Analysis of Best Practice in School-to-Work Transition for Adolescents with Intellectual Disability in China: Implications for Practice and Policy

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Dedicated to

My parents:

Guizhong Xu and Dezhi Zhang
DECLARATION

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for examination to any other University or Institution.

Signed:                      Date: ............................
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My sincerest gratitude goes to my supervisors, Associate Professor Ian Dempsey and Emeritus Professor Phil Foreman, whose knowledge, constant timely and sage advice, encouragement, tolerance and persistence have been instrumental in assisting me to reach completion. Their unfailing support enables me to pursue my enthusiasm in the disability study field with maximum autonomy.

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I am grateful to the principals or directors of institutions in China where I have visited to conduct my study, and give special thanks for their support in assisting me to recruit participants. I would like to express my gratitude to transition experts, parents and teachers who have given generously of their time to participate in this research. Special thanks go to those who were able to share their beliefs and stories during interview and surveys.

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Publications:


Presentations:


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ABSTRACT

It has often been recognised that school-to-work transition plays a crucial role in the achievement of post-secondary outcomes. However, adolescents with intellectual disability (ID) in China who require intensive vocational education and transition services frequently cannot access specific services that could guide them into employment opportunities appropriate for their competencies. The present study uses Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming (KTTP) (Kohler, 1996b) to explore best practices in school-to-work transition for Chinese adolescents with ID and to examine the predictors of that best practice.

A mixed methods research design that integrated qualitative and quantitative approaches into two studies was applied to the present research. In Study 1, five transition experts were surveyed, and 14 transition teachers and 14 parents were interviewed, to obtain their perceptions on existing school-to-work transition services for adolescents with ID in China. In Study 2, 329 teachers were surveyed to examine the extent of their implementation of endorsed best practices in transition. Through surveys and interviews, thematic analysis, descriptive analyses, ANOVA, and multiple regression, three research questions were answered.

The findings indicated that the vast majority of the transition practices in KTTP and its sub-categories were relevant to vocational education and transition services in the Chinese context. In addition, social bias against people with ID, lack of quality transition programs, and insufficient government and societal support were reported by teachers and parents as the main barriers to successful transition. In contrast, both teachers and parents confirmed best practice in effective transition programs, such as individualised transition planning, employment skills cultivation, family involvement, interagency collaboration, and some connecting activities.

Furthermore, the findings also indicated that the endorsed best practices in school-to-work transition were at least occasionally implemented by participating transition teachers. In addition, multiple regression analysis using dummy variables (Field, 2013) suggested that, compared to working in public vocational education
institutions, participants working in vocational education programs (VEP) in public special education institutions implemented transition practices less frequently. Moreover, compared to participants who had less than two years of experience in working with adolescents with ID in vocational education and transition services, respondents with 6-10 years of experience were more likely to implement endorsed best practices in transition. Likewise, compared to participants who spent more than 76% of their time working with adolescents with ID in vocational education and transition services, those who spent less than 25% of their time were significantly less likely to implement transition practices.

The findings of the present study supported the effectiveness of a majority of the transition practices in KTTP, and suggest that KTTP is the most comprehensive and widely accepted framework of quality transition practice. In addition to this, findings presented in this study indicate that transition education and associated services in China are in the early stages of development, and signal a need for action at the government, employer, transition institution, and family levels.
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# LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADA</td>
<td>Americans with Disabilities Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>AEF</td>
<td>Australian Educational Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANOVA</td>
<td>Analysis of Variance</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDPF</td>
<td>China Disabled Persons’ Federation</td>
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<tr>
<td>DCDT</td>
<td>Division of Career Development and Transition</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDA</td>
<td>Disability Discrimination Act</td>
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<td>EFA</td>
<td>Exploratory Factor Analysis</td>
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<td>EM</td>
<td>Expectation Maximization</td>
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<td>ES</td>
<td>External Support</td>
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<td>FI</td>
<td>Family Involvement</td>
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<td>FITP</td>
<td>Frequency of Implementing Transition Practices</td>
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<td>IC</td>
<td>Interagency Collaboration</td>
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<td>ID</td>
<td>Intellectual Disability</td>
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<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individualised Education Planning</td>
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<td>ITP</td>
<td>Individualised transition planning</td>
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<td>KMO</td>
<td>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin</td>
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<tr>
<td>KTTP</td>
<td>Kohler’s Taxonomy for Transition Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td>MCAR</td>
<td>Missing Completely at Random</td>
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<td>MSA</td>
<td>Measure of Sampling Adequacy</td>
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<td>NSTTAC</td>
<td>National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Centre</td>
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<td>PAF</td>
<td>Principal Axis Factoring</td>
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<td>PCA</td>
<td>Principal Component Analysis</td>
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<td>Program Philosophy</td>
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<td>VEPSEO</td>
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<td>Vocational Education Program in Public Special Education School</td>
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<td>VIF</td>
<td>Variance Inflation Factor</td>
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