

Innovative development of a school- to -work transition programme for learners with intellectual disability attending a special school in Stellenbosch

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Introduction and rationale: Special schools frequently face criticism about their irrelevant and incomplete curriculum for facilitating the transition from school to work for learners with intellectual disability. Access to protective workshops is limited due to the large numbers of post-school learners seeking further work placement there. By developing the transitional school- to- work programme, learner's transition could take place in phases during the learners last 2-3 years of attendance in the training school.

Objectives: To facilitate the development of a school-work transition programme in a special school context situated in Stellenbosch.

Method: An action research design was implemented. Participants were the learner, his/her parents, school-based occupational therapist, occupational therapy students and employers in the Stellenbosch area. The action research cycles identified as work preparation phases needed for the successful transition from school -to -work for learners leaving schools at the age of 18 years as is required in South Africa.

Results: Graded, situated work contexts were created for the learners to develop work skills and facilitate their exposure to and adaptation within the school and real working contexts. The contexts were graded from classroom learning, work station learning in the school followed by work trail placements in numerous community organizations.

Practice implications and conclusion: Work –to-school transitional programmes for learners at special schools do not exist in South Africa yet. This transitional work programme is the first of its kind in South Africa. If found to be sustainable and successful, it could be emulated at other special schools.