Transition planning/coordinating interventions for youth with disabilities: a systematic review
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CRD summary
The authors concluded that the findings of this review supported the efficacy of student-focused planning and student development interventions in improved transition-related outcomes for youths with disabilities. The conclusion reflected the evidence presented, but should be interpreted with caution given the small sample sizes of the included studies.

Authors' objectives
To evaluate the effectiveness of transition planning/co-ordinating interventions on transition outcomes for secondary aged youths with disabilities.

Searching
ERIC, PsycINFO and MEDLINE were searched. Search terms were reported. A random sample of 104 of 520 issues dated 1990 to 1 January 2004 of 10 unspecified journals was handsearched.

Study selection
Studies of any intervention from 1984 to 2004 that were conducted in a secondary school environment and reported data on a sample of one or more types of youth with disabilities were eligible for inclusion in the review if they reported at least one outcome related to academic performance, a smooth transition from school to post-school environment or drop-out prevention.

Most studies were published in the 1990s. The average age of participants varied widely between studies (13.3 to 21.5 years, where reported). Most participants had learning or developmental disabilities. Most studies had a higher percentage of male than female participants. Types of interventions included student-focused planning, student development, collaborative service delivery and family involvement.

Outcomes included careers self-efficacy, wages, proficiency in work-related behaviours, job application skills, career decision making, perceptions of success in career development and employment, perceptions of success in transition and help-recruiting behaviours. Study designs included: multiple baseline across subjects; one-group pre-test/post-test; pre-test/post-test control group; post-test only control group; randomised matched pairs; single-participant designs; and qualitative studies.

The authors did not state how many reviewers were involved in the study selection process.

Assessment of study quality
Study quality was assessed using the adapted version of the Device Implementation Assessment Device (DIAD) version 1.0. DIAD was used to assess internal validity in terms of intervention, outcome measures, fairness of comparison and lack of contamination; and external validity in terms of ecological validity, important subgroup analyses, statistical reporting and testing of assumptions (where appropriate).

The authors did not state how many reviewers were involved in study quality assessment.

Data extraction
The authors did not state how many reviewers were involved in data extraction.

Methods of synthesis
Effect sizes from studies with the same type of intervention and study design were combined in a meta-analysis.
Qualitative studies were synthesised using qualitative meta synthesis.

**Results of the review**

Thirty-one studies met the inclusion criteria. Twelve quantitative studies were included in final meta-analyses and 14 studies in the qualitative analysis.

**Student-focused planning (three multigroup studies; 86 participants):** Student-focused planning interventions had a large statistically significant average effect size ($g=1.47; p<0.001$) with no evidence of statistically significant heterogeneity.

**Student development (three multigroup studies; 78 participants):** Student development interventions had a moderately large statistically significant average effect size ($g=0.67; p<0.005$) with no evidence of statistically significant heterogeneity.

**Student development (six one-group pre-test/post-test studies; 246 participants):** Student development interventions examined in one-group pre-test post test studies produced a large and statistically significant average effect size ($g=0.94, p<0.001$). However, there was evidence of statistically significant heterogeneity (value not provided). Removal of individual studies from the analysis did not reduce heterogeneity.

**Qualitative studies (14 studies):** Primary themes found were: "transition more of a promise than a reality; uneven transition expertise and low levels of parent/student involvement; influence of families and extended families on career choices and job acquisition; restrictive views held on post-school outcomes for youth with disabilities; lack of cognitive clarity and systematic instruction in the special education curricula; lack of respect and understanding by some teachers".

**Authors’ conclusions**

The findings of this review supported the efficacy of student-focused planning and student development interventions in improving transition-related outcomes for youths with disabilities.

**CRD commentary**

This review addressed a clear research question and was supported by adequate inclusion criteria. The search strategy was adequate, although there were no apparent attempts to locate unpublished material and relevant studies may have been missed. The authors did not state how many reviewers performed study selection or study quality assessment, which made it unclear whether these two processes were subject to reviewer error or bias. It was appropriate that studies were pooled according to intervention and study design.

The authors’ conclusion reflected the evidence presented, but the finding should be interpreted with caution given the small sample sizes of the included studies.

**Implications of the review for practice and research**

**Practice:** The authors did not state any implications for practice.

**Research:** The authors stated that larger studies of student-focused packages and comprehensive transition-planning and co-ordinating packages were needed to carefully assess moderator and mediator effects associated with these interventions. There was a need for well-designed randomised cluster randomised trials that clarified implementation processes and differential effects of these interventions coupled with qualitative studies that could document the lived experienced and transition outcomes for participants who worked with these comprehensive interventions. Researchers should build direct estimates of transition outcomes into their designs if at all possible.

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Record Status
This is a critical abstract of a systematic review that meets the criteria for inclusion on DARE. Each critical abstract contains a brief summary of the review methods, results and conclusions followed by a detailed critical assessment on the reliability of the review and the conclusions drawn.