



## JOB PLACEMENT FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS: CAREER AND VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE

**Khalil Alsaadat<sup>i</sup>**

Department of Educational Policies,  
College of Education,  
King Saud University,  
Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

### **Abstract:**

The purpose of this paper is to discuss job placement for handicapped and disadvantaged persons, and to present examples of jobs available to these special groups. Vocational education, the disadvantaged, and handicapped persons are identified to give better understanding as to why special programs and services are needed for those people with special needs. Job placement is discussed, including some vocational guidance that might lead to employment. Some disadvantaged groups' characteristics are discussed. A single case of a handicapped and a single case of a disadvantaged individual are not discussed as it seemed more meaningful, practical, and appropriate to discuss the handicapped and the disadvantaged persons as one issue.

**Keywords:** job placement, students with special needs, career and vocational guidance

### **1. Introduction**

Vocational education could be defined as organized training or preparation designed to increase the probability of an individual receiving paid or unpaid employment in one of nine career fields. These career fields have been identified by the United States Department of Education. They include technical education, industrial arts, trade and industrial occupations, occupational home economics, agriculture, distributive education, health occupations education, consumer and homemaking education, and office occupations. Training required as a prerequisite to a baccalaureate or advance degree is usually excluded from definitions of vocational education (Frith, 1985).

### **2. Related Studies**

Batevik and Myklebust (2006)'s study focuses on how young people with special educational needs have made the transition into working life. At 23–24 years of age, the

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [alsaadat@gmail.com](mailto:alsaadat@gmail.com)

young women have, to a lesser extent than the young men, succeeded in finding a permanent job. This finding reflects the fact that young women and young men follow different paths. Many young women with special needs give birth to children at an early stage in their life course, which consequently delays their gaining a foothold in the labour market. However, what occurs during their schooling also affects their adaptation to a job situation. Formal competence improves the young men's chances to get work, whereas the organization of the teaching is more important in the case of the young women. To a large extent, the young women benefit from an education that includes a job placement contract in a company. This study is based on a longitudinal study of 494 former special needs students from six Norwegian counties (Batevik and Myklebust, 2006).

Myklebust and Batevik (2009)'s article discusses the extent to which former special needs students – now in their late 20s – achieve economic independence. The emphasis is on class placement – that is, whether being educated in special or regular classes in upper secondary school contributes to favourable occupational outcomes. The empirical evidence is based on interviews of 373 young Norwegians who were surveyed regularly for more than 10 years. The analyses reveal that nearly half of the young adults found jobs that made them economically independent. Students schooled in regular classes attained vocational or academic competence and obtained a driving licence to a much greater degree than did students educated in special classes. In turn this increased the chances of earning a living. That is the indirect effect of class placement. The direct positive effect of schooling in regular classes was observed among people with rather low functional abilities and among those who did not succeed in attaining competence or obtaining a driving licence (Myklebust and Batevik, 2009).

The abstract of the Myklebust and Batevik (2014) was quoted; the reported that abundant research exists on the transition from school to work of youth with disabilities. However, few studies investigate their subsequent long-term participation in working life. This study, drawing on a life course approach, aimed to examine how former students with special educational needs succeeded in finding full-time employment with sufficient pay to make them economically independent. The extent of economic independence was investigated in their late twenties and their mid-thirties. The sample ( $N = 216$ ) originates from a Norwegian longitudinal research project that commenced in the mid-1990s when the study participants just had started upper secondary school. Their special needs provision and their physical, psychological and/or social difficulties were recorded at the same time. After their teens, they were interviewed every fifth year. At both age phases close to 50% of the study participants were economically independent, men to a much greater degree than women. By logistic regression analyses, it was revealed that the independent variables influenced economic independence differently among men and women, for example, that educational attainment was important for women, but not for men. However, possession of a driving licence was crucial for men, but was relatively unimportant for women, at least in the first age phase. There was also a differential impact of parenthood. Having children increased the likelihood of being economically independent for men, whereas the impact was opposite for women,

especially when they were approaching their mid-thirties. Processes of cumulative advantages and disadvantages were also observed, indicating that previous negative life course experiences dramatically reduce the chances of obtaining economic independence (Myklebust and Batevik, 2014).

Inclusive education (IE) has the potential to improve special education needs (SEN) students' learning outcomes, but IE requires teachers receive adequate training to be effective (Kang & Martin, 2017).

Bij et al. (2016) conducted a study in inclusive special needs education they concluded that Inclusive special needs education is prominent on the international education agenda. Research on the characteristics of inclusive education for students with special needs and schools providing this is scarce, however. Our aim in the present study was therefore to further theory-building with regard to inclusive special needs education. On the basis of the relevant literature, we identified three core aspects of inclusivity: the learning environment, the guidance provided by teachers and the general care structure (Bij et al., 2016).

Bij et al. (2016) defined inclusive special needs education as accepting all students in regular education, if necessary, in collaboration with schools of special education and/or external partners or agencies (e.g. social workers, youth care professionals, school attendance officers, police). Such a definition implies that students need not be diagnosed and labelled. Inclusive school policy and teaching practices are shaped by the different educational needs of students, not by the deficiencies of certain students compared to others. As such, the design of inclusive special needs education can be undertaken from the general perspective of school development, with attention to the educational views of school management and the professionalism of teachers (Bij et al., 2016).

Ainscow & Sandel (2010) noted in their research that including all children in education is the major challenge facing educational systems around the world, in both developing and developed countries. Drawing on research evidence and ideas from a range of international literature, this paper argues that leadership practice is a crucial element in gearing education systems towards inclusive values and bringing about sustainable change (Ainscow & Sandel, 2010).

Smeets and Roeleved (2016) concluded from studies that have been carried out in the past that the judgment of pupils having special educational needs may vary from teacher to teacher, that teachers' attitudes can play a significant role in this process, and that certain pupil groups tend to be over-identified with. In addition, it is questionable whether teachers are sufficiently prepared to provide special educational needs pupils with optimum education (Smeets and Roelevede, 2016).

### **3. Definitions**

#### **3.1 The Disadvantaged**

*"The disadvantaged student is perhaps the most difficult to identify and serve. A disadvantaging condition in one area of the educational system may not exist in another"* (Nystrom, Bayne & McClellan, 1977).

The disadvantaged are persons (other than handicapped persons) who: "1) *have academic or economic disadvantages, and 2) require special services, assistance, or programs in order to enable them to succeed in vocational education programs*" (Meers, 1987).

The disadvantaged are divided into two major categories: academic and economic. A person is academically disadvantaged if that person: "1) *lacks reading and writing skills, 2) lacks mathematical skills, or 3) performs below grade level* A person is economically disadvantaged if: 1) *family income is at or below the national poverty level, 2) the participant or parent(s) or guardian of the participant is unemployed, 3) the participant or parent(s) of the participant is recipient of public assistance, or 4) the participant is institutionalized or under state guardianship*" (Meers, 1987).

### **3.2 The Handicapped**

*"The handicapped are those individuals who have been evaluated appropriately as being mentally retarded, hard of hearing, deaf, speech impaired, visually handicapped, seriously emotionally disturbed, orthopedically impaired, other health impaired, deaf-blind, multi-handicapped, or as having specific learning disabilities who, because of those impairments, need special education and related services"* (Meers, 1987).

### **3.3 Career Education**

Career education is the total effort of public education and the community to help all individuals become familiar with the values of work-oriented society to integrate these values into their personal value system, and to implement these values into their lives in such a way that work becomes possible, meaningful, and satisfying to each individual (Hoyt, Evans, Mackin, and Mangum, 1974). Hoyt also defines career education as "*the totality of experiences through which one learns about and prepares to engage in work as part of her or his way of living*" (Meers, 1987).

Meers stated that "*career education is perceived as a flow-through type of education whereby individuals acquire not only information concerning paid employment but information about other aspects of their lives as well*" (Meers, 1987).

### **3.4 Career Education Programs**

A comprehensive career education program for disabled students should include five developmentally sequential phases, or levels. These phases are: career awareness, career exploration, pre-vocational education, vocational education, and vocational reeducation. A comprehensive career program for today's disabled students must be future-oriented and must reflect the skills and attitudes that will be required for them to function in the society and economy of their future, the 21st century. The ultimate objective of such a program is to prepare today's disabled students to become self sufficient, independent, and contributing adult members of society, both now and in the future world of the information age (Cain, Jr. and Taber, 1987).

Numerous considerations require assessment prior to career placement. These considerations range from working conditions to the personal and professional ability of the potential placement station to assist the youth.

They are: 1. convenience of location, 2. health and safety conditions, 3. hours that must be worked, 4. adequacy of facilities and equipment, and 5. potential agencies' compliance with applicable laws. All persons involved in the cooperative career education program must have the skills necessary to instruct youth so that new skills and performance competencies are achieved. Personnel working with the handicapped should be trained to: 1. manage the youth's general behavior, 2. provide professional technical assistance, 3. exhibit exemplary behavior for the youth to model, 4. organize the work experiences, 5. communicate with the youth, 6. understand the career education program and the youth, and 7. recommend alternatives in the career program for the youth (Miller and Schloss, 1982).

Opportunities for handicapped and disadvantaged students to participate in a variety of mainstream career preparation programs have expanded considerably in the past several years. The Vocational Education Act of 1963 and its amendments have provided that 10 percent of the research and demonstration monies that each state receive under this legislation be used for providing vocational education to the handicapped. In addition, the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 guarantees handicapped individuals' access to all educational programs receiving federal money.

These legislative efforts have greatly expanded the opportunities afforded the handicapped to obtain appropriate career preparation at both the secondary and post secondary levels (Blackhurst and Berdin, 1981).

### **3.5 Career Decision Making**

Since most Americans value making a living and most students are looking forward to being independent someday, the relationship between school learning and potential employment provides a logical and meaningful vehicle for the teacher in making learning experiences relevant for the student.

This feature is utilized at all levels of education by good teachers, who constantly struggle to teach their students to identify, discuss, explore, and prepare for future occupations. This teaching concept is fundamental in career education; therefore, the teachers' work experiences are an essential part of their preparation for teaching (Phelps and Lutz, 1979).

The insight, compassion, patience, and concern that teachers provide young people making important career decisions is essential, especially for the special needs' learner. It has been said that some students will make appropriate decisions without much help, but the handicapped and disadvantaged need optimistic and creative teachers to help them recognize their potentials and make realistic career decisions (Phelps and Lutz, 1979).

The multi-disciplinary team serves children well because it focuses on a variety of different professional skills and perspectives on children as individuals. We predict it will serve education well, in general, as it may come to be used increasingly for decision making about non-special education children as well. Particularly in light of the urgent focus on education in the nation during this decade, the multi-disciplinary team may

become a ubiquitous vehicle for forging a stronger partnership between professional educators and parents, to everyone's benefit (Losen and Losen, 1985).

### **3.6 Vocational Guidance**

The purpose of the program of vocational guidance is to provide individuals with the information and skills needed to make wise decisions concerning problems of vocational adjustment.

An efficient program of vocational guidance should improve the chances of the individual for progress and satisfaction in his occupation. The program should also result in increased efficiency in the organization and operation of the instructional program within the school (Roberts, p. 363, 1971).

The successful future of vocational education programs for the disabled depends upon the development of close cooperation between the private sector and the educational system. Only business and industry can provide educators with necessary information about specific current and future skills of successful workers. The private sector can also help to develop successful training programs and provide necessary funds, as well as needed on-the-job training. In return, the product of education, students of any age, will be better prepared for the available job market (Cain, Jr., and Taber, p. 206, 1987).

The area of job placement and follow-up of handicapped persons continues to be the activity that is most poorly conceived and attended to in the entire vocational preparation process. In too many instances, after extensive efforts at vocational counseling, evaluation and training, the planned program ends in failure through improvident Job placement actions on the part of some professional workers. The job must be what the person has been trained for, or close to it, and be consistent with his abilities, needs, and interests, or little has been accomplished (Brolin, 1982).

### **3.7 Problems Faced in Placing the Handicapped and Disadvantaged Student**

- 1) The student cannot clear entry hurdles - entry requirements often make greater physical or intellectual demands than does the job itself.
- 2) Employers fear increased employee-related expenses - they may fear insurance codes, accident frequency, or some other expense of doing business will rise.
- 3) Employers do not see how the handicapped person can get the job done at all, or they fear that accommodations will be terribly expensive - they may fear that environmental adaptations and special tools may be costly or that the handicapped worker cannot get the job done, accommodations or not.
- 4) Employers fear that other workers will not be able to work well with the handicapped or may lack communication or other skills needed to function efficiently with handicapped colleagues (Dahl, Appleby, Lipe, 1978).

Each of these problems can be overcome through early planning, effective employer contacts, and timely use of various members of the placement team.

Gardner and Warren stated that disabled persons have no less claim to training for employment than do other citizens; the constitution of the United States clearly

indicates that disabled persons have the same rights as other citizens. This point is underscored by the fact that they passed federal legislation (p. L.94-142), a law that mandates that all states provide free public education to handicapped students. It is designated a civil rights act by federal officials. Nevertheless, there has consistently been insufficient and often inadequate training and education available for individuals who have disabilities. Such a situation leads inevitably to underemployment and unemployment. To know that the situation exists does not explain it. Perhaps some of the barriers to employment are quite complex, but it may be helpful to consider some known and some hypothesized barriers.

One might group the factors which interfere with full employment under the following headings:

- 1) the disability itself;
- 2) attitudes of society and employers;
- 3) education and training limitations;
- 4) attitudes of disabled persons;
- 5) economic factors (Dahl, Appleby, Lipe, 1978).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The importance of vocational education for the handicapped and disadvantaged has been well documented in the professional literature. While most of the vocational education emphasis has centered on the mildly handicapped, its value for the moderately and severely handicapped has also been recognized.

The Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1978 was of particular importance in assigning priority to vocational training for severely handicapped individuals. Sheltered workshops have been used for several years as a primary source of vocational training and potential employment for moderately and severely handicapped individuals.

Competitive employment training has been increasingly popular with this population (Frith, 1985).

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