School to work

by Henry Msimango

Effectiveness of a School-to-Work Transition Programme for learners at a special educational needs school

ABSTRACT

Introduction: South Africa has a high unemployment rate and few post-school employment opportunities for learners with disabilities. School-to-work transition programmes in special educational needs schools prepare learners with disabilities for work in the open labour market, optimizing post-school employment opportunities.

Aim: This study explores the effectiveness of a school-to-work transition programme at the school for learners with special needs.

Methods: This study was an interpretive phenomenological qualitative study. We conducted semi-structured interviews with six occupational therapists involved in delivering the programme at the school. To ensure ethical compliance, we obtained clearance from the UP-Research Ethics Committee. The collected data underwent thematic analysis for analysis and interpretation.

Findings: Three prominent themes surfaced during the study's analysis: (1) The Significance of the Programme: Participants highlighted the importance and benefits of the program. (2) Facilitators Affecting School-to-Work Transition: Various factors that positively influenced the smooth transition from school to the workforce were identified and discussed. (3) Barriers to School-to-Work Transition: Participants also pointed out obstacles and challenges that hindered the successful transition from school to the workforce.

Conclusion: The effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme was influenced by personal, environmental, and occupational barriers and facilitators. The findings highlighted that the benefits of the programme should be viewed in a broader context, as learners mature and develop self-confidence. The value of the programme thus extends beyond employment opportunities.

Implications for practice: The research findings inform of the barriers that need to be focused on in order to have a successful and effective school to work transition programme. There are facilitators that show the effectiveness of the school to work transition programme, that could assist in motivating for more assistance from stakeholders of the school.

Key words: learners with disabilities, occupational therapy, open labour market, school-to-work transition, supported employment, vocational rehabilitation

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INTRODUCTION

From an early age, individuals often foster aspirations regarding their future occupations and the specific work that will enable them to sustain their livelihood[1]. As they mature, these ambitions lead them to pursue educational and training pathways. Nonetheless, individuals with disabilities (PWD) encounter a myriad of obstacles while striving to actualize these aspirations[2]. The World Health Organization (WHO) collaborates with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability, and Health to define disabilities as an inclusive term encompassing impairments, limitations in activities, and restrictions in participation[3]. Within this context, the XXXX School caters to learners with special education needs (LSEN), offering educational support to children affected by neurological disorders, specific syndromes, and physical disabilities[4].

Learners who have physical or cognitive disabilities, such as the learners at the XXXX School, are at risk of not being employed in the open labour market (OLM) when they leave school[5,6]. South Africa has a high unemployment rate, estimated to be 32.6% in 2021, which includes PWD[7]. Currently, the National Development Plan, 2030, aims to employ 2% of South African PWD, but a community survey conducted in 2016 indicated that the overall employment rate of PWD is still below the target[5,8]. To address these unemployment rates, South Africa has developed legislative frameworks and guidelines to support learners with disabilities (LWD)[9]. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNSC) supports the employment of LWD in White Paper 6[10,11]. The RNCS emphasizes the importance of strengthening education for learners with severe disabilities in the form of outcome-based education[12]. The RNSC strives to support the process of successfully transitioning LWD into a sustainable work environment to create post-school employment opportunities[10].

The XXXX School identified that their learners had poor post-school employment opportunities through informal feedback obtained from staff and parents[4,12]. The school realised that the actions of the government were inadequate to successfully transition LWD into the OLM and that the employment rates of these learners have historically been low[5,15]. The school-to-work transition model for youth with disabilities in South Africa was developed in 2002, and it was based on the successful implementation of transition models in the United States of America (USA)[12].

The school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School comprises different elements of various models such as the Vocational Transition Model, the Youth Transition Programme Model, and the Model of Supported Employment[12]. The school-to-work transition programme was

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structured in three phases to prepare LWD who have the academic potential to be employed in the OLM (Table 1)[12].

Table 1: Overview of the school-to-work transition programme at the school[12].

Phases	Activity	Duties of the occupational therapist
Phase 1: Pre-vocational preparation phase	- Pre-vocational training - Integrated school curriculum - Functional skills training, three times per week - Introductory in-service training in the open labour market (OLM)	The provision of pre-vocational skills training and participation in therapeutic groups. Tailored educational and vocational planning, along with the creation of a personalized vocational profile. An orientation session to familiarize individuals with the OLM requirements
Phase 2: Vocational preparation	- Vocational training and in-service training in the OLM - Daily, full-time exposure, and rotation among jobs every three to six months - On-site learning opportunities	- Exploring opportunities for in-service training. - Identifying potential matches for in-service training. - Negotiating on-site job training arrangements. - Confirming the actual fit for in-service training. - Conducting job analysis and providing job coaching
Phase 3: Placement and follow up	Employment	- Discussing terms and conditions of part/full-time employment, ensuring fair labor practices. - Arranging for the transfer of supervision to a support person. - Providing continuous support and follow-up assistance. - Offering aid in the process of re-employment.

School-to-work transition programmes increase post-school employment opportunities for LWD[12]. The school-to-work transition programme of the XXXX School was established and implemented in 2007. Even though the programme has been running for about 20 years, there is limited literature on the perceptions and experiences regarding the effectiveness of the programme. This qualitative study explores the experiences and perceptions of occupational therapists who were involved in the school-to-work transition programme regarding the effectiveness of the programme.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction to the school-to-work transition model at the XXXX School

School-to-work transition programmes prepare learners to enter the work environment and opportunities in life[13]. Learners acquire prevocational and vocational skills[13]. Pre-vocational skills include work motivation, work habits, work endurance, and job seeking skills, while work speed and vocational skills are job specific skills[2]. Evidence suggests that if LWD are not prepared with adequate prevocational and vocational skills, transition to work will be ineffective and this will result in poor post-school employment opportunities in the OLM[5,14].

Effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme

The school-to-work programme was evaluated, and positive outcomes were observed in terms of growth in the diversity of services offered and the number of learners enrolled in the programme[12]. The LWD also displayed personal maturation and growth[12]. Research supports that if LWD are able to identify their own goals and purpose in life, there is an increased opportunity for employment[15,16]. Evidence supports that developing vocational skills will enable LWD to transition successfully and will also assist them later in life[17]. The school-to-work programme at the XXXX School also resulted in the local community and surrounding employers welcoming the employment of LWD[12]. Literature suggests that LWD have better post-school employment outcomes if they obtain work experience in high school[18, 12]. At the XXXX School, limited funding and staff for the service delivery of the school-to-work transition programme negatively impacted the employment options for LWD[12,16].

In the USA, vocational rehabilitation agencies are required to allocate 15% of their funding to transition services[17,18]. If South African legislation followed the example of the USA, LWD might have better employment outcomes[19]. In South Africa, allocating funding to transition programmes

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might be challenging due to insufficient infrastructure and financial resources[7,20]. When analysing school-to-work transition programmes, resources should be considered as structural factors that contribute to effectiveness[19,21]. The Youth Transition Programme is an example of a programme that has government funding and enough staff to facilitate an effective programme[21,22]. Currently, there is no literature that indicates whether lack of funding and resources are still barriers and whether LWD are employed in the OLM. Literature suggests that more research is needed to explore the effectiveness of school-to-work programmes[23].

METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School for LSEN.

Study design

This was a qualitative interpretive phenomenological study that allowed the researchers to obtain rich data by interpreting participants' lived experiences and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme[24–27].

Study setting

The study was conducted at the XXXX School for LSEN which is situated in the Prinshof suburb of the Tshwane Metropolitan municipality, Gauteng[4]. The Occupational Therapy Department at the school offers pre-vocational skills groups and the school-to-work transition programme, also known as the Building Tomorrow Training programme[4].

Sampling and participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling and snowballing[28-30]. The researchers purposely selected six occupational therapists who were involved in the delivery of the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School during the 2021 academic year. Following the selection of an initial participant, additional participants were identified via snowball sampling as the initial participant informed the researchers about other participants who were actively involved in the service delivery of the programme and who could provide valuable insight to the study[31].

Data collection

Data for this study were gathered through semi-structured interviews, with accompanying field notes being taken during the process[26,28]. The researcher conducted a pilot interview prior to data collection to prepare for the face-to-face interviews with participants[28]. These semi-structured

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interviews were audio-recorded and had varying durations, lasting between 25 to 55 minutes. The interviewer employed eight broad open-ended questions, followed by probing questions that facilitated a comprehensive exploration of the topic under consideration[29]. To ensure consistency in data collection, all the semi-structured interviews were conducted in person by a single researcher. This researcher also took field notes for all six interviews, maintaining a consistent format throughout[28]. These field notes were subsequently analyzed in conjunction with the semi-structured interviews, providing valuable insights into theoretical aspects that aligned with the existing literature review.

Data analysis and trustworthiness

The data were thematically analysed as described by Braun and Clarke[32]. The researchers first familiarise themselves with the data by transcribing the six-audio recorded semi-structured interviews, reading the transcriptions, and cross-referencing the transcriptions with the field notes. The researchers assigned a pseudonym to the participants' interviews to depersonalise the data. A constant comparison analysis technique was used in which the researchers first read through all the data and then grouped the data into smaller, meaningful units. Each unit was then labelled with a "code". The researcher compared each new data unit with the previous codes, to ensure that similar units were labelled with the same code. After all the collected data were coded, similar codes were grouped into sub themes and themes. The sub themes and themes were reviewed to check their relevance. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness in this study, the researchers employed triangulation, which involved converging two methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews and field notes. This approach allowed them to capture the perspectives of all six participants comprehensively. Additionally, member checking was utilized to verify the accuracy of participants' perspectives, providing them with the opportunity to clarify and elaborate on their experiences and perceptions. This process enhanced the researchers' comprehension of identified themes and subthemes. To establish confirmability and neutrality, the researchers practiced reflexivity, actively addressing and mitigating potential biases in their analysis. This methodological self-awareness helped maintain an objective stance throughout the study.

Ethical considerations

The Faculty of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee of XXXX granted ethical approval for the study (ethics number 804/2020). Permission to conduct the study at the XXXX School for LSEN was obtained from the principal and the head of the occupational therapy department prior

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to commencing the study. All the ethical principles of non-maleficence, beneficence, and confidentiality were adhered to in the study. Informed consent was obtained in the form of written and verbal consent from the participants prior to commencing the study.

RESULTS

Demographics of participants

The participants (n = 6) were all white, female qualified occupational therapists who were all employed in the occupational therapy department at the XXXX School. The participants' ages ranged between 20 and 59. Two participants (Participants A&B) had been involved in the programme for more than 11 years and primarily provided services in phase two and three of the programme. Two participants (C&D) had been involved in the programme for six to ten years and provided services in phase one of the programme. Participant E had been involved in the delivery of phase one for two to five years. Participant F indicated that she did not provide specific services in the programme as she was more involved with the pre-primary phase learners. This participant was still interviewed as it was recommended by the selected participant. This participant had been working in the occupational therapy department at the XXXX School for two to five years and contributed valuable information that was congruent with the scope of the study. Despite this participant not being actively involved in the service delivery of the programme, similar themes emerged regarding the effectiveness of the programme. 1) the program's value, 2) the facilitators shaping school-to-work transition, and 3) the barriers affecting school-to-work transition.

Theme 1: The value of the programme

The participants agreed that the programme enabled the *learners' personal growth and development*. Participants explained that the programme had been running for 20 years, and that the programme had been used as a blueprint for similar programmes at other LSEN schools which again alludes to the value of the programme. The participants expressed that the effectiveness of the programme is not only measured in ultimate employment in the OLM, but it is also measured in terms of personal growth and development of the learners (Table 2). The school-to-work transition programme allows LWD to develop mature characteristics. Through the programme, the LWD displays improved self-esteem, self-identity, and confidence leading to increased health and an experience of well-being. The LWD have an opportunity to develop their unique adult roles by acquiring the appropriate prevocational skills to be employed in the OLM. This further creates a sense of purpose. The occupational therapists involved in the programme innovatively created *vocational training opportunities in the school*, such as the school tuck shop, due to the limited in-

service training opportunities in the OLM. These training opportunities include income-generating projects that allow the LWD to have a chance to practice their work habits and other prevocational skills at the school to prepare them for employment in the OLM (Table 2).   The participants also reported that the programme has been effective and continues to have a positive impact on the overall lives of learners for several years, therefore making the programme sustainable.

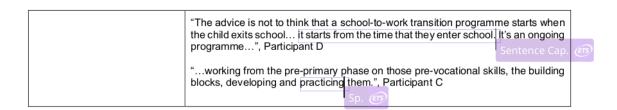**Table 2. Direct quotations supporting Theme 1: The value of the programme**

Subtheme	Quotation
The learners experience personal growth and development.	"…the success is not only measured in ultimately getting employment…It is in their human dignity …I have equipped this child with enough personal growth…to know what they can contribute within the community….", Participant D "…. you get a lot of children who have hidden skills or newfound confidence…I think it's a sense of purpose…. It's really a general improvement of the child's health and well-being.", Participant C "…you can just think of the basic skills that you need to present yourself to become a young adult… how I communicate…what do I do if I have a conflict situation…how do I problem solve"-Participant C
The programme offers vocational training opportunities in the school.	"…she's running the staff tuck shop where the learners actually work in the kitchen…take orders from the staff, make the stuff, deliver it and handle the money…", Participant D "…they learn to make a variety of food products so that they can do simple catering or just sell it on the corner of the street in the informal sector. Something to have an income… the whole process of having a small business set up…", Participant A "…they create opportunities within the school environment for them to do office administration, kitchen skills, waitressing or sewing…", Participant C
The programme has been sustainable for 20 years	"…I believe that we are making a difference…If I look back 20 years to now… just to see that the kids can believe in themselves …I think it's very effective…", Participant B "…he is now a business owner…and employs two other persons with disabilities as well as another employee.", Participant A "…she was a CP quad, severely disabled…and she took a big bucket of yoghurt and scooped little cups for the hostel kiddies…I actually placed her there, so then at the end they paid her a competitive salary…", Participant B "I think every school is different, it depends on the resources that you have…our approach would be different than another LSEN school due the different disabilities of the learners", Participant B

Theme 2: Facilitators that influence school-to-work transition.

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LWD receive various forms of *social and physical support throughout the programme* and the role of occupational therapists as skills trainers and job coaches is to facilitate school-to-work transition (Table 3). The LWD starts with prevocational and vocational skills training from a young age which also facilitates school-to-work transition. The participants stated that the learners are given various forms of physical support. The participants mentioned that the programme has received more financial support over the years and currently has a set budget. A participant supported this by saying that most of the expenses have been accounted for. The participants also mentioned that they use a multidisciplinary team for physical and social support. The participants expressed that the programme offers social support in the form of a safe space to learn the needed prevocational and vocational skills. The multidisciplinary team provides the needed individualised support that each learner needs to flourish. The occupational therapists who are employed at the XXXX School provide the services in the programme that contribute to the learners' work readiness and this starts from an early age. One of the services that was prominently mentioned was *pre-vocational and vocational skills training.* The second service that is delivered by the occupational therapists that were mentioned prominently, is *job coaching*.

Table 3. Direct quotations supporting Theme 2: Facilitators that influence school-to-work transition

Subtheme	Quotation
The learners have various forms of physical and social support throughout the programme.	"…I think there's really a massive amount that goes into supporting the kids…you just look physically, everything from assistive devices to wheelchairs, to physicians, to adapted bathroom facilities…", Participant C "…it just provides a safe and supportive environment where the learners have the opportunity to practice among people who are accepting of their mistakes and help them to overcome challenges…", Participant A
Occupational therapists fulfil the role of skills trainers and job coaches in the programme.	"I'm doing the pre-voc programme... my role there is teaching them good manners, time management skills, money management, communication skills, specific telephone skills …and household skills…", Participant D "… I coordinate their in-service training and assist with their exit planning… that entails all the duties that a job coach would be responsible for…I have to source appropriate placement positions…I then match the learners appropriately to those placement positions…", Participant A
The LWD start with prevocational and vocational skills training from a young age.	"What works really well is that the programme starts from such a young age…", Participant F

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	"The advice is not to think that a school-to-work transition programme starts when the child exits school… it starts from the time that they enter school. It's an ongoing programme…", Participant D
	"…working from the pre-primary phase on those pre-vocational skills, the building blocks, developing and practicing them.", Participant C

Theme 3: Barriers that influence school-to-work transition

A significant barrier to the school-to-work transition programme is that the *programme does not provide a formal qualification* for LWD after completion. This negatively impacts the learners' employment opportunities as employers require the learners to have a formal qualification such as a certificate. A number of LWD elected not to join the programme for this reason. Participants also explained that learners with severe disabilities experience different challenges to obtaining employment and thus have greater socio-economic challenges (Table 4). The participants explained that *employment in the OLM for LWD is scarce* due to the poor economic status of the country. Furthermore, employers are driven to meet productivity standards to profit in the poor economic market. Barriers such as prejudice and discrimination in the workplace regarding disability are other factors that limit employers from appointing LWD. Participants explained that employers do not always know how to treat LWD in the workplace. The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened the reluctance of employers to employ LWD due to the narrowed employment market and decreased economic status of the country.

The participants also expressed challenges regarding Sector Education and Training Authority (SETA) learnerships which limits employment opportunities for learners. Some employers require LWD to complete a learnership before they can be employed. The challenges with the SETA learnerships are that some learners do not qualify for the learnerships due to their *disability profile or severity of their conditions*. The SETA learnerships do not provide learners with sufficient vocational skills to meet job requirements. More time and therapists are required to assess and re-assess the learners and negotiate with the employers for appropriate placement in the OLM. The participants additionally expressed that funding for assistive devices, specific skills training, and transport to and from work remain a concern despite the increased financial support that has been received over the years. Due to the *funding, time, and staff constraints*, there is subsequently limited space in the programme and at the school itself to accommodate all the learners with the potential for school-to-work transition.

Table 4. Direct quotations supporting Theme 3: Barriers that influence school-to-work transition

Subtheme	Quotation
There are limited employment opportunities for learners with disabilities in the open labour market.	"…socio-economic factors actually play the largest role in the limited employment opportunities and the barriers within the employment market itself…", Participant A "…the employment market has preconceived ideas about where and how disabled people fit into the picture…and there is a lot of discrimination…", Participant A
The programme does not provide a formal qualification.	"None of this has been formalized…we have basic guidelines in place, but they have not been formally aligned with the Department of Education…and we have had learners who have elected not to join the programme because they won't have a paper at the end of it", Participant A
There are time, staff, space, and funding constraints in the service delivery of the programme.	"…I read about the service in the UK…one job coach takes on only ten clients, and it's because it's so labour intensive. At our school, on average, one therapist treats about 100 learners in small groups…for one therapist to see only 10 clients…it's almost unfair to the rest.", Participant B
A number of learners have severe disabilities and socio-economic challenges.	"…a lot of placements require at least matric, or mobility, so I think there's not a lot of placements available for our type of learners who are physically and cognitively impaired.", Participant E "…The child might not afford accommodation and transport every time… so even when there is an employment opportunity, it's not necessarily close to home, or easily accessible for that learner.", Participant E

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study provided valuable insight regarding the effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School and how the effectiveness of the programme was measured by the occupational therapists who provided the services. The study revealed the facilitators and the barriers that influenced school-to-work transition. These barriers and facilitators aligned with the chosen theoretical framework, the Person, Environment and Occupation (PEO) model, which guided the study in terms of how the effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme could possibly be improved.

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The PEO model consists of personal, environmental, and occupational spheres that need to interact optimally to ensure enhanced occupational performance[33,34]. Effective school-to-work transition resulting in post-school employment opportunities was considered enhanced occupational performance for LWD in this study. The personal sphere included LWD's interests, values, beliefs and motor, sensory, cognitive, and social abilities[35]. The environmental sphere included the LWD's social and physical environment[34]. The occupational sphere included the necessary prevocational and vocational skills as well as a formal educational qualification needed to be employed[2]. The model guided the researchers' understanding in terms of identifying the barriers and facilitators in the three spheres of the school-to-work transition programme that influenced its effectiveness[34].

Personal barriers

According to the findings of the study individuals with LWD face certain personal barriers that hinder their employability. A number of the learners who were enrolled in the programme had severe disabilities that further decreased employment outcomes. Evidence supports that LWD who have either motor, sensory, cognitive or social disabilities, struggle to attain pre-vocational and vocational skills which limits their ability to effectively transition from school to work[2,5,18,34].

Environmental barriers

The participants in our study explained that there were limited employment opportunities in the OLM because of the poor economic status of South Africa. South Africa has a high overall unemployment rate which will inevitably affect the disabled population due to the narrowed employment market[7]. The participants further mentioned the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on South Africa's economy[36], which also decreased the employment opportunities for LWD. Aside from fewer opportunities, participants also expressed that COVID-19 safety regulations prevented LWD from entering workplaces for in-service training. LWD could not engage in the second, vocational-preparation phase of the programme[12]. Not being able to engage in in-service training ultimately affected the third phase of the programme, namely placement, as LWD had less full-time exposure and onsite learning in the workplace[12]. Additionally, LWD could not interact with potential employers and could not develop a positive employee-employer relationship. Lack of workplace exposure may also perpetuate discrimination and prejudice in the workplace, which are environmental barriers that limit employment opportunities for LWD[5,20].

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In South Africa, LWD with socio-economic challenges are also excluded from employment because they do not have access to transport and accommodation close to their place of employment[19-20]. Nel and van der Westuyzen[12] suggested that a government-driven transition service should be introduced to increase the employment rates and successful transitions of LWD. A government-driven transition service could ensure increased financial support for the services provided in the programme.[12] The participants acknowledged that time, staff, space, and funding constraints in the service delivery of the programme remained an environmental barrier that influenced school-to-work transition, which is consistent with the literature[19, 23]. In this study, participants expressed that limited funding and staff also limited their ability to meet all the transition needs of LWD. The XXXX School also has limited space to enrol learners in the programme and limited space at the school to offer vocational training opportunities. A government-driven transition service could further ensure a nationally recognised formal qualification, which is a real need for both prospective employees and employers.

Occupational barriers

Another finding in our study was the mention of SETA learnerships. Participants explained that employers required LWD to compensate for the lack of a formal qualification by completing a SETA learnership, which is an occupational barrier for LWD. Most employers require that prospective employees have a formal qualification such as a learnership certificate[37]. Unfortunately, SETA learnerships do not provide LWD with the necessary skills to enter the workplace. Furthermore, evidence indicates that learners' employability does not significantly improve after completing a learnership, as some learners were still actively seeking employment six months post-learnership completion[37].

Personal, environmental, and occupational facilitators

We identified several personal, environmental, and occupational facilitators that increased the value and effectiveness of the school-to-work transition programme. Where poor economic status of the country and socio-economic challenges of LWD was a barrier, occupational therapists involved in the programme had to be innovative to compensate for the lack of in-service training opportunities in the OLM, which usually forms part of phase two of the programme. This was seen as an occupational facilitator as the learners were given the opportunity in the school to acquire appropriate pre-vocational and vocational skills. If LWD are prepared with the appropriate skills and qualifications to work, school-to-work transition would be effective and this would result in better post-school employment options in the OLM[5, 14]. The study revealed that the resilience and

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innovation of the occupational therapists, led to the sustainability of the programme and optimal service delivery, which is consistent with the literature[33]. The programme at the XXXX School has been operating successfully for the past 20 years and similar programmes could be implemented at other LSEN schools, which reflects the value of the programme.

Other environmental facilitators included the various forms of physical and social support offered to LWD and the involvement of occupational therapists in the programme as skills trainers and job coaches. The XXXX School has the facilities, including disability access, assistive devices, and assistive technology to support LWD. The benefit of a multi-disciplinary team is that each team member can contribute their discipline specific knowledge to optimise the therapeutic outcomes for an individual with a disability. The involvement of occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, psychologists, educators, and social workers enhanced transition outcomes for LWD. Participants explained that a multi-disciplinary team offered a safe space, acceptance of mistakes, and ongoing individualized support for the learners to develop their work competency skills[38]. Occupational therapists fulfil the unique role of skills trainers and job coaches to prepare LWD with the necessary pre-vocational and vocational skills[2,34].

The assessment of the school-to-work transition program's effectiveness focused on the successful integration and eventual employment of individuals with LWD in the OLM[16]. However, participants also felt that LWD benefited in terms of personal growth and development. This personal growth was identified as a personal facilitator of enhanced occupational performance. LWD displayed improved confidence, self-esteem, self-identity, and well-being. The personal growth and development of the learners helped them to fulfil adult roles that enhanced their integration into their communities. The school-to-work programme thus helps a learner to enter into employment as well as community living[33]. At the XXXX School, learners started the programme from a young age which was another personal facilitator of effective school-to-work transition. Similar results were seen in the school-to-work transition programme for learners with emotional and behavioural disorders in the USA, which also incorporated early intervention similar to the "pre-vocational training" phase of the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School[12,23].

The PEO model indicates that many barriers limited occupational performance and that many facilitators enabled occupational performance[33] in the XXXX School. The PEO thus alluded to the fact that if the identified personal, environmental, and occupational barriers were reduced and the

facilitators were optimized, the occupational performance of the LWD in terms of effective school-to-work transition would inevitably improve[34].

Limitations

The scope of the study was restricted to exploring the experiences of the occupational therapists actively engaged in the program. Educators and other therapists were omitted from the study due to their lack of day-to-day involvement in the program. The interconnected perspectives among occupational therapists within the department, influenced by its size, led to a narrowing of the study's focus.

CONCLUSION

Using the PEO model, we explored occupational therapists' views of the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School. The school-to-work transition programme should be evaluated in a broader context and the effectiveness of the programme can be measured in a variety of ways. We identified barriers and facilitators of the programme, addressing the barriers while strengthening the facilitators may help to improve the programme. Our findings also provide valuable evidence for how the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School for LSEN can be translated to other schools in South Africa. Occupational therapists, as well as a multidisciplinary team, play a valuable role in school-to-work transition. Quantitative studies are needed to provide statistical evidence of the effectiveness of the programme. This would be beneficial to the school-to-work transition programme at the XXXX School as it will provide leverage to formalise the programme for national recognition. This will ensure that learners receive a certified qualification after completing the programme and allow the programme to be officially implemented at other LSEN schools.

Conflict of interest (COI) declaration

Authors declare that there are no opposing interests

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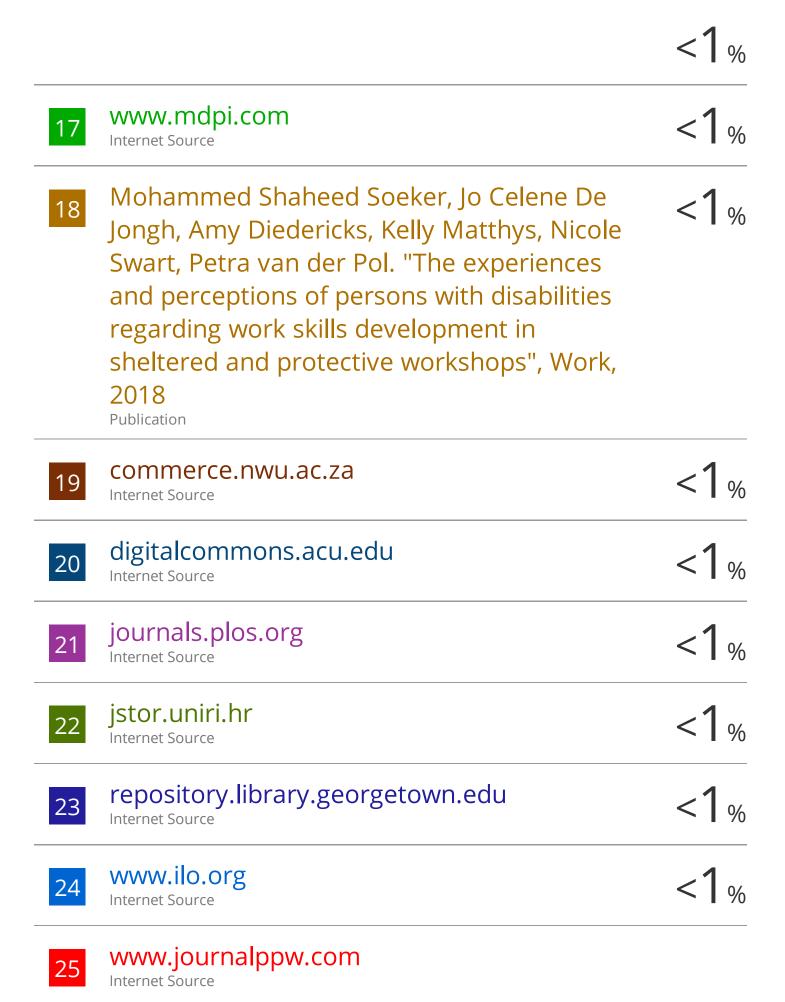
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School to work

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PAGE 2

Prep. You may be using the wrong preposition.

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Wrong Article You may have used the wrong article or pronoun. Proofread the sentence to make sure that the article or pronoun agrees with the word it describes.

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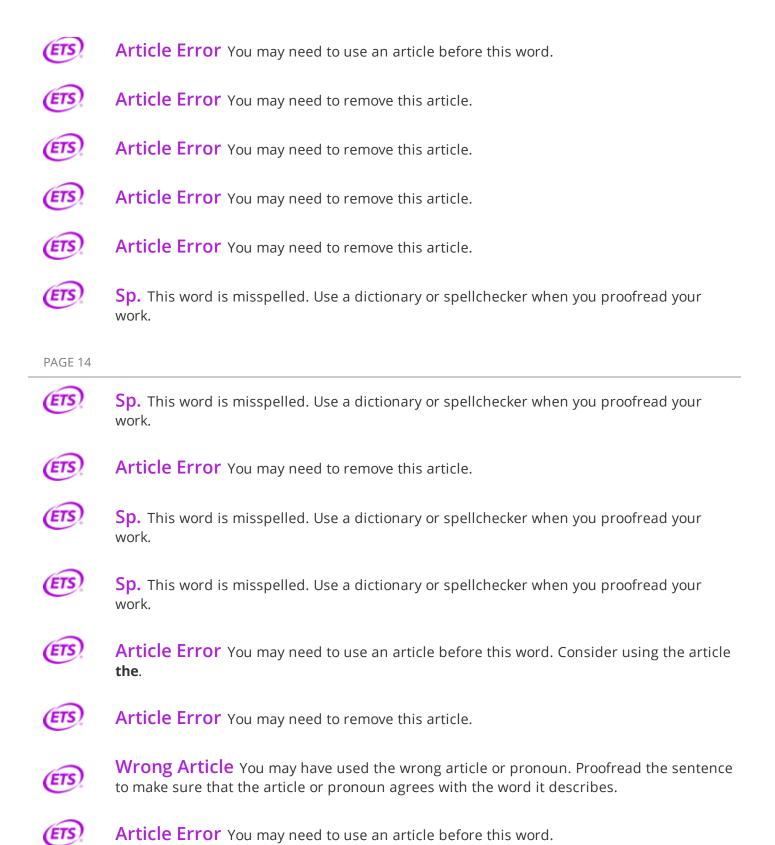**Article Error** You may need to remove this article.

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