

# Collaboration between Lecturers and Industry in Implementing Career Transition Programs for Students with Abilities

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## Abstract

Students with abilities often face challenges in finding employment after graduation. The collaborative network between community college lecturers and the industry is crucial in providing exposure to successful transitions for these students. As implementers, lecturers are crucial in understanding the career transition process, guiding, and effectively implementing career transition programs. This understanding is crucial for their cooperation with the industry to gain insights and perspectives on the career transition process of students with abilities. While this collaboration can be challenging, lecturers must devise strategies to ensure the industry's expectations and requirements align with the career transition program. Overcoming the challenges related to the transition program is crucial for reaching a consensus between the two parties. The purpose of the study is to explore the implementation of lecturers in carrying out collaboration with industry for career transition programs. A qualitative method was used through a case study of six Northern Community College lecturers. The interview protocol instrument and results were analyzed using Atlas Ti to obtain themes. The two resulting themes are i) Collaboration with the industry and ii) Employer Attitudes. The findings show that Community College lecturers take the initiative by establishing collaboration with the industry, but problems arise during implementation. Therefore, Community College lecturers need to increase collaboration with the industry to deal with issues and challenges encountered during the successful transition program. The implications of this study can be significant for lecturers in organizing strategies and discussing the needs of the industry in accepting students with special needs to achieve the goals of the career transition program and ensure the marketability of students with special needs. This aligns with SDG 4, which is equal education for people with special needs.

**Keywords:** Collaboration between Lecturers, Lecturers and Industry, Career Transition Management, Students with Special Needs

## Introduction

The career transition program provides early exposure to the real world of work and the needs of the industry when they finish school. The transition to the career of students with ability needs is a development process that provides training and skills to shape students with special

needs so that they are ready to enter the real world of work (Ookeditse & Mukhopadhyay, 2021). Implementing an effective career transition program for students with special needs requires close cooperation between lecturers and industry regarding curriculum implementation, employer acceptance, and the skills needed to increase the chances of students with special needs getting a job (Shaffeei et al., 2020). In line with the sustainable development goal (SDG4) the main component is to acquire fair and quality knowledge and skills in the learning environment to increase the marketability of students with special needs (Khushik & Diemer, 2020). Various initiatives from community college lecturers are being used to collaborate with the industry in the implementation of career transition programs to ensure that students with abilities needs meet the needs of the industry and can increase the marketability of students with special needs. Cooperation between agencies in career transition can improve marketability results when students finish school (Pacheco et al., 2022).

Collaboration with various agencies is critical in making the career transition program successful. In addition, the collaboration of various agencies is considered effective in achieving career transition goals because it combines various needs to get comprehensive learning to improve the quality of the transition program (Maebara, 2022). Cooperation with agencies actively between schools can positively influence drafting and exchanging opinions about curriculum and industry needs in preparing students with special needs for career transition (Mohd et al., 2019). The collaboration created is a role, responsibility, communication strategy, and collaborative steps to achieve the goal of career transition for students with better and better quality (Hussein, 2021). However, there are challenges in the implementation of collaboration with the industry. Some employers give a negative perspective to students with special needs. Employers say they cannot accept students with special needs because these students cannot carry out a task assigned to them (McKinney & Swartz, 2021). Meanwhile, some employers initially welcome collaboration between schools and accept students with special needs for career transition. However, when employers accept students and see they cannot adapt, they reject them due to communication problems and inappropriate student behavior (Ineland et al., 2021).

Concerning that, lecturers play a role in helping employers understand the behavior of students with special needs. Continuous communication and collaboration help make the career transition program successful so that both parties understand each other's tasks and needs. This study explores lecturers' implementation in collaborating with industry for career transition programs.

### **Literature Review**

The challenge for students with the abilities to get a job is very difficult upon graduation. According to the Ministry of Higher Education Graduate Verification Study report (2021), only 59% of OKU graduates get jobs, and the remaining 41% are still looking for suitable jobs. Therefore, the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) has implemented the Career Transition Program (PTK) to prepare students with special needs to work upon graduation. The approach and way of implementing career transition play an essential role in planning career transition for students with abilities. Suppose the implementation of clear strategies and methods is carried out during the transition to a career. In that case, it will facilitate the direction of

students with special needs to place themselves in the world of work, but the implementation of strategies and methods is still low (Tahar, 2021).

Accordingly, lecturers' knowledge in establishing collaboration with industry needs to be emphasized. Multi-industry collaboration is considered effective in achieving career transition goals because it combines various needs to get comprehensive learning to improve the quality of the transition program (Maebara, 2022). Active cooperation between schools and the industry can positively influence drafting and exchanging opinions about curriculum and industry needs in preparing students with special needs for career transition (Zainal & Hashim, 2019). Therefore, the role of collaboration is not limited to cooperation but also to achieving the goal of marketability for students with abilities through career transition programs (Eseadi, 2023). Each party plays a role in ensuring that the implementation of the transition program can achieve the set objectives.

### Research Methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach as a case study to explore the implementation of lecturers in collaborating with industry for career transition programs. A semi-structured Interview was used as a research instrument.

#### Study Sample

The selection of informants to conduct an in-depth exploration of a phenomenon, non-probability sampling (*nonprobability sampling*), involves selecting a sample from an identified population based on predetermined criteria (Creswell, J.W., 2021). Apart from that, non-probability sampling is a technique where the sample is not randomly chosen (Ghazali et al., 2021). A study sample selected based on the experience of managing students with special needs and being involved in implementing a career transition program can provide information that coincides with this program. A total of 6 lecturers teach in pastry and food quality manufacturing and have experience managing the career transition of students with abilities. The following is the lecturer's background regarding age, education level, teaching experience, and experience handling students with special needs—description as in Table 1.

Table 1

*Informants' Background in Terms of Age, Level of Education, Teaching Experience, and Experience Handling Students with Special Needs*

Respondent	Age	Academic Qualification	Teaching Experience	Experience in handling Student with disabilities
Amira	49	Degree	20 years	15 years
Suhaila	43	Master's	15 years	9 years
Katty	44	Degree	19 years	3 years
Siti	47	Master's	20 years	8 years
Rosli	43	Degree	12 years	8 years
Ayu	30	Degree	3 years	1 years

Three community Colleges in the northern zone were selected as study locations. The study aims to explore the implementation of career transition by establishing collaboration with industry for career transition programs. The study site selection should be based on enrichment factors and appropriateness according to the research question (Busetto et al., 2020).

### Findings and Discussion

As a result of the data analysis, several themes emerged to answer the research questions. The study's results found that the career transition implementation establishing collaboration with industry for the career transition program was implemented through i) Collaboration with Industry and ii) employer Attitudes.

#### *Theme 1: Collaboration with Industry*

The findings show that the three community colleges collaborate with the industry. Collaboration with industry is necessary to give students with special needs exposure and a preliminary overview of the world of work. Lecturers play a role in finding industries that can cooperate in career transition.

*"Like this Mickey Pink Chef company, we have a collaboration where the owner of the bakery shop himself has a disability, and he opens up opportunities for disabled students who want to undergo a transition program and also work. If the students are competent, they will be absorbed to continue working"*

*(Suhaila, .15 years of work experience)*

*"Our latest development is a micro-credential where these students can make a career transition starting from semester 1 to semester 4 periodically, and there are several industries that will collaborate with us that will start in the next semester is Tcer Bun which this bakery shop will accept competent students twice a week for career transition."*

*(Rosli,12 years of work experience)*

The informant from Kenanga Community College also explained the same thing, namely:

*"We have collaborated with a biscuit factory in Bertam Augy Global Marketing. We collaborate in terms of making biscuits. However, this involvement involves not only special students but also normal students. Season time"*

*(Amira.20 years of work experience).*

The study's findings show an excellent collaborative relationship between lecturers and industry. Analysis of the interviews found that lecturers collaborate with several industries to help students gain skills and open the minds of students who need to work when they finish school. Lecturers know about implementing transition programs by establishing collaborations with several industries that can provide work opportunities for students with special needs. According to the study by Magee & Plotner (2022), a good relationship between the industry and teachers can organize strategies and improve skills while undergoing a career transition program. This study parallels Schutz et al (2021), believes that with collaboration, the understanding and skills of students with special needs increase. Employers can

understand the behavior of students with special needs more deeply by exchanging opinions with teachers.

### *Theme 2: Employer Attitudes*

Acceptance of the industry in accepting students with special needs is considered to be still at a moderate level. The findings say:

*The acceptance of students into the industry is shallow compared to abroad. Accepting special working students is quite encouraging, so it is pretty tricky for us at the college to find a transition place because most industries do not want to accept for various reasons except for the industry we are always in contact with and collaborate with."*

*(Katty, 19 years of work experience)*

This statement is also supported by Ayu and Siti, who explain:

*"Some employers like to look down on the abilities of students with special needs. In addition, some employers complain about behavior and difficulty hearing instructions. What I do is I meet and discuss with the employer in a good way to solve the problem"*

*(Ayu, 3 years of work experience)*

*"In terms of industry, these people are sometimes seen taking the opportunity to get tax relief by hiring these oku workers, but they are not treated commensurately with what they claim from the company."*

*(Siti, 20 years work experience)*

The findings found that the problem of industry acceptance consists of several factors, such as employers not knowing how to handle particular student behavior, dilemmas between staff and students, and some employers taking advantage when hiring students who need to work. This will cause various problems for the two parties. Apart from that, employers cannot accept the weaknesses of students with special needs (Castruita Rios et al., 2023). Some employers at the initial stage accept but ultimately reject because they can understand the behavior and needs of students with abilities. In addition, some employers say they cannot accept students with abilities because they are incapable of carrying out a task and have communication problems (Brittany Bales, 2022). This finding aligns with (Awsumb et al., 2020), who also stated that the main obstacle for students with special needs is not understanding the instructions and being unable to adapt to the environment while working. Therefore, industry support and Community College lecturers play a role in career transition management. Community College lecturers are responsible for providing information related to the needs of exceptional students, giving briefings on the lack of special students in terms of behavior, and so on. On behalf of the industry, collaboration in terms of providing training places and briefings or skills required in the industry regarding work procedures and safety during the workplace. With collaboration between the two parties, career transition management can be better implemented.

### **Conclusion**

Collaboration is one of the elements that plays a significant role in implementing the career transition program for students with special needs. Lecturers cooperate well with the industry. Even so, some obstacles exist to integrating collaboration with industry in the career

transition program for students with abilities. There is a gap between employers; some employers can accept students with special needs, and some employers cannot accept students with special needs. In this context, lecturers need to play a role by giving exposure to the industry related to behavior and unique needs in handling students with abilities when in the industry. Good cooperation between both parties can help implement the career transition of students in need more effectively. A successful career transition program requires the continuity of the two main drivers between the Community College and industry. Therefore, the findings of this study can help Community College lecturers organize strategies to establish cooperation more collaboration and able to solve challenges related to industry acceptance to improve collaborative efforts as well as the marketability of students in need after finishing school

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