

The Role of High Schools in Saudi Arabia in Supporting Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities with Their Transition to Post-secondary Education

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Abstract : Introduction and Objectives: There is limited research focusing on young adults with intellectual disabilities (ID) and their experiences after finishing compulsory education, especially in the Middle Eastern/Arab countries. This paper aims to further understand the lives of young adults with ID in Riyadh [the capital city of Saudi Arabia], particularly as they go on to access Post-Secondary Education [PSE]. As part of this study, it is important to understand the roles of high schools in Riyadh in terms of preparing their students for post-school life. To achieve this, the researcher has asked Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Education to provide student transition plans (TPs) for post-school opportunities. However, and unfortunately, high schools in Riyadh do not use transition plans for their students. Therefore, the researcher has requested individual education plans (IEPs) for students with ID in their final year at high school to find the type of support the students had regarding both their long- and short-term goals that might help them access PSE or the labour market. Methods: The researcher analysed 10 IEPs of students in their final year at high school. To achieve the aim of the study, the researcher compared these IEPs with expectations set out in the official IEP framework of the MoE in Saudi Arabia, such as collaboration on the IEP sample and the focus on adult life. By analysing the students' IEPs in terms of various goals, this study attempts to highlight skills that might offer students more independence after finishing compulsory education and going on to PSE. Results: Unfortunately, communication between IEP team members proved persistently absent in the sample. This was clear from the fact that none of the team members, apart from the SEN teachers, had signed any of the IEPs. Thus, none of the daily or weekly goals outlined were sent to parents to review at home. As a result of this, there were no goals in the IEPs that clearly referred to PSE. However, some long-term goals were set which might help those with ID become more independent in their adult life. For example, in the IEPs, which dealt with computer skills, the student had goals related to using Microsoft Word. Finally, just one goal of these IEPs set an important independent skill for the young adults with ID: "the student will learn how to use public transportation". Conclusions: From analysing the ten IEPs, it was clear that SEN teachers in Riyadh schools were working without any help from other professionals. The students with ID, as well as their families, were not consulted on their views on important goals. Therefore, more work needs to be done with the students regarding their transition to PSE, perhaps by building partnerships between high schools and potential PSE institutions. Finally, more PSE programmes and a higher level of employer awareness could help create a bridge for students transferring from high school to PSE. Schools could also focus their IEP goals towards specific PSE programmes the student might attend, which could increase their chances of success.

Keywords : high school, post-secondary education, PSE, students with intellectual disabilities

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