Literature Review Fact Sheet and Executive Summary
Transitioning From Post-Secondary Education to Decent Employment
Strategies for Success and Areas for Improvement

Executive Summary

Transitioning from PSE to decent work can be a difficult experience for any graduate, but as with PSE and decent work outcomes, there are more barriers for (PWD). The literature in this area is currently quite limited, with most focusing on evaluating private transition programs. While this is important for PWD trying to choose appropriate options for transition, more solutions should be available. Many of the transition programs considered were specifically for people with IDD. This is also important because people with IDD tend to have lower job prospects and outcomes when compared to people with other disabilities (Readhead & Owen, 2020). Future research should continue to focus on how employment outcomes may be improved for people with IDD, while also considering inclusive solutions that work for as many people as possible.

In our analysis, we noted several strategies that for success that have been proven to be effective for PWD. Collaboration among employers, PWD, and community stakeholders can provide many benefits when transitioning from school to work (Readhead & Owen, 2020; Petcu & Chezan, 2015; Lindsay et al., 2017). For example, collaboration with employers can provide placement and internships opportunities, while collaboration with community stakeholders can improve access to social supports (Pectu & Chezan, 2015; Lindsay et al., 2017; Hall, 2020). Mentorship can also be a very beneficial support and can help reduce the time PWD spend searching for employment (Antonelli et al., 2018).

It is also very important that the programs that are made available are inclusive and utilize universal design. Inclusive programs provide agency for PWD by supporting the needs of each individual student (Wilczenski et al., 2017). A good way to incorporate inclusive universal design is creating transition programs that do not require users to disclose their disability. This also means that anyone can access these programs, regardless of disability. Additionally, social and community services should be in place to provide support for adults and their families and friends (Kelly & Prohn, 2019; Lindsay et al., 2017).

Our analysis also identified some areas that need to be improved to ease the transition from PSE to decent for PWD. One important change should be the responsibility of employers and administrative staff at workplaces. Inclusive policies and practices should be created and followed to support PWD, which includes hiring and management processes (Perri et al., 2021). Further, policy should be adjusted to remove income limits when accessing disability support, as this is a major barrier for PWD trying to obtain decent work (Scheef et al., 2018). Current policies often force PWD to work in low-wage jobs with minimal hours, leading to precarious work and poverty (Enayati & Karpur, 2019; Moore & Schelling, 2015).

Research in this area also needs to shift to better represent the needs and desires of PWD. Our analysis found that much of the literature uses the deficit model of disability, which is inseparable from the medical model which puts the onus on PWD to change so they can be considered "normal" and fit into society (Pfeiffer, 2002). This model is most often used in the literature when concerning people with IDD and future research should counter this framework by shifting towards the social model of disability that is informed by intersectionality and human rights. One way to work with the social model of disability is making sure that the perspectives and lived experiences of PWD are highlighted in the research. Finally, it is very important that transition programming and services is understood through an intersectional lens and considers the diverse needs of PWD.

Our analysis found that while there are many promising strategies for easing the transition from PSE to decent work for PWD, there are several areas requiring attention to reduce barriers for graduates with a variety of learning styles and abilities accessing decent work. These findings are drawn from research Eviance completed in collaboration with its partners at Toronto Metropolitan University, OCADU, St. Francis Xavier University, and ARCH Disability Law Centre.

Recommendations

- Remove income limits for people accessing disability support benefits.
- Create transition programs that are individualized, inclusive, intersectional, and support as many people as possible as they transition from PSE to decent work.
- Future research should challenge the deficit and medical models of disability and consider ways that environments and attitudes may change rather than focusing on how to change PWD to fit into an ableist society. Research should involve and honour the lived experiences of PWD when conducting studies and reviews.
- Ensure that PWD have their basic needs met (housing, food, mental health care etc.) and ensure that PWD and their support systems have access to the services they need to succeed.

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Our partners for this project include:

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