Therefore, any transition program into adulthood should integrate the skill of information organization.

For most teachers, the effectiveness of a transition program into adulthood is indicated by the life skills being achieved by the students with intellectual disability. The teachers assume that the students could rely on such skills. The students, however, need to be equipped by integrated social competencies, workplace experience, leisure time utilization, self-esteem, society's acceptance, and self-determination. The last point mentioned could be studied and trained through information organization. Self-determination could be integrated in the life skill program.

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