

SCHOOL-TO-WORK FOR HEARING IMPAIRED STUDENTS

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Abstract: Adolescents with disabilities especially hearing impaired student and their family face many challenges especially at critical transition periods in their lives. Such transition include moving from a middle school to a high school setting, moving a high school to an employment setting, entering a postsecondary education programme and deciding to live independently in the community. The purpose of this study is to determine the transition process from school to work among hearing impaired students in Malaysia. The main focus of this study was to indentify the level of the transition process from special education teachers, and deaf worker who come ot from the transition programme. The data source is obtained from 200 of special education teacher, and 60 deaf worker which is work from various sector. Quantitative approaches will be used to analyze the finding. A set of questionnaire, was used as a research instrument. Taxonomy Transition Program Model by Kohler (1996) will be use to the teachers and “The Survey of Job Training for Hearing Impaired Youth” by Kendall G (2002) will be use to deaf worker questionnaire will be used as a quantitative data. The quantitative data was analyze using descriptive and inferential statistic and information from interview protocol and open ended question was analyzed inductively based cases and cross cases of emerging themes. Hence, the outcome of this study hopefully will be useful source and reference to enhance the transition programme from school to work among hearing impaired students.

Keywords: vocational and technical education, hearing impaired students, career transition, transition from school to work

INTRODUCTION

Education for hearing impaired in Malaysia were started in 1954 with the opening of a special education class in Northam Road, Penang. To date, there were 1959 students and 413 primary school pupils in secondary schools across the country with hearing problems (Department of Special Education 2009). Education-focused programs provide career training in Malaysia began with the establishment of Special Education Vocational for the Hearing impaired (SMPKV) in 1987. Through this program, students have been hearing impaired and vocational skills course that aims to provide hearing impaired students into the job market. In 1989, the pilot took the Malaysian Skills Certificate (SKM) organized by the National Vocational Training Council (NVTC), the Ministry of Human Resources. While on March 1, 1993 - SMPKV upgraded to a Grade A school and was recognized by the SDS as Certified No. K 05048 for the 10-run vocational courses. On November 5, 1996 - The school was inaugurated by the Minister of Education (SMPKV 2005).

The shift in the economy now requires changes in education based on needs of the individual skills. In more specific, a development that we have today requires us to explore the educational opportunities that focus on providing skills to students to produce skilled and competent, especially for individuals with special needs. In Malaysia, a special education program is intended to make a special child-skilled people, wing, capable, faithful, dependable, able to deal with life and realize their potential as individuals and members of the community that is balanced and productive. (Special Education Department, Ministry of Education 1997).

CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAM

The transition from school to job placement, postsecondary education, or adult life and living independently constitutes a major challenge for most hearing impaired and hard of hearing students schools. Although predictable and a challenge to their hearing counterparts also face the transition process for a hearing impaired student often involves leaving a relatively supportive special education system, complete with its complementary services and trained personnel, for the world of adult living and employment, which typically does not provide the same level of services and support. It involves letting go of the structured role of a student for the multiple and fluid roles of adulthood.

Transition concept was first introduced by Madeleine Will of the Office of the Federal Special Education and Rehabilitation (OSERS). Initiatives of this transition program due to all fields related to special education focuses on transition issues. OSERS emphasis on the needs of youth with special needs in schools moving from life to life in the community and education after school and work. This requirement is due to the high level of unemployment among the population with special needs (Maureen 1999; Bullis, Bull, Sendelbaugh & Freeburg 1987). Transition by Shanthi (2004); Brolin (1995) requires three major components to be an effective effort by the school:

- i. Functional / career development curriculum
- ii. A joint collaboration with employers, community agencies and parents
- iii. Support and follow-up systems so that individuals can adapt the work community.

The standards are framed around five main content areas identified as critical to successful post-school transition: schooling, career preparatory experiences, youth development and leadership, family involvement, and connecting activities. Career transition for hearing impaired students in Malaysia is implemented through technical and vocational education programs that focus on skills and employability in the career world. The program is implemented through the Special Education Secondary School (SMPK) and integrated special education program. Specific subjects offered at vocational SMPK (expected to assist hearing impaired students to find jobs like hair dressing, ceramics, graphic art, cooking, car repair, agriculture, making batik, technicians, air conditioning (Norani 1995). Courses offered through the vocational education and skills are intended to enable those to get a job as a skilled and semi-skilled workers in the industrial, trade and agriculture. This can be achieved through:

- i. The curriculum is broad and flexible to meet not only current needs but future needs and changes in technology.
- ii. Basic education in languages, mathematics and science to enable students to adapt to new ways of work and enable them to achieve higher efficiency in the future.
- iii. Knowledge and skills foundation for further education and training in vocational / technical. Thus the courses offered include areas ranging from wiring and maintenance, electricity, repair of televisions, radios, electronics, refrigeration and air conditioning courses in automotive, machine shop practice, welding and metal fabrication, construction, trade, agriculture and others.

From now on, there are three Special Education Secondary School offering vocational courses and the elective vocational subjects to hearing impaired students as well as a number of technical secondary schools (Special Education Department 2005). MGS was carried out and completely removed by the Department of Skill Development (DSD), Ministry of Human Resources. It covers the National Skills Standards (National Occupation Skill Standards - NOSS), which was approved by the Evaluation Committee and the NCC certification. School system introduced by the NCC to focus on system DACUM (Developing A Curriculum) that duty (Duty) and Tasks (Task). To ensure that Accredited Centre evaluation conducted in accordance with the conditions and criteria set by NCC, a quality assurance system in place. Hearing impaired students given time to complete the duty and the duty for two years in MGS stage 1. During this period, students will be assessed for formative and continuous assessment officer (qualified teachers), the Internal Verification Officers (PPD) and External Verifiers (EV) appointed by the GMC. Students who are competent in all duties and duties will be awarded MGS, for those who are not competent to be awarded a Certificate Achievement Statement (Sazali Karli 2010).

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM AND OBJECTIVE

Transition is the link, or bridge between the education experience and eventual integration into community for individuals with disability (Will, 1984). The concept was first used by Madeleine Will from the federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation (OSERS) and focused on assisting disabled individuals' move from school to community life and post secondary education or work. The need was justified by the high levels of unemployment among the disabled population (Bullis, Bull, Sendelbaugh & Freeburg, 1987). Edgerton (1996); Clark & Kolstoe (1996); Steven & Gregory (1988) points out, the successful transition from to the workplace is troubled and troubling for almost everyone, but for persons with disabilities it is likely to be particularly problematic. Gerber and Reiff (1994) underscore the fact that, having a disability compounds the pressure to achieve independence. Upon leaving school, individuals who have disabilities often face a reality of little or no employment, low income, social isolation and inadequate residential or other services.

This is because the existing education system in Malaysia, particularly the training received in the transition program is not clear, nothing illustrates the working environment and lives of real people and no effective collaboration between the ministries such as the ministry of education with a ministry of human resources. Safani et.al (2000) found that individuals with special needs are facing more obstacles and problems in vocational and career skills, and they also explain the failure was due, among others factors can not adjust and difficult to interact with others. Although a clear philosophy and a special education program rooted to produce individuals with special skills and self-reliance, but in terms of implementation of the curriculum is less focused to meet these needs implementation of the career transition .

According to Scherich (1996), nearly 80% of hearing impaired people who want to be employed are unable to find work. These current high levels of unemployment among the hearing impaired population are problematic, especially since Australia has recently experienced strong economic growth and low levels of unemployment (Commonwealth of Australia, 2006). In theory, more Australians who are hearing impaired should be working. However, the data shows that many hearing impaired people have been excluded from the Australian economic success story. Data at the Department of Labor of Malaysia show that the number of hearing impaired people who work are low compared with those who finish school. Government policy through the circular 10/1988 bills Services has determined that at least 1% of employment in the public sector through the ministries allocated to disabled people and the Labour Department has also implemented a placement for the handicapped, including those who have employment problems (Wahab Salleh 1997). However, The Star (2010) & MyMetro (2010) explained that the achievements of persons with disabilities are still not satisfactory, but many employers do not care, difficulty in providing job opportunities to those involved when the disabled should also be given the opportunity to work and help contribute to the country.

Zainuddin (2004) explains that the special needs of new employees is still low despite various attempts by the government to increase the percentage of workers among this group. Shanthi (2004) explained that apart from the difficulty in obtaining employment hearing impaired students were faced with the problem areas of work that is not consistent with the skills possessed during the following school programs such as hearing impaired students with Skills Certificate in Refrigeration and Air Condition to work in textile mills as abrasive shirts .

The Australian Federation of Hearing impaired Societies (AFDS) reported that hearing impaired people continue to experience barriers to full economic participation for four reasons: (1) gaps in access to education and training, (2) inadequate funding for sign language interpreters, (3) the need to improve employers' awareness of hearing impaired and (4) problems with the availability of workplace modifications (Australian Federation of Hearing impaired Societies [AFDS], 2004). This suggests that barriers other than demand for labour are blocking access to the labour market for people who are hearing impaired (Stephen Winn 2007; Jillian et. Al 2007). Therefore, a study to review the effectiveness of the implementation of career paths in technical and vocational programs, followed by the hearing impaired students is seen as a key tool in strengthening the application programs to produce individuals with special needs particularly hearing impaired students who are independent and competent, which also contributes the talent to national development. The purpose of this study is to review the implementation of career transition programs in terms of career preparation programs for technical and vocational education carried out to hearing impaired students in schools that run programs focused on job skills. Model Transition to adulthood by Blackmon, D (2007) using the Quality Indicators and Secondary Education and Transition has been used to achieve the desired objectives. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to:

- i. To identify the participation of students in career awareness programs in the vocational school transition programs in special education hearing impaired.
- ii. Identify practices of curriculum integration of academic and non academic activities hearing impaired students career preparation.
- iii. Examine the pace of implementation of employability skills as the basis for hearing impaired students in career preparation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Overall, this study is a descriptive survey form in order to observe the implementation of elements of preparation to career transition programs conducted in the vocational curriculum to hearing impaired students in Malaysia. Studies carried out are consistent with the opinion of descriptive Mohamed Najib (1999) stating that descriptive studies are studies that examine the events or phenomena in the present involving the description, observation, analysis and comparison. The sample for this study consists of the teachers involved conduct career transition programs, or programs that focus provides job training for hearing impaired students in Malaysia. A total of 179 teachers involved to answer the questionnaire submitted. The questionnaire used was based on the National Standards and Quality Indicators for Transition by D. Blackmon (2007). The data collected is the result of feedback through questionnaires distributed to respondents and the answers are in accordance with respondent's sincerity. For the determination of teachers' level of agreement with the assessment schedule has been built by Mohamed Najib (1999) as a guide in determining the level based on the mean score. Table 1 describes the level of acceptance based on the mean score.

Table 1. Mean Score Based on the level of acceptance

Mean Score	Interpretation of Mean Score	Mean Score
1.00 – 1.49	Very Low	Low level of implementation and may not perform in school.
1.50 – 2.49	Low	The implementation of the program is still in the planning stage.
2.50 – 3.49	Middle	A moderate level of implementation. The program has been implemented but not fully.
3.50 – 4.49	High	High level of performance. The program has been fully implemented, but there are some practices that are not fully implemented.
4.50 – 5.00	Very High	A very high level of performance. Elements of the program was fully implemented

Source: Mohamed Najib (1999)

Researchers have set a mean score range between 1.00 to 1490 which indicates a very low level. While the mean score for the range between 1.50 to 2:49 indicates a low level. Mean score range between 2:50 to 3:49 shows a moderate level, while the mean score range between 3:50 to 4:49 indicates a high level. Finally, the range of mean scores ranging from 4.50 to 5.00 indicates a very high level.

DATA ANALYSIS

Profile of Respondents

This section discusses the background of the respondents that contains seven items related to respondent's background. Trying to analyze aspects focused on gender, race, age, length of service and courses for students with special needs. Analysis of the data obtained are presented in frequencies and percentages so that it is easier to examine.

Table 2: Profile of Respondents according to the frequency and percent

Case	Category	Research Findings	
		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	53	29.6
	Female	126	70.4
Education Level	SPM/MCE	2	1.1
	STPM/HSC	2	1.1
	Diploma	9	5.0
	First Degree	156	87.2
	Other	10	5.6
Major / Special Education Option	Yes	88	49.2
	No	91	50.8
Major / Field of Vocational Option	Yes	121	67.6
	No	58	32.4
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year	23	12.8
	1 – 3 year	45	25.1
	4 – 6 year	30	16.8
	7 – 9 year	23	12.8
	More than 10 year	58	32.4
	Other	24	13.4
Knowledge About career transition	Yes	98	45.3
	No	81	54.7
Courses attended related to career transition	Yes	37	79.3
	No	142	20.7

Table 2 shows the demographics of the respondents according to frequency and percent. Total respondents numbered 179 teachers. 53 respondents were male and 126 female respondents. In terms of education level of respondents of two persons are Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM), two of the Malaysian Higher School Certificate (STPM), nine person holds a diploma, 156 teachers are graduated with a first degree and a total of

10 people for other categories. The findings also show a total of 88 respondents from the special education options and 91 respondents in the field out of special education. In addition, a total of 121 respondents is from technical and vocational education options, while 58 respondents are not from technical and vocational fields. From the aspect of teaching experience 58 respondents had experience of over 10 years, 45 of them within 1 to 3 years, 30 people within 4 to 6 years, 23 people within 7 to 9 years and 23 people in less than a year. Knowledge of career transition program 81 respondents did not know and 98 said they had knowledge of career transition. A total of 142 respondents did not pursue the course career transition and only 37 respondents who had attended courses related to career transition .

Analysis of research question

The analysis is made to identify the level of implementation of career preparation practices in transition programs in hearing impaired education curriculum of students of vocational programs. Discussion of the study data analysis will be examined based on three objectives of the research that has been built.

Table 3: Participation of students in career awareness programs in vocational education hearing impaired students

Num	Research Objective	Mean Score value	Total Mean Score	Level
1	Student participation in career awareness programs in vocational education hearing impaired students			
	i. Youth participate in career awareness, exploration, and preparatory activities in school- and community-based settings.	3.72		
	ii. Schools and community partners offer courses, programs, and activities that broaden and deepen youths' knowledge of careers and allow for more informed postsecondary education and career choices.	3.65		
	iii. Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities incorporate contextual teaching and learning.	3.55	3.41	Moderate
	iv. Schools, employers, and community partners collaboratively plan and design career preparatory courses, programs, and activities that support quality standards, practices, and experiences.	3.29		
	v. Youth and families understand the relationship between postsecondary and career choices, and financial and benefits planning.	3.09		
	vi. Youth understand how community resources, experiences, and family members can assist them in their role as workers.	3.20		

Based on table 3, the level of assessment practices for special education teachers on career preparatory aspect of the transition program shows that mean score at moderate levels. For the aspect of participation in the Career Awareness Programme of 5 items recorded a moderate level of implementation and for item 1, 2 and 3 recorded high levels of implementation of the "Youth participate in career awareness, exploration, and preparatory activities in school- and community-based settings" which recorded a mean score of 3.72. Item 5 recorded the lowest mean scores that describe the 3.09 "Youth and families understand the relationship between postsecondary and career choices, and financial and benefits planning".

Table 4: Curriculum Integration of Academic and Non Academic Career Development Activities

Num	Research Objective	Mean Score value	Total Mean Score	Level
2.	Academic and non-academic courses and programs include integrated career development activities.			
i.	Schools offer broad career curricula that allow youth to organize and select academic, career, or technical courses based on their career interests and goals.	3.63		
ii.	With the guidance of school and/or community professionals, youth use a career planning process (e.g., assessments, career portfolio, etc.)based on career goals, interests, and abilities.	2.83		
iii.	Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities align with labor market trends and specific job requirements.	3.13		
iv.	Career preparatory courses, programs, and activities provide the basic skills crucial to success in a career field, further training, and profesional growth.	3.47	3.13	Moderate
v.	Schools and community partners provide youth with opportunities to participate in meaningful school- and community-based work experiences	3.06		
vi.	Youth participate in quality work experiences that are offered to them prior to exiting school (e.g., apprenticeships, mentoring, paid and unpaid work, service learning, school-based enterprises, on-the-job training, internships, etc.).	2.94		
vii.	Work experiences are relevant and aligned with each youth's career interests, postsecondary education plans, goals, skills, abilities, and strengths.	3.19		
viii.	Youth participate in various on-the-job training experiences, including community service (paid or unpaid) specifically linked to school credit or program content.	2.79		
ix.	Youth are able to access, accept, and use individually needed supports and accommodations for work experiences.	3.16		

Based on table 4, the level of assessment practices for special education teachers on the integration of academic and non-academic curriculum in career development activities in the transition program shows the overall mean score was 3.13 that showed at a moderate level. For the integration of aspects of Academic and Non Academic Curriculum indicating that the entire item shows moderate levels of implementation between the mean score of 2.79 to 3.63. The items that recorded the highest mean score is a describing the students have the opportunity to manage and select their academic, career or technical courses based on their interests and career goals, while items that recorded the lowest mean score was 2.79 which is the item that says students are engaged training in different work experiences include community service credit, especially related to curriculum and program content.

Table 5: Implementation aspects of employability skills in education

Num	Research Objective	Mean Score value	Total Mean Score	Level
1	Employability Skill			
	i. Schools and community partners provide career preparatory activities that lead to youths' acquisition of employability and technical skills, knowledge, and behaviors.	3.08		
	ii. Youth have multiple opportunities to develop traditional job preparation skills through job-readiness curricula and training.	3.32		
	iii. Youth complete career assessments to identify school and post-school preferences, interests, skills, and abilities.	3.25	3.25	Moderate
	iv. Youth exhibit understanding of career expectations, workplace culture, and the changing nature of work and educational requirements.	3.17		
	v. Youth demonstrate that they understand how personal skill development (e.g., positive attitude, self-discipline, honesty, time management, etc.) affects their employability.	3.44		

While the level of implementation of employability skills career transition showed that the overall 5 items at a moderate level, which shows the aspect of employability skills, the school studied at the level of planning implementation. The highest score item is item 5 in which at 3.44, the teachers agreed that students can demonstrate their understanding of how personality development skills such as good character, discipline, honesty, punctuality can affect their job performance, while the lowest mean scores were on the item a showing at 3.08 only mean the teachers agreed that schools and communities work together to provide work preparation activities that assist students employability skills with technical skills, knowledge and behaviour.

DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study was targeted at the hearing impaired students because of the recent problems related to education of students with special needs are often discussed, particularly in human capital development (Saifulizam, 2007) as well as operation of vocational education program which has now reached adult age is 24 years. Selection of respondents among the teachers / teaching program was based on the tasks the role play towards the formation of the country's energy resources are of high quality by channelling the knowledge useful to them, especially in technical and vocational education (Lokman et.al, 2009). The overall results of data analysis results show the overall mean score recorded at a moderate level the scores, which clearly shows that the transition programs have been implemented although not fully, there are some aspects that show the performance at the planning stage. There are items in student involvement in career awareness program is at a high level. While the lowest item explaining the lack of opportunities for family participation in career awareness programs with students. These factors may be due to a lack of information in choosing a career in hearing impaired students as research findings by Georgette et.al (2002), parents and educators involved in the transition process have less information about options for students with special needs in their communities. Parents also acknowledged the lack of knowledge about the needs of employers and individuals with special needs placement.

For the integration of aspects of academic and non-academic curriculum in career development activities, the findings show the entire item is at a moderate level, while items that showed low mean score of the items

involving the community and the collaboration with external parties on items 2, 6 and 8. This shows that the aspect of collaboration is one aspect that is often an obstacle to the success of a program, as the findings by Salleh (1988) & Norshidah et.al (2001) shows that there are many obstacles to creating such consensus. To date, continuation of education and employment opportunities has not yet effectively implemented between the ministry of education with a ministry of human resources in planning career transition whereas according to Robert (1995) hearing impaired students' success in completing educational programs is dependent on the collaboration aspect. The ability of educators, support from parents, community agencies and employers in the process of providing them with the skills, understanding, and employment opportunities for them to live independent, productive, and fun to carry out responsibilities as members of the community and various parties need to engage in effective collaboration which includes school administrators, teachers, parents, community agencies and the community. The findings also show application of employability skills in career preparation programs in the education system at a moderate level, whereas a particularly important focus of the transition from school to adult living is the development of employment and life skills. SCANS, (1991) The following minimum skills are required for today's workplace:

- The ability to read at a basic level
- The ability to perform basic mathematics operations
- The ability to work in groups with persons of various backgrounds
- The ability to communicate, both orally and in writing
- The ability to use personal computers to carry out simple tasks, such as word processing

The findings are in line with findings by Yahya Zakaria & Meor Ibrahim (2009) found that overall the teachers agree that in their efforts to apply the skills employability that they face many obstacles exist which correlates to the curriculum factors, administrative factors and also by teachers.

SUMMARY

The implementation of the career path for hearing impaired students is important agenda to be addressed by the party responsible. This is because through the process of education that focuses on the question of the future, it is hoped the students aware of the expiration of the school system is considered ready to face the working together of getting skills at school. The most important element in addition to actively engage students in career preparation programs are employability skills that should have been completely controlled by a student job skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Based on the findings, some implications and recommendations put forward by researchers to enhance the teaching and learning of hearing impaired students in technical and vocational education. It is hoped that the implications of this study can be used as guidelines by the parties to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning in special education programs for young hearing impaired students to special programs for technical and vocational or used for the purpose of enhancing the curriculum in particular. Therefore, based on the findings of the study, some aspects need to be upgraded to provide career preparation programs more effectively and efficiently. What is visible is a collaboration between the agencies must be improved and more holistic to provide opportunities for students to participate in career preparation programs in a holistic and effective. Zainuddin (2004) explained that collaboration with the community in educational programs is very important in enhancing the professional skills and special needs groups. Society in his study involving

governments, NGO, employers and individuals. He outlined the role of the public as follows:

- i. Changing the negative perception of the ability of the disabled,
- ii. Improving the systems and practices carried out involving the special needs, and
- iii. To increase the support and cooperation to the special needs ensuring their careers.

To enhance the implementation of aspects of employability skills, teachers should be aware of the importance of the implementation aspects in the teaching and learning as well as the role of the ministry to look at aspects of employability skills in a positive and strive to introduce and expand its educational system as other skills, such as generic skills, technical skills and values.

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