



## Lived Experiences of Parents of Children with Intellectual Disability Undergoing Pre-Vocational Education

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**Abstract:** Children with intellectual disability have limitations in two areas – intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors. Intellectual function, most commonly known as intelligence quotient or IQ, is the person’s capability in learning, reasoning, decision-making and problem solving. Adaptive behaviors, on the other hand, are age-appropriate behaviors that a person needs to attain to function appropriately in everyday life. Because of these deficits that are manifested by the child, it now poses a concern to primary caregivers, notably the parent. It has thoroughly been studied that parents of children with intellectual disabilities experience chronic stress. There are different factors and degrees on the stress families experience in rearing their child with the said disability. The results are almost unanimous – that families, particularly parents do experience high levels of stress. Not only does it affect the parents, but it also the siblings of the child as well as the relationships of other family members. Pre-vocational education is a collection of skills that improve a student’s motor skills, thus improving a person’s manual skill and coordination. This phenomenological type of research study details the lived experiences of parents of children with intellectual disability undergoing pre-vocational education. The participants of this study were the parents of the students in the Special Education Department of an elementary school in the City of Imus in Cavite. They were identified through the utilization of purposive sampling, in which the participants were chosen based on the aptness of their experience for the research topic. The researchers interviewed the participants thoroughly, obtaining an informed consent from each of the participants. Colaizzi’s approach was utilized in analyzing the data obtained from the participants. After data analysis, the researchers were able to come up with four themes that were drawn out from the participants’ statements out of specific concepts and categories that emerged from the narratives of the participants. The four themes are: *Pre-vocational education: the child’s journey to independence*; *Catalyst: the child’s transformation*; *Knowledge: an ongoing process*; and *School: the parents’ partner to guide and shape the child’s development*.

**Key words:** Intellectual disability; parents; pre-vocational education; phenomenology; qualitative research.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Intellectual disability (ID), more formerly known as mental retardation, is a disability that dates back to the ancient Greek and Roman Era.

Many believed that children were born with intellectual disability because the gods were angered and the children’s disability was a result of their anger.



Intellectual Disability is a term that is used to describe children with a compromised adaptive functioning, deficit in functional life skills and a sub average intelligence which arises from the developmental period, which starts from conception up to 18 years old. Roughly 1 to 3 per cent of the population is affected by this disability. (Medline Plus by the US National Library of Medicine)

Children with intellectual disability have limitations in two areas – intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviors. Intellectual function, most commonly known as intelligence quotient or IQ, is the person's capability in learning, reasoning, decision-making and problem solving. Adaptive behaviors, on the other hand, are age-appropriate behaviors that a person needs to attain to function appropriately in everyday life. These include communicating and interacting effectively with other people, and taking care of one's self or self-help skills (Wehmyer and Obremski, 2010).

One of the major stresses of a family is the caregiving responsibility of the child which takes a toll on both parents and other family members. Concern and anxiety towards the child's future is also a factor (Gupta & Singhal, 2004). Questions like "How will my child live when I get old and cannot do much anymore?" or "How will my child support himself/herself when I pass away?" are a parent's and a primary giver's main concern.

That is why pre-vocational education and transition services should be provided to every child with disability. Pre-vocational education is a collection of skills that improve a student's motor skills, thus improving a person's manual skill and coordination. These, as well, are skills needed in preparation for the work place. It teaches the students to promote their survival skills. Students who perform pre-vocational activities will develop attitudes, outlook and social competences that are needed for them to be both functional in social and personal levels. Students develop a range of interpersonal and psychosocial skills which will help them make informed decisions, develop coping and self-management skills and effectively communicate with other people.

For children with intellectual disability, it is important that they learn pre-vocational education before reaching adulthood. Pre-vocational education prepares them for independence, as much as they are able to. It is a great accomplishment and joy on the part of the teacher/parent if the child is slowly learning how to do things on his/her own and it gives them a sense of security that the child will be able to live as independently as he or she can.

The researchers were encouraged to conduct this study to determine the lived experiences of parents of children with intellectual disability undergoing pre-vocational education through phenomenological design of research. The researchers were motivated to do this research because of their experiences in using pre-vocational activities as interventions or activities when performing demo teaching presentations. The researchers have also observed during their field study observations that special education teachers also include this in their students' individualized education plan and in their curriculum in general. The researchers were interested in determining whether these pre-vocational activities or tasks that were taught in school were applied by the students with intellectual disability and what their parents have experienced while the child is undergoing pre-vocational education.

### Intellectual Disability

Intellectual Disability is a type of disability. According to the World Health Organization's International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (WHO, 2001), the term 'disability' is an umbrella term for limitations in human functioning, wherein human functioning refers simply to all life activities in which a person would typically engage. Limitations in functioning are labelled a 'disability.' Disability can result from any problem in one or more of the three dimensions of human functioning which are the body structures and functions, personal activities and participation.

The common method of identifying the limitations in intellectual functioning is through the performance of intelligence tests, which produce an intelligence quotient or IQ score. The diagnosis of intellectual disability is based on individual IQ scores that fall approximately two standard deviations below the mean of the participating population (Luckasson et al., 2002).

However, the diagnosis of intellectual disability cannot be made just based upon an IQ score. The second element in diagnosis and classification involves limitations in adaptive behavior. Adaptive behavior is the collection of conceptual, social and practical skills that have been learned by people in order to function in their everyday lives (Luckasson, 2002). Adaptive behavior refers to one's ability to respond and cope with daily environmental demands.

Definitions of intellectual disability maintain a developmental perspective. It is considered a developmental disability because of its onset during the developmental period (before 18

years old) and can only be diagnosed if the limitations in human functioning manifest during the developmental period.

Drew et al. (1984) said that the main goal of the school personnel who teach students with intellectual disabilities is to help them attain the functional behaviors needed to assume adult roles and responsibilities when they transition from the school setting in to the community and eventually in the workplace. Drew et al. also mentioned that a student who is intellectually disabled faces more difficulties in the area of adaptive behavior than in the area of low intellectual functioning.

The LCCE (Life-Centered Career Education) Mild/Moderate Curriculum provides plenty of opportunities to develop adaptive behavior. The competencies/sub-competencies contained in three domains (personal-social, daily living, occupational guidance and preparation) are the thrust of all programs for students with intellectual disabilities. These competencies and sub-competencies may be included in the general education curriculum. First-hand observation shows that intellectually disabled adults have difficulty with daily functioning in these three domains. If the needs of these students were modified and catered to each of them early on and appropriate functional instruction using appropriate functional materials is provided, all stakeholders (student, teachers, parents, etc.) can better prepare them for having a successful transition from school to work and community living. The LCCE Mild/Moderate Curriculum competencies and sub-competencies emphasis is on providing hands-on, real-life learning activities and functional experiences rather than the academic approach.

Harrison & Boney (2002) says that adaptive skills deficits are needed in diagnosing and classifying intellectual disability. Research shows that individuals with disabilities do have important adaptive skills deficits.

Luckasson, et al., (1992), as cited by Li Mei-Ling (2001), stated that limitations in adaptive behavior are now included in the definition of intellectual disability, emphasizing on the context of the environment of the child.

Bradley & Baney (1994), also cited by Li Mei-Ling (2001), added that it is believed that organized training programs and support services will help these individuals adjust well. Support resources given fall into four categories: (1) individual: skills, competencies, the ability to make choices, money information, spiritual values; (2) other people: family, friends, co-workers, cohabitants, mentors; (3) technology: assistive devices, job/living accommodations, behavioral technology; (4) services:

habitation services that can be used when natural resources are not available. Programs for adolescents and young adults with disabilities should give emphasis on systematic instruction of specific community skills. Systematic methods that are part of intervention programs have been employed successfully in a wide variety of settings such as schools, community sites and human services agencies. These approaches were also used to develop diverse individual, social, educational and sexual skills. Some of these skills include community mobility such as commuting, domestic skills (e.g. cooking, housekeeping, laundry skills and home management); self-care skills e.g. grooming, dressing and self-medication; money management (e.g. coin recognition, making change and budgeting); telephone skills; leisure and social activities; vocational skills (e.g. job-seeking behaviors, work behaviors and specific work skills). Each of these categories is other skills that are considered important for functioning in the community and have been successfully taught to disabled young adults.

Skills that enable individuals to live in a safe and socially responsible manner are referred to as life skills (Reynolds, Zupanick and Dombeck, 2013).

Life skills are one of the primary deficits of children with intellectual disability apart from the intellectual deficit. Pre-vocational education is one of the interventions being applied to children with intellectual disability and includes life skills in the program. In the school where the researchers conducted the interview with the primary caregivers, life skills are being taught in pre-vocational education or program which include skills that children with intellectual disability like taking care of one's self (hygiene) and doing things for one's self (taking off and putting on clothing), apart from others.

Nietupski et al. (1992) conducted a study on the preferences of parents who have children with moderate and severe/profound disabilities. The parents of the children with moderate disabilities placed functional life skills over academic skills and social relationship while parents of children with severe/profound disabilities placed social relationship most highly. Since the children of the participants in this study are more on the mild to moderate intellectual disability, having an improvement on their child's life skills abilities is important to them.

### Pre-vocational Education

It is important that a child learns a set of hands-on exploratory experiences that will help them develop his work values and also be able to answer self-awareness questions. Examples of these hands-



on experiences include following directions, setting up materials and practicing safety in the workplace. These pre-vocational hands-on activities help the child how to identify tools, materials and processes, discover their physical properties, measure quantities and develop social skills (Phelps & Lutz, 1977).

However, many students with disabilities have not had a pre-vocational education as part of their program, according to Hardman et al. (1984). A Harris poll (1989) stated that less than half of students with disabilities have not received any job counselling during their high school and for those who did; according to their parents it was not effective.

Now that we are already in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, schools should develop pre-vocational education that is outcome-driven and that focuses on providing access to an environment that is conducive to teach and apply different skills. Pre-vocational education should cater to students' needs and abilities and must

focus on a bigger access to postsecondary education and/or preparation for real life, which includes work and employment.

In the United States, the Individuals Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004) mandates that pre-vocational training, should happen by the time a child turns 16 years of age to build a "bridge between the security and structure offered by the school and opportunities and risks of adult life" as defined by the Federal Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services. Transition services are included in the IDEA regulations which are a coordinated set of activities, within an outcome oriented process designed to facilitate the child's adjustment from school to adult living (Hansen, Dickey and Harris, 2012).

Meanwhile, in the Philippines, it is indicated in the Magna Carta for Disabled Persons (Title II, Chapter 1, Section 5) that no disabled person shall be denied access to opportunities for suitable employment. They should be subjected to the same terms and conditions of employment and the same compensation, privileges, benefits, fringe benefits, incentives or allowances as a qualified able-bodied person. That is why students with disabilities should be given an acceptable and integrated system of special education for disabled persons such as the intellectually disabled, among other forms of exceptionalities (Title II, Chapter 2, and Section 14). Among the programs included in the special education program is pre-vocational education (National Council on Disability Affairs, 1992).

In an article written by Josh Arnett (2014), at McPherson Middle School, special education students develop their work skills and job experience through a pre-vocational training program, which is part of their regular special education class. Students perform tasks such as shredding paper while keeping track of hours and calculating how much they would be paid for those tasks in the workplace. According to their school psychologist, Mary Jo Staab, these activities help students develop "soft skills" like work ethic and punctuality.

Another article by Shidani Yadav (2012) states that a proposal was made to be implemented in the Indian government schools for children with special needs. Nidhi, the Assistant Coordinator with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) Inclusive Education says that pre-vocational courses will help the students find their interests at an early stage and be able to further pursue them when they get out of school. There are four broad areas to be included in the program which includes arts and crafts, computer training, safety skills and health care, and paper bag making. There are more activities within these categories that will be identified based on the interest and response expressed by the students.

Phelps & Hanley-Maxwell (1997) as cited by Harvey (2001) stated that in the field of special education, the topic of transition or pre-vocational education from school to adult life for students with disability has dominated the field for over a decade. The theme in special education transition has been prominent on productive post-school outcomes, which are primarily concentrated in the area of employment. The interest in pre-vocation is multifaceted, but the most convincing reason is economic. Being functionally independent and employed is the "expected" post-school adult outcome. That is why it is important to have a successful transitional planning for students with disabilities at the secondary level. (Journal of Industrial Teacher Education, Spring 2001, Volume 38 No. 3)

Elamparo (1983) cited in a country report for intellectual disability that formal secondary education for the intellectually disabled is only available for those that can be mainstreamed. But for those that cannot be integrated, a program was introduced for formal vocational training of qualified adolescent intellectually disabled students as a training ground for employment and job placement. The program is geared towards preparing the intellectually disabled with in-demand skills for future employment.

However, a study done by Gomez (2012) stated that in the field of pre-vocational and vocational rehabilitation, there have only been micro-



advances in the Philippines. Pediatric rehabilitation centers and special schools have started offering pre-vocational and vocational programs. Other than this, there is little known about the current status of pre-vocational rehabilitation in the Philippines due to limited available publications, advocacies and general knowledge.

Thankfully though, in the Philippines, a project initiated by the Special Education Division, Bureau of Elementary Education, Department of Education with financial assistance from Christoffel Blindenmission entitled "Transition Program for Children with Mental Retardation in the Philippines", was mentioned during the 18<sup>th</sup> Asian Conference on Mental Retardation held at Taiwan last 2007. Spearheaded by Yolanda Quijano, Director III of the Bureau of Education, the program targets to develop career awareness and work skills through school-to-work transition among children with intellectual disabilities.

Quijano (2007) also mentioned about the pilot implementation of the program (second phase) which happened between 2006-2007 being done in 15 schools located in the different major islands of the Philippines – Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Results and the experiences of the service providers were documented and monitored to serve as a basis for the finalization of the model and its curriculum.

Quijano cited the Iriga City Division Integrated Special School, which has a strong transition/pre-vocational program for children with intellectual disabilities as well as hearing impaired children who are above 12 years of age. The school offers training in cooking and baking, tailoring, shoe repair and basic building wiring. As a result, the school built a baking center which supplies special *puto*, chocolate and banana cakes to nearby universities and other schools. The students also act as leaders to the other students who are just starting to be trained in the program. They are also trained to do the marketing for the ingredients, to record sales and supplies and determine their profits.

As a result, Quijano (2007) stated the program served its purpose of providing training to adolescents with intellectual disabilities on career awareness as well as job placement. Their experiences with the program encouraged the students to concentrate on learning work skills to have productive living. The activities offered by the program are also very suitable for the targeted clientele since age, ability and interests are considered. The teachers and the parents feel that these skills training activities for children their age are more significant than academic lessons.

In the context of this study, apart from the pre-vocational education which the children with intellectual disability have learned, functional academics were also learned by them. Functional academics is defined as studying made functional that teaches skills which allow each student to succeed in real-life situations at home, school, work and in the community (The Spastics Society of Tamilnadu, 2011). All four participants have children studying in Imus Pilot Elementary School in Imus, Cavite, which combines pre-vocational education and functional academics. In the context of this study, learning is the lessons that these children have received after studying in school.

## Parents

Mullins (1987) analyzed 60 books that were written by parents of children with different disabilities. He found out that there was a presence of emotional stress on the part of the parents, but they also felt that their lives had increased meaning and improvement upon having a child with disability.

A similar study by Hornby (1992) on fathers mentioned that not only stress and negative feelings are experienced and felt by parents but also strong, positive feelings as well as claims of personal growth. In addition, relatives that were studied less thoroughly by researchers, like the child's siblings and grandparents, showed positive views about their relative with disability.

The parents and the family's involvement in the student's pre-vocational role are very important in order to facilitate preparation for employment in the high school level. Schools alone cannot do this task so a coordination of the family, schools and adult service agencies should be done. (Mental Retardation: A Life Cycle Approach, 1984 by Clifford J. Drew, p. 282)

In a research done by Wade, Llewellyn and Matthews (2008), parents who have children with intellectual disabilities were given training interventions on behavioral interventions. There is reasonable evidence of the effectiveness of parent training but the researches have yet to determine the influence of immediate or distal factors on the outcomes.

Meanwhile, on a qualitative study done by Defur, Getzel and Todd-Allen (2001) about Virginian families' experiences in transition planning, results show that the quality of the relationship the family had with the service providers was the key factor that affected the family's involvement in the transition planning of their adolescent child with disabilities. A model was designed to show the



positive and negative cycle that happens on the interaction between the families and the professionals involved in transition planning.

Another study done by Landmark, Roberts and Zhang (2013) delved into beliefs and practices of teachers from local education agencies in Texas with different levels of parent involvement during the transition planning process. The major themes that came up were the parent involvement in the transition process, barriers for parent involvement and how parent involvement is promoted in the transition process. (Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, August 2013 vol. 36 no. 2)

Most parents are concerned about how their child would be able to achieve independence. With the help of pre-vocational education, skills for self-help and daily living can be achieved by these children and as their children develop and improve, the skills they are able to acquire will increase and improve as well, making them closer to achieving their independence (Government of South Australia, nod.).

As previously mentioned in the review of related literature, families, especially parents have been the primary caregivers of children with intellectual disability. As a result, parents experience emotional stress, but they also feel that their lives had increased meaning and improvement upon having a child with a disability (Mullins, 1987).

To support that, a study by Hornsby (1992) on fathers mentioned that not only stress and negative feelings are experienced and felt by parents but also strong, positive feelings as well as claims of personal growth.

Also, a qualitative study done by Defur, Getzel and Todd-Allen (2001) about Virginian families' experiences in transition planning, results show that the quality of the relationship the family had with the service providers was the key factor that affected the family's involvement in the transition planning of their adolescent child with disabilities. They designed a model that showed the positive and negative cycle that happens on the interaction between the families and the professionals involved in transition planning. (Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals, Spring 2001 vol. 24 no. 1)

#### A Priori Model

Intellectual disability is a type of disability that is used to describe children with a compromised adaptive functioning, functional life skills deficit and sub average intelligence which arises from the developmental period. Children who have this kind of

condition have limitations in two areas – intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior.

Because of these deficits manifested by the child, they now pose a concern to parents. One of the major stresses of a family is the caregiving responsibility of the child which takes a toll on parents and other family members. Concern and anxiety towards the child's future is also a factor.

That is why pre-vocational education and transition services should be provided to children with disability. These are a collection of skills that improve a student's motor skills, thus improving a person's manual skill and coordination. These are also skills needed in preparation for the workplace. The following review of related literature will further delve on intellectual disability, on parents and on pre-vocational education of a child with intellectual disability.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

This study aims to describe the lived experiences of parents of children with intellectual disability undergoing pre-vocational education

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study made use of the Colaizzi's approach to data analysis which is under the descriptive, phenomenological type of qualitative method. Descriptive phenomenology, in correspondence to phenomenology, was developed by Husserl (1962). He gave emphasis to describing the human experience. Descriptive phenomenologists are firm on a careful description of ordinary conscious experience of a person's everyday life. Colaizzi's approach necessitates the researchers to return the research findings to their participants to discuss it with them, thus validating their findings (Shosha, 2012).

Therefore, this study describes the lived experiences of parents of children with intellectual disability undergoing pre-vocational education after collecting data.

### Sampling Design

Purposive sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling method that entails the researchers to select participants based on a variety of criteria which may include knowledge of the issue of the research, or the willingness to participate in the research (Jupp, 2006).

The subjects who were able share information about the phenomenon under study are the parents of the children with intellectual disability. Sampling in this manner offers no external, objective method for measuring the distinctiveness of the selected subjects/respondents. There is no particular number of participants for this study, and the researchers only stopped looking for participants when data saturation was attained, in which no new information were obtained and there were redundancy of information or ideas from the participants.

## Results and Discussion

The first level of data analysis was the construction of concepts. Concepts were constructed by the researchers through thorough analysis of the statements of the participants. The first participant's statement was "*Katulad dati, hindi siya marunong magbasa. kasi doon sa pinanggalingan niyang school, hindi siya ano eh. kumbaga sa ano hindi siya in-entertain na parang turuan.*" The concept of the statement was "not given importance". The same goes with the second statement. "*Dito, natututukan siya..at binibigyang halaga di tulad sa regular na ano dun.. hindi nila binibigyan ng pansin. Tapos nga, ano..ayaw nilang tanggapin. Kaya nga pumunta kami rito.*"

The second level of data analysis was the construction of categories. After creating the concepts of the statements made by the participants, the researchers clustered the statements that fall under the same "category" and provided an appropriate term or word to describe the category. The participant's statements, as stated, have a concept of "not given importance". The researchers have coined the term "school acceptance" since both of the statements talk about how the child of the participant was treated and accepted in the school, which in this case was a negative treatment or acceptance of the child with intellectual disability in the school.

The third and final level of data analysis was the construction of themes. The creation of the different categories through careful analysis of the participant's statements led to the construction of themes. Using the above statements from the excerpt, the category "school acceptance" fell under Theme 4: "*School: the parents' partner to guide and shape the child's development.*"

Consequently, the researchers were able to come up with four (4) themes. The themes that came up after the data gathering utilized metaphors.

### THEME 1. Pre-vocational education: the child's journey to independence

*"Yung ayaw niyang kumilos, ako na lang lagi, susubuan ko pa siya pero ngayon, kumakain na siyang mag-isa. Minsan ayaw na niyang magpapasubo. Sinasabi niya, malaki na daw siya"* (He doesn't like to do things on his own before and needs me to do things for him, like getting food for him. He used to be spoonfed but now he can eat on his own. Now he is the one who says he's already old enough to do things on his own.).

Pre-vocational education is indeed a device that enables children, most especially the children with special needs, to learn things and tasks that will enable them to rely on their own selves.

Most of the data gathered from the participants fell under Theme 1. Pre-vocational education enables children with intellectual disability to rely on their own selves and be independent. One of their major deficits, apart from intellectual, is their impaired life skill abilities which require them to rely on other people, particularly on their primary caregivers or their parents, to do things for them. Pre-vocational education teaches them do things on their own as much as they are able.

#### Life Skills

*"Tapos ano... Marunong na siyang magligpit ng mga kalat, kunwari, yung mga stuff toys niya, naka-organize yan mula sa malaki hanggang sa maliit. Ganun siya, naka-organize yung mga gamit. Ok na.. anlaki ng natutunan niya dito. Sobrang ok."* (She knows how to fix her things. She organizes her stuff toys from the biggest to the smallest. That's what she does, her things are always organized. She has really learned a lot here).

Skills that enable individuals to live in a safe and socially responsible manner are defined as life skills (Reynolds, Zupanick and Dombeck, 2013). Life skills are one of the primary deficits of children with intellectual disability apart from the intellectual deficit. Pre-vocational education is one of the interventions being applied to children with intellectual disability and includes life skills in the program. In the school where the researchers conducted the interview with the parents, life skills are being taught in pre-vocational education or program which include skills that children with intellectual disability like taking care of one's self

(hygiene) and doing things for one's self (taking off and putting on clothing), apart from others.

Nietupski et al. (1992) conducted a study on the preferences of parents who have children with moderate and severe/profound disabilities. The parents of the children with moderate disabilities placed functional life skills over academic skills and social relationship while parents of children with severe/profound disabilities placed social relationship most highly. Since the children of the participants in this study are more on the mild to moderate intellectual disability, having an improvement on their child's life skills abilities is important to them.

#### *Pre-vocational Skills*

Pre-vocational skills are being defined as the skills that refine a client's motor skills. Students are trained to do activities like cooking, gardening, cleaning and the like. These skills develop an individual's manual dexterity and coordination. At the same time, pre-vocational skills should serve as a preparation for future work and should develop appropriate work attitudes.

*"Pagdating sa bahay marunong siyang magwalis. Ang bag niya, pagdating sa ano, ilalagay, alam na niya kung saan ilalagay. Kasi tinuturo dito eh. Pagdating 'sa bahay ina-apply niya yun."* (He knows how to clean the house, like sweeping the floor. He knows where to put his bag and in its proper place. These things are taught to him here at school and he is able to apply them at home).

In the context of the study, these pre-vocational skills are integrated with self-help skills in their curriculum. They are taught how to cook, wash and iron clothes, and be familiar with the concept of money by helping in the school canteen, among others. Self-help skills are also taught like tying shoelaces, teaching proper hygiene, among many others.

#### *Reliance*

Reliance is defined as the act of relying or being reliant to someone (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). In the case of children with intellectual disability, they often depend on their caregivers, most notably the children's parents, for majority of the things that they are unable to do.

*"Kasi pag sa bahay nagpapasuot siya ng medyas at tsaka sapatos. Dito, kusa siyang mag-isa then, pagka pumasok na siya sa gate, siya na lang kusa."* (He used to depend on us to put on his socks and shoes. When he started studying here, he learned how to do these things by himself).

Pre-vocational education is a tool in changing this interaction between the parents and

the children with intellectual disability. Instead, children learn how to do things on their own instead of depending on others.

Reliance of these children to others, particularly to their parents, stems from their experiences of rejection and lack of consistent social support. They rely heavily on others for feedback and guidance. They constantly seek recognition from other people, making it difficult for them to be more independent. Educational programs like pre-vocational education can enhance their personality development, develop their self-esteem, and eventually their confidence in one's self that can lead to being self-reliant. (Harris, 2010).

#### *Self-Reliance*

Self-reliance, on the other hand, is defined as being confident in your own abilities the ability to do things by themselves and not rely on other people ((Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.).

*"Yung parang naging independent na siya, yung kaya na niyang kumilos nang mag-isa, yung minsan, pag gusto na niyang kumain, kukuha na lang siya hindi tulad ng dati na magpakuha pa siya."* (He became more independent and can do things on his own. He used to ask people to get food for him but now he can do this for himself.)

*"Yung ayaw niyang kumilos, ako na lang lagi, susubuan ko pa siya pero ngayon, kumakain na siyang mag-isa. Minsan ayaw na niyang magpapasubo. Sinasabi niya, malaki na daw siya."* (He doesn't like to do things on his own before and needs me to do things for him, like getting food for him. He used to be spoonfed but now he can eat on his own. Now he is the one who says he's already old enough to do things on his own.)

The participants have seen and observed the changes in the child with intellectual disability. When before, these children needed their guidance and assistance in doing simple tasks like getting food, putting on clothes and the like, these children are able to do these things by themselves now due to pre-vocational education.

Project IDEAL in Action, a project of the Texas Council for Developmental Disabilities (2013) specified that independence and self-reliance should be the primary goals in all instructional strategies done to children with intellectual disability.

#### *Benefits of Pre-vocational Education*

Benefit is defined as a helpful result or effect (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). In this study, benefit of pre-vocational education is defined as the benefits that the participants and their children have acquired while they subject their children to pre-vocational education. There are many different



benefits of pre-vocational education. Majority of the participants' answers which are under the "benefits" category refer to the improvement of one's adaptive skills and self-help skills.

Theme 1 was constructed by grouping the categories "life skills", "pre-vocational skills", "reliance", "self-reliance", and "benefits of pre-vocational education". All of these categories fall under Theme 1 because all of them are related to pre-vocational education and to the child's independence. Life skills and pre-vocational skills are the skills the child learns while undergoing pre-vocational education. As a result, the child benefits from pre-vocational education. Reliance and self-reliance are qualities that the child has while undergoing pre-vocational education. At first he will be reliant to his/her parents for the things he/she needs, since children with intellectual disabilities rely on their parents to do things for them. After undergoing pre-vocational education and acquiring life skills and pre-vocational skills, they learn to be self-reliant.

## THEME 2. Catalyst: the child's transformation

### *Behavior*

Behavior is defined as the response of an individual, group, or species to its environment (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). It is what an individual manifests when he or she is under a particular environment.

*Pero nung napasok siya... kasi ipinasok namin yan ng Kinder... umiyak siya. Lalo na kapag ang teacher nagpalo sa desk. Kasi alam mo naman ang mga teacher diba pag maingay ang estudyante may stick.* ("When she was in Kinder, she was constantly crying. Especially when the teacher bangs the teacher's table with a stick").

*Hindi naman. Pag halimbawang kinontra mo lang siya, "Si Nanay kasi eh!" Gaganyan yan (She doesn't have tantrums. If ever I do not agree with what she's saying she'll just say "Nanay kasi eh!")*

As narrated by the participants in this study, children with intellectual disability have displayed different kinds of behavior under different situations. These behaviors may either be positive or negative, depending on what they have manifested on a particular situation.

Behavior, especially difficult behavior, is often exhibited by children with intellectual disability due to their inability to communicate effectively as well as their developmental deficiencies like controlling their impulsivity. Environment can also affect their behavior especially if structure and routine are either present or absent (Government of South Australia, n.d.).

### *Positive Changes in Behavior*

Behavior change can refer to any transformation or modification of human behavior (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). *Nagbabago yung pakikitungo niya sa ano..sa mga kapwa niya bata, yung hindi siya nagiging aloof. Kasi dati, ano siya eh, yung parang tahimik lang siya sa tabi. (He changed the way he way he interacts with other children. He used to be very reserved and quiet and quite aloof.)*

In the context of the study, these are the behaviors that the children manifested after undergoing pre-vocational education. Majority of the participants' responses that can be placed under this category have responses pertaining to how pre-vocational education has improved the development of their child, but with a changed attitude or behavior, apart from having a significant improvement of their adaptive skills.

Pre-vocational education will be able to develop attitudes and social competences needed to become functional at both a personal and social level. It develops a range of interpersonal and psychosocial skills that can help students make decisions, effectively communicate with others and eventually develop into individuals with a sense of responsibility, competence and well-being. Ministry of Education and Human Resources (n.d.)

### *Parents' Wishes for Their Child*

Wish is defined as to want (someone) to be in a particular state (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). *Wala naman.. gusto naman niya lahat. Gusto ko din wag lang yung mga delikado gaya nung sa plantsa. (She wants to do any pre-voc activity. I want her to learn it all to do independently, except for those chores or pre-voc that are quite dangerous like ironing clothes).*

In the context of this study, the participants (parents) of the child have said things that they wish their child would still be able to learn while having pre-vocational education in the current school their child is in.

Most parents are concerned about how their child would be able to achieve independence. With the help of pre-vocational education, skills for self-help and daily living can be achieved by these children and as they develop and improve, the skills they are able to acquire will increase and improve as well, making them closer to achieving their independence (Government of South Australia, n.d.).

Theme 2 was constructed by grouping the categories "behavior", "positive changes in behavior", and "parents' wishes for their child". All of these categories fall into Theme 2 because upon

undergoing pre-vocational education, certain behaviors by the child will eventually change. Behavior(s) are the mannerisms that the child already had before undergoing pre-vocational education. The positive changes in behavior are the mannerisms the child has acquired while undergoing pre-vocational education. It can be a development of a positive behavior or an elimination of a negative one. Parents' wishes for their children are traits and mannerisms that the parents still want their child to acquire while under pre-vocational education. As a result, these three categories serve as catalysts in transforming the child while under pre-vocational education.

### THEME 3. Knowledge: An Ongoing Process

#### Learning

Learning is defined as the activity or process of gaining knowledge or skill by studying, practicing, being taught, or experiencing something. (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). *Oo. Dati nga hindi marunong magbilang yan eh. Ngayon nakakabilang na, nakakasulat na. (She didn't know how to count before. Now, she's able to count numbers and she's also able to write.)*

*Eh dito kasi sa school nagluluto sila, tinuturuan ni teacher kung papaano mamalantsa, manahi..(They are able to learn how to cook here at school.. The teacher also teaches them how to iron and sew clothes.)*

In the context of this study, apart from the pre-vocational education which the children with intellectual disability have learned, they have also learned functional academics. Functional academics is defined as studying made functional that teaches skills which allow each student to succeed in real-life situations at home, school, work and in the community (The Spastics Society of Tamilnadu, 2011). All four participants have children studying in Imus Pilot Elementary School in Imus, Cavite, which combines pre-vocational education and functional academics. In the context of this study, learning refers to the lessons that these children have received after studying in school.

Theme 3 has only one category under it and it is "learning". This category fell on Theme 3 because learning happens when the child with intellectual disability undergoes pre-vocational education. He/She learns many skills that are added to his/her knowledge that can be applied in the child's future. This knowledge is an ongoing process since the child continually learns new things and new skills, until such time that the child can eventually apply these skills in the real world and

learns to be self-reliant and works as independently as he/she can.

### THEME 4. School: the parents' partner to guide and shape the child's development

#### School Acceptance

Acceptance is defined as the state of being accepted or acceptable (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). *Katulad dati, hindi siya marunong magbasa..kasi doon sa pinanggalingan niyang school, hindi siya ano eh.. kumbaga sa ano hindi siya ini-entertain na parang turuan. (On her previous school, she didn't learn how to read because the school doesn't pay attention or give importance to teach children like her.)*

*Dito, natututukan siya.at binibigyang halaga di tulad sa regular na ano dun.. hindi nila binibigyan ng pansin. Tapos nga, ano..ayaw nilang tanggapin. Kaya nga pumunta kami rito. (In this school, teachers teach her extensively, and she is appreciated and given value. On her previous regular school, she is not paid attention. Some schools didn't even accept her. That's the reason why we came here [to Imus Pilot].)*

In the context of this study, school acceptance is viewed as the way the school has accepted the child with intellectual disability. There were two kinds of responses given by the participants. One: that the previous school has rejected the child with intellectual disability because it cannot be mainstreamed in a regular class, or simply because it has no means of the kind of intervention the child needs. All of them have come to Imus Pilot Elementary School to enrol their children in the Special Education Department.

Thomas (1997) stated in his article on the British Journal of Special Education that mainstream school should assume and accept responsibility for all children. Empirical evidence shows that inclusive schools are beneficial to all children.

#### Teacher Acceptance

Acceptance, as previously said, is defined as the act of accepting something or someone (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). *May teacher na nakakaunawa, may teacher naman na wala lang. Ang paliwanag niya sa amin, ang mga estudyante niya matatalino. (There are teachers who understand her condition, but there are also teachers who seem to not care at all. One teacher's explanation to me was that all her students are "intelligent.")*

*Ang sinasabi na lang niya, "Ay naku, di pu-pwede, matatalino mga estudyante ko... at tsaka star*

*section ako, di ako nahawak ng ganyan..” Dapat ang teacher hindi ganun, diba? (She just said that “I’m not available. And besides, all my children are intelligent and are in the star section. I don’t handle children like your daughter.” Teachers aren’t supposed to be like that, right?)*

In this study, teacher acceptance is described as the way the teacher has accepted the child with intellectual disability in the class. The teachers did not accept the child with intellectual disability in the class because of his condition, whereas the teacher said that she is only teaching regular children and cannot accommodate the child.

A research by Avramidis & Norwich (2002) on teachers’ attitudes towards integration stated that while their analysis has yielded an evidence of positive towards attitudes, there is no evidence of an acceptance of total inclusion or what they call a ‘zero-reject’ approach when it comes to provision of special education.

#### *Years of Schooling*

*Hindi..mga.. kasi grade 4.. ano siya.. sabagay pahinto-hinto kasi siya eh. Grade 1 kasi siya..tatlong taon kasi siya sa grade 1 eh. Hindi siya makaalis-alis sa grade 1. ([She started here] when she was in Grade 4. She was in and out of school and she stayed in Grade 1 for three years.)*

*Hindi pa, ito lang talaga, ito lang, sa bahay lang ang experience niya, sa bahay ng mga kapatid niya This is his first time (in a school) because he has always been at home with his siblings.*

In this study, years of schooling is defined as the number of years the child has been in the school. It can either be the years of schooling in their previous school or in their present school. Some participants have children that just started this school year, while some of them have started 4-5 years ago.

In a study made by McIntyre et al. (2006) on the importance of transition to school for young children and their families, the results indicated that children with intellectual disability have less positive school experiences.

#### *Teacher’s Advice*

Advice is defined as giving a suggestion to someone about what should be done (Merriam-Webster Online, n.d.). *Oo, sabi din kasi ng teacher niya wag na lang pilitin kung ayaw. Inaantay ko lang siya na siya na mismong magkusa. (The teacher also advised us not to force him if he doesn’t want to do the tasks. We should just wait for him to start doing the task on his own.)*

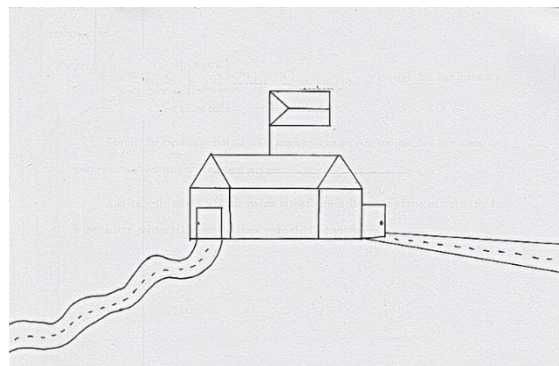
In this study, teachers’ advice is defined as the advice that the teacher gives to parents for the welfare of the child with intellectual disability. The advice is predominantly about how to care or perform the intervention to the child.

In a research conducted by Wade, Llewellyn and Matthews (2008), parents who have children with intellectual disabilities were given training interventions which are behavioral interventions. There is reasonable evidence of the effectiveness of parent training but the researches have yet to determine the influence of immediate or distal factors on the outcomes.

Theme 4 was constructed by grouping the categories “school acceptance”, “teacher acceptance”, “years of schooling” and “teacher’s advice”. All of these categories fall into Theme 4 because they are related to the school as the parents’ partner in guiding and shaping the child’s development. School and teacher acceptance, as well as the years of schooling affect the child with intellectual disability especially if the child is “rejected” or not accepted by both the teacher and the school, hence making the parents and the child switch from one school to another. The teacher’s advice to the parents also fall under this theme because these suggestions to the parents can help the child with intellectual disability further improve with his/her development. The school, as a whole, is a big factor in the development of the child with intellectual disability.

#### Synthesis of the themes

At the end of the data analysis, the researchers were able to come up with four themes. These themes were combined and identified two roads with a school in the middle as a model that symbolizes all the themes. The researchers call this symbol as “THE ROADS LEADING TO DEVELOPMENT”.





The researchers created the term “The Roads Leading to Development” because there are essentially two scenarios when a child with intellectual disability is placed under pre-vocational education. First is the journey from the first road which is the curvy road, then going to the school, and eventually going through the path of the straight road. Just like the first theme, pre-vocational education is a part of an intellectually disabled child’s life that helps him/her achieve his/her independence, or at least as much as he/she is able to.

Second, the catalyst in the child’s transformation is the changes that happen to the child while undergoing pre-vocational education. Prior to undergoing this type of program, the intellectually disabled child essentially has different behaviors, which can either be positive or negative. While undergoing pre-vocational education, these behaviors may improve which leads to a positive change in behavior. This is evident in the figure wherein there are two types of roads, one which is curvy and one which is straight. The curvy road symbolizes the prior behavior of the child before undergoing pre-vocational education. The straight road symbolizes the positive changes in the behavior of the child.

Third, the knowledge that the child acquires is an ongoing process. Just like roads, the journey through learning is an ongoing process. Lastly, the school, which is evident in the figure as the building between the two roads, is the parents’ partner in guiding and shaping the child’s development.

## Conclusion

From the study undertaken, the researchers have arrived at the conclusion that pre-vocational education enables children with intellectual disability to rely on their own selves and be independent. It is the child’s journey to independence. It teaches the children with intellectual disability not to rely on their parents or other people for the things they need, and instead do them as independently as they can.

Also, pre-vocational education is a catalyst for the behavioral change of children with intellectual disability. Apart from the skills acquired, pre-vocational education also manages to transform the children’s behaviors into a more positive and appropriate manner. Pre-vocational education also provides children with intellectual disabilities with knowledge that is essential for them to utilize the skills necessary for real life. It is an ongoing process that the child undergoes while having pre-vocational

education. The knowledge that they have acquired in pre-vocational education will be very much helpful once these children grow up and be exposed to the real world. Lastly, the school is an integral part of the pre-vocational education of a child with intellectual disability because it serves as a foundation to guide and shape the child’s future. It is the parents’ partner in guiding and shaping the child’s development. A school that can provide pre-vocational education to these children can be the best foundation that these children can have.

The researchers therefore conclude that pre-vocational education has had a significant impact on children with intellectual disability. It has given the parents and the children significant knowledge, and it has changed the children with intellectual disability for the better in terms of their adaptive capabilities and behavior.

## Recommendation

The researchers would like to recommend the following:

The participants of the study should let their children avail of the pre-vocational education services of Imus Pilot Elementary School as they help their child to improve more. They should also continue to apply the things that the children have learned in school to the home.

The SDCA Special Education majors should research and study more about pre-vocational education so that they will be able to teach more pre-vocational skills to their students in the future.

Special Education teachers should research and study more about pre-vocational education as well as apply this to their curriculum, as pre-vocational classes are very limited and only in selected schools. An increase in the number of schools that will offer pre-vocational education to children with special needs, most especially those with intellectual disability will benefit from this type of program in the curriculum.

Future researchers will utilize this study to develop and delve more into this area of special education to further improve the research findings.

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