

TRANSITION PROGRAM: PHILIPPINE MODEL

Yolanda S. Quijano, ED.D.

Director III, Bureau of Elementary Education
Department of Education, Pasig City, PHILIPPINES

Introduction

The task of choosing a job and preparing for work for all youths, with or without disabilities is a complex decision. Parents and professionals are particularly interested in helping young persons with mental retardation make this decision but they lack the basic knowledge on how this could be done. The project “Transition Program for Children with Mental Retardation in the Philippines” initiated by the Special Education Division, Bureau of Elementary Education, Dept. of Education with financial assistance from Christoffel Blindenmission Inc. addresses this problem.

The program is anchored on the traditional context of transition. It viewed transition as coordinated set of activities for a student designed within an outcome oriented process that promotes movement from school to out-of-school activities. The program includes vocational training, integrated employment, continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living or community participation. The coordinated activities must be based on the individual needs, taking into account the students preferences and interests. It includes activities in the areas of functional academics, daily living skills, community experiences, the development of employment and other adult living objectives and if appropriate, functional vocational evaluation.

Project Objectives

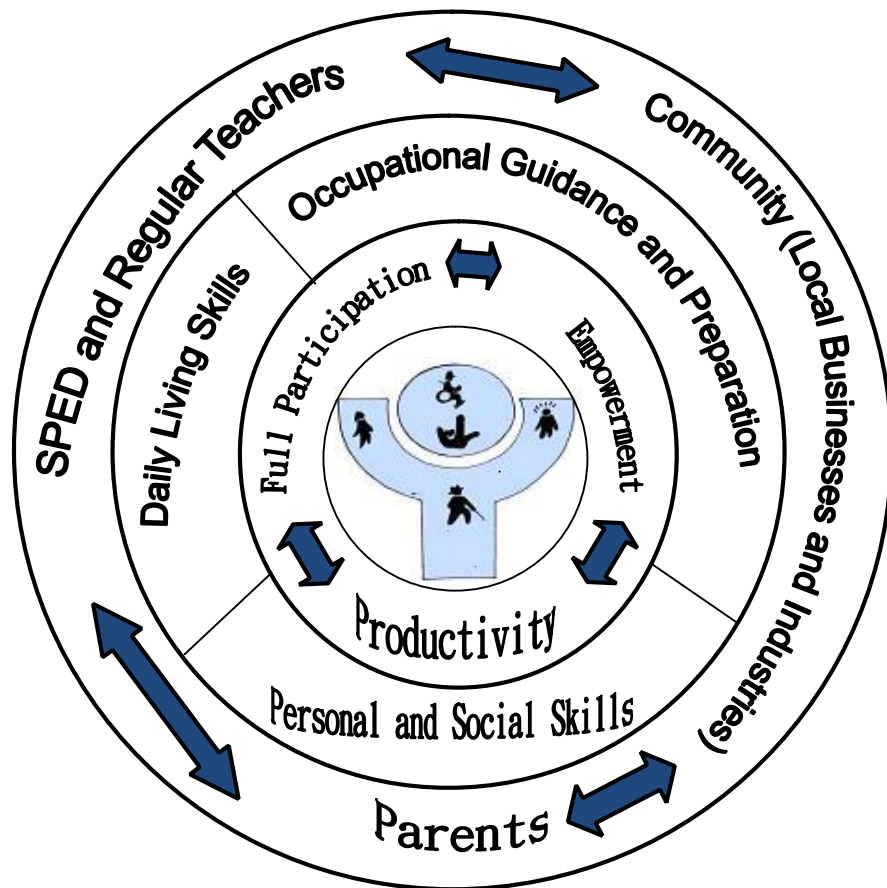
The project generally aims to develop career awareness and work skills through school-to-work transition among children with mental retardation. Its specific objectives include: i) design a transition program model and its curriculum, and i) implement the transition program model nationwide.

Project Description and Implementation

This project targets children with mental retardation who have completed the elementary level or those who are over-aged for formal schooling. It has three phases. The first phase (2005) was the development of the transition program model and its curriculum by SPED teachers and administrators in both public and private schools, parents and heads of business establishments who are familiar with the characteristics of persons with mental retardation. The model is shown on the next page.

The transition program model envisions the full participation, empowerment and productivity among children with mental retardation. Full participation is described as involvement of persons with mental retardation in the different activities in the

community. Opportunities for their participation should be made available and support in terms of assistive devices and assistance from peers, professionals and other people in the community are accessible, when needed. Empowerment pertains to making choices and decisions and being able to control one's life and the demonstration of this skill is an assurance that person with mental retardation could already live an independent life. Productivity refers to the ability of a person with mental retardation to engage oneself in work or any activities that will provide him/her with income to finance his own needs.



Transition Program Model

The curriculum domains for the transition program include: i) daily living skills, ii) personal and social skills, and iii) occupational guidance and preparation. The daily living skills include competencies on managing, selecting and maintaining living environment, caring for personal health, developing and maintaining intimate relationship, eating at home and in the community, cleaning and purchasing clothing, participating in leisure or recreational activities, and getting around the community. The competencies on personal and social skills focus on achieving self-awareness, acquiring self-confidence, achieving socially responsible behavior, maintaining good interpersonal skills, achieving independence, making informed and adequate decisions, and communicating with others. The occupational guidance and preparation domain covers competencies like exploring

and locating occupational training and job placement opportunities, making occupational training and job placement choices, applying for and maintaining occupational training and job placements, developing and maintaining appropriate work skills and behavior, and matching physical and manual skills to occupational training and employment. Each of the domains has competency rating scale which evaluates mastery of the competencies learned.

The competencies in the three domains are taught to children with mental retardation by both the SPED and regular teachers, the parents and skilled volunteers from the local businesses and industries. The setting for these domain could be in the school, in the community or in business establishments. The activities offer students opportunities on career awareness and work skills which will ultimately equip them to live an independent and productive life.

The model and its curriculum underwent validation by SPED teachers, administrators, vocational teachers in regular schools, parents and heads of industries or in small scale businesses. Feedbacks were utilized for the revision of the materials.

The second phase (2006-2007) which is the pilot implementation of the model and its curriculum is being done in 15 schools located in three major islands, namely, Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Monitoring results and experiences of the service providers are documented and will serve as the bases for the finalization of the model and its curriculum. Below are vignettes in the pilot implementation of the program.

Chocolate Cookies Baked by Special Children

The Baguio City SPED Center was a recipient of a complete baking equipment through the efforts of the Parents Teachers Community Association (PTCA) who worked closely for its donation by the Rotary Club of the city. Alongside with this equipment were five skilled persons in baking who trained the ten children with mental retardation who were assessed by their SPED teachers and found ready for the transition program. The initial capital was provided by the PTCA and from donations of civic spirited individuals. The training yielded positive results: happy and productive children who learned to bake cookies deliciously. They can readily say, "*Marunog na kaming mag-luto ng cookies.*" (*We already know how to bake cookies.*) These cookies were sold in the school canteen and regular children admired what the special children have done.

The SPED teachers provided the training to the children on how to purchase the ingredients as well as in selling the baked cookies. The parents, teachers and the community are motivated to sustain the program.

Rugs for Sale Done by Special Children

Twelve to fifteen years old children with mental retardation of Silahis ng Pag-asa, Bo. Obrero Elementary School are being taught rug making. The skill is being offered by parent volunteers who are tailors. The rugs vary in colors, sizes and could be used for different purposes. Each child learns how to sew together pieces of cloth and fashion them to different shapes. He/She has a target number of rugs to finish in one day depending on his/her speed. While making the rugs, the children also learn to combine colors to achieve beauty. The tailor shops in the community provide them with the materials while sewing machines are made available by the school. These rugs are sold in the school and nearby small stores. This experience bolsters self-confidence of the children and make parents proud of them.

Candle Making Brightens Naga SPED Center

It was on October 8, 2006 when the teachers of Naga City SPED Center attended the orientation on the pilot implementation of the transition program model for special children.

Luckily, the executive director of a non-government organization in Camarines Sur happened to talk to Mr. Meliton Celedonio, the principal of the school and offered support in any project that the school would like to undertake. Meetings were held between teachers and the Kalayag Foundation and decision to start the transition program in candle making was made. The sponsor gave the seed money and provided personnel to train the teachers and students. One week after the training, the school started the production of candles on time for All Souls Day and Christmas season. The activity made profit and the amount was saved for expansion.

Now, five children with mental retardation are engaged in candle making without teacher supervision. Others do this at home. The candles are packaged in various ways. Some are put in open bottles, in cans and in boxes.

There are other children who are specifically trained to sell the products since they could not develop the skill in making candles. Besides selling, they get the orders and comments from the customers.

The school is presently accepting orders for any occasion. A percentage of the proceeds are kept as capital while the children get their commission based on their outputs. The partner organization is now offering additional capital.

Transition Program How Far Has It Gone?

Iriga City Division Integrated Special School has a strong transition program for children with mental retardation and hearing impairment who are above 12 years old. The school is offering training in cooking and baking, shoe repair, tailoring and basic building wiring. Every week, each class has a half day schedule for transition program. Material and human resources have been tapped for the different activities.

The school established a baking center and six students supply special puto, chocolate and banana cakes to the nearby university and other schools. The students also act as leaders and models to other students who are just starting to be trained. These bakers are also trained to do the marketing for the ingredients, to record sales and supplies and to determine their gains.

Another field in the transition program is shoe repair. Juver Bribante, after a year of training has his own shoe repair shop at home. Community people bring their shoes and sandals for repair to his shop. Every Thursday he goes to the school to coach other children with mental retardation and repairs shoes of teachers at cost. He is very happy of his skill at the same time enjoys his earnings.

The trainings on tailoring and shoe repair were made possible through the expertise of a father of a child who is deaf. He volunteered his services to start of the program.

Regular monitoring is being conducted by the staff of the Special Education Division and initial results are the following:

1. The program serves its purpose of providing training to adolescents with mental retardation on career awareness and job placement. The experiences motivated the children to focus on learning work skills for productive living.
2. The activities offered were very appropriate for the targeted clientele since age, ability and interest were considered. Teachers and parents felt that skills training activities for these children at their age are more relevant than academic lessons.
3. The children enjoyed the activities because of the following reasons:
 - 3.1 They learned by doing.
 - 3.2 There was much interaction with their peers.
 - 3.3 They felt they were productive in their own ways.
 - 3.4 They were proud to say: “Kaya ko nang gawin ito” or “Yes I can do it.”
 - 3.5 The activities were interesting.
 - 3.6 They were thrilled to receive their first pay or earning.
4. Transition program needs special support from parents, local government units, other stakeholders in the community since fund allocation is an important component to start it.

5. The schools which will implement this program needs to advocate strongly for public support and the school staff together with parents should know how to establish linkages or do networking.
6. The schools had difficulty finding experts or resource persons who could train the children on the different work skills. They did not have any factories or business enterprise in the community.
7. Some teachers felt the implementation of the transition program should be complimented by additional staff and funds.

The last phase of the project is the nationwide implementation which is scheduled next year (2008). Feedback from the pilot implementation both positive and negative will be considered to improve the materials as well as the process of implementing the program.