

Post-School Transition: Vocational Enhancement for Students with Mild Disabilities (A Survey in Central Java)

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Abstract—Empowering post-school transition is becoming an increasingly important program in strengthening the equality and quality of education for students with disabilities. It is generally acknowledged that adults with disabilities are those with the most limitations not only to education access but also job opportunities. Moreover, they should compete with those of adults in general. Through research, there should be caring agents who are willing to assist their struggle for the better living of this minority of the population. The general objective of this research is to provide larger opportunities for individuals with disabilities, particularly in improving their life skills. To be specific, this research aims at 1) assessing the skilled interest among the students with disabilities, 2) exploring life skill training on the vocational promotion, 3) designing the model of the vocational post-school transition program. This study will take place in special schools located in five regions of Central Java. Such information is considered important for the research in projecting the students' potentials on the individual bases of development. The result of the assessment is then made use to design the model of post-school transition.

Keywords— post-school transition; vocational enhancement; mild disabilities

I. INTRODUCTION

Some schools provide internship for their students to prepare for their better career in the future. Post-school transition functions as a bridge between the academic and career [1]. The post-school transition for high schools needs particular attention. Furthermore, activities like internship are necessary to facilitate the students with disabilities to find employment upon graduation [2]. However, the transition for students with disability to higher education, job, and life in the community always brings up more challenges and even causes stress for adults [1]. For students, a transition to adults means a complex process that involves a lot of factors affecting the students' different lives from previous school experiences. New life readiness is much influenced by the students' characteristic, family background, economic condition, and importantly, the availability of services for living in the

community. Students with disabilities are those with the most restricted access to the open job market merely due to their skill limitation. In fact, instead of their handicapping condition, students with disabilities lack basic opportunities for education, training, and quality of life.

Part of the government policy and the practice of job opportunity is intended for people in general, whether or not they are disabled. Everyone needs an independent life, and it is the right to struggle to earn a living. It is the government's responsibility to overcome unemployment. Once the job opportunity is opened, it is a free market where everyone has the right to apply for. It means there is no privilege for people with disabilities. Students with disabilities may be diverse in the degree of capabilities, interest, and specific needs. It is true, they are different individuals, to some extent, in terms of physical, intellectual, and emotional states from those in general. However, the human right of equality is first. Hence, it is not fair for those with disabilities to compete for a job opportunity. Justice does not mean the same for everyone, including job opportunities. There should be specific laws ruling the job competition for the disabled. The post-school transition for students with disabilities is essentially based on the expectation that upon graduation, all students get meaningful learning in both aspects of academic and life skills.

Vocational skills are achieved partly through education, training and other experiences as they grow adult within the school society. [3] state that education and training influenced the satisfaction of children with special need in the likelihood of employment after graduation from high school. During school time, it is the responsibility of the schools to identify the problems and facilitate the students as to how they could finally be successful in education aligned with the curriculum. Transition is generally defined as the passage from child-centred activities to adult-oriented activities. It occurs in several main aspects of life; from paediatric healthcare to adult healthcare, from adolescence to adulthood, and more importantly, from school to work. Many challenges make the transition process to adulthood difficult. Based on

the experience, post-school transition program is always hindered with many potential barriers [2]. In many schools, some of these problems include the loss of support systems, mental health issues for patients or family members, and the lack of school-provided support services such as occupation, physical and speech therapies, as well as nursing, transportation and school psychology services.

To begin with the school transition, it requires that Individual Education Plan (IEP) be the main source of information for a transition program [3]. In the United States, IEP must include a discussion about transition service needs. The involvement of the child for IEP is an essential part of the whole programs of post-school transition, particularly during the assessment [4]. Factors to be included are academic preparation, community experience, development of vocational and independent living objectives, and, if applicable, a functional vocational evaluation [5]. The agreed-upon plans must then be documented in the student's IEP. The law also requires that a statement of the student's transition goals and services be included in the transition plan. Schools must report to parents on the student's progress toward meeting his transition goals.

The implementation, however, is not that easy. There is no fixed pattern of school transition for students with disabilities. One type of transition program in a certain school may differ from other schools [6]. Transition program also varies from country to country. That is the reason why transition for students with disabilities needs to be designed more flexibly either in pursuing higher education or vocational environment. One thing is sure that transition program must be essentially initiated under-qualified and knowledgeable personnel' supports and commitment in collaboration with families, companies and also with the individuals with disabilities themselves.

It is importantly noted that students with disabilities, to some extent, have different capabilities, interest needs, as well as ideas [7]. Such differences may also change from time to time as they grow old. This fact indicates the needs of flexibilities in planning the transition program. Therefore, the transition program is likely to be designed as a running process. The transition from school to post-school constitutes a continuum process, i.e. from paediatric healthcare to adult healthcare, from adolescence to adulthood, from school to work, and from home to community [8]. The focus of a transition program involves the question of whether or not students with disabilities could work in the world of the job market of competition. Post-school transition does not mean putting graduated students with disabilities in the job market. Rather, it is fostering the flexible and systematic plan, implementation, and monitoring the model. In short, the transition model for students with disabilities differs from other children where the focus is their powers of optimistic points of views instead of their deficits. Based on this point of view, model development of post-school transition is likely urgent to be designed on the research-based transition program of vocation in term of life skills in particular. The purpose of this research is to measure the readiness of the special schools

in preparing students' independence of living. To be specific, this research is focused on the availability of vocational programs provided by the special schools and the efforts conducted to help the students develop their skills in promoting their life skills.

II. METHOD

This research was a survey on the existing conditions of school activities addressed to the preparation of the post-school program for the students. This research included 38 teachers and headmasters in Special Schools. The survey was a self-assessment report filled out by teachers and headmasters in the respective schools. This research involved a number of 10 intact special schools located in 4 regencies of Central Java, Indonesia. Data were collected through questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and interviews, and then they were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively from each step of the model development and experiment [9] [10] as to describe and measure the effectiveness of the Post-School Transition model.

III. RESULT

This autonomy or entrepreneurship assessment is given to special schools that have an education level of both general and vocational high schools. The purpose of this assessment is to find out an overview of the implementation of post-school transition programs provided for students graduating from the schools. The results of the vocational assessment can be described below.

A. The existence of autonomy or entrepreneurship field in post-school transition program

TABLE I. THE EXISTENCE OF AUTONOMY OR ENTREPRENEURSHIP FIELD IN POST-SCHOOL TRANSITION PROGRAM

Program Availability	Number of Special Schools	Percentage
Available	28	72%
Unavailable	6	15%
Unknown	5	13%

Based on Table 1, it can be seen that 28 special schools (72%) has the autonomy or entrepreneurship field in post-school transition program, 6 special schools did not have a program (15%), and 5 special schools did not give the response (13%).

B. Entrepreneurship interests among students with special needs in the Special Schools.

TABLE II. ENTREPRENEURSHIP INTERESTS IN STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS.

Program Availability	Number of Special Schools	Percentage
Available	26	67%
Unavailable	0	0%
Unknown	13	33%

Based on Table 2, the percentage of entrepreneurship interest of students with special needs was 67% (26 Special Schools), while 13 others (33%) did not response.

C. Autonomy or entrepreneurship program in post-school transition

TABLE III. AUTONOMY OR ENTERPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM IN POST-SCHOOL TRANSITION

Services	Amount	Percentage (%)
Curriculum adjustment	10	26
Additional hours of skill training	26	67
Children inclusion in the training programs at the Sheltered Workshops or other job training institutions	16	41
Providing special teachers to train entrepreneurship to students	21	54
Conducting competency tests to assess students' special skills	5	13
Involving parents	19	49
Others	2	5

Based on Table 3, it can be seen that the school program helps students prepare post-school autonomy/entrepreneurship which has the highest percentage of schools that provide additional hours of skills training (26 schools / 67%) then followed by schools that provide special teachers to train entrepreneurship (21 schools / 54%), schools that want to involve parents of children (19 schools / 49%), schools that invite children to take part in the *Diklat* work program at Sheltered Workshops or other training institutions (16 schools / 41%), schools that adjust curriculum for children (10 schools / 26%), schools that carry out special skills competency tests (5 schools / 13%), and other programs (2 schools / 5%).

IV. DISCUSSION

Based on the result, 72% of Special Schools have post-school transition programs in vocational or entrepreneurship field to prepare students to enter the society. These results are consistent with Heffron' statement [11] that 90% of special schools have vocational post-school transition programs. Furthermore, Heffron [11] also explained that the school had conducted an official assessment to explore data on work skills and interests, career counselling, work readiness, and service needs related to entrepreneurship. This research has also conducted an assessment in exploring entrepreneurial interests in Special Schools students, and it was found that 67% of the schools of the research sites mentioned that they had conducted an assessment of entrepreneurial interests for their students. Research by [12] found that internship was one of the predictors of the student's persistence in postsecondary education. Similar to the internship as mentioned above, assessment becomes the predictor whether or not the post-school transition is effective for the participants. It implies

assessment is determinant in measuring the degree of success in post-school transition.

There were some vocational services in post-school transition programs, such as curriculum adjustment, additional hours of skill training, children are included in work education and training programs at the Sheltered Workshops or other training institutions, providing special teachers to train entrepreneurship to students, conducting competency tests to assess students' special skills, and involving parents. Both education and training are important from school to employment [3]. That is why the post-school transition should well be prepared by the special schools through various additional training for either who want to study or to work in the community. According to Ratnengsih [12], the selection of the types of skills carried out by the schools has been reviewed and takes into account the specific needs of students and the environment in which students live. Further research is needed to design a post-school transition program model in the appropriate vocational field by considering each students' specific needs. [13] reveals that post-school transition is believed to give an impact on the students in many ways, such as building motivation and persistence in terms of academic and vocation. It is worth noted that successful post-school transition programs would give better opportunities to experience through internship training in a company. This opportunity seems to be an easier way to get a job accordingly [13].

V. CONCLUSION

This research draws the conclusion that: (1) Vocational post-school transition program is urgent for special schools to provide the lifeskill for their life autonomy in the future. However, not all special schools provide such a vocational program for life skills. (2) The special schools that provide the program of life skills start with the assessment of entrepreneurship interest in the field of vocation. (3) There are many vocational programs provided by special schools. In addition to skill training, workshop, and other job training of entrepreneurship, involving parents are the main program that the schools provide to help the students get ready for life independence. It is recommended that a model of vocational post-school transition is designed to prepare the future of students with disabilities.

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