

## **Outcome measures of successful adjustment to adult living for people with disabilities**

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### **EXPECTATIONS!!**

- It is generally expected that children will develop and grow to become fulfilled and well adjusted youths who will meet and manage the challenges of adult life.
- Parents have visions of their daughters and sons becoming accomplished in vocations that will make them financially independent. They think of their children making families and integrating into the society as good corporate citizens.

### **EDUCATION**

- In school, educators talk about educating the “whole child” for responsible adult living.
- A sound education will prepare students using a holistic approach that is like a pie cut into three equal pieces, each piece represents a student’s:
  - (1) intellectual,
  - (2) social and
  - (3) personal dimension.
- The holistic approach fosters a linking of the three dimensions and the importance of paying attention to the likely changes that day to day events may demand (Barker, Basile & Olson, 2005).

### **ADJUSTMENT**

- The ability to cope with life and the interacting personal, social and environmental elements that people encounter, speak to their level of adjustment.

- People who are well-adjusted have been found to be more self-fulfilled, socially competent and well integrated into their communities.
- In contrast, those who are less well-adjusted seem to encounter problems that negatively impact on the quality of their lives.

### **ISSUES OF OUTCOME MEASURES AND ADJUSTMENT**

- There are many factors that contribute to successful adjustment in adult life:
- Successful people know what they want, and persistently go after it.
- They set major goals and set timelines for attaining goals
- They develop specific plans to attain their goals, and determine the benefits that reaching their goals will bring.
- They stave off discouraging influences and thoughts and build coalitions with others who share similar goals and who will engage them in mutual exploits (Sands & Wehmeyer, 1996).
- It is suggested that successful people in any field, excel at making decisions, self-manage their behaviours, and adapt to changing circumstances (Noddings, 2002).

### **PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

- The same success behaviours apply to people with disabilities.
- Well-adjusted adults with disabilities are self-fulfilled, socially competent and relatively well integrated into society.
- Adults with disabilities who are less well adjusted, encounter problems that negatively impact on their lives.
- Post-school outcomes have been useful indicators of adult adjustment.

### **POST-SCHOOL OUTCOME MEASURES**

#### **Post-school Outcomes:**

- Are of concern to parents, educators, programme planners and policy makers. It is a desire that all students become equipped to be active citizens in their communities.
- Are measurable indicators of people's level of adjustment in adulthood.
- Are normally considered a reflection of the quality of educational training received by people with disabilities during the formative period of schooling.
- Are usually examined in follow-up studies that track graduates and "school leavers" with disabilities to determine their levels of post-school adjustment.
- Are usually examined in terms of employment status, living arrangements, post-secondary educational access and social and community integration.

## **FOLLOW-UP STUDIES ON POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES**

Many countries examine adult outcomes to determine success:

- United States - (Hazazi, Gordon & Rowe, 1985; Edgar, 1987; Benz, Yavanoff & Doran, 1997; Sitlington, 2000; Wehmeyer, Palmer, Agran, Mithaug & Martin, 2000)
- England - (Robinson, 1993)
- Canada - (McConnell, 1999)
- The Netherlands - (Kieff, 2002)

**Results indicate the value of training and preparation for successful adult adjustment!!**

## **PREPARATION AND OUTCOMES IN JAMAICA FOR STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES**

Exposure to educational opportunities to maximize academic and vocational potentials is provided by schools for:

- students who are deaf and hard of hearing
- students with visual impairments
- students with mental retardation
- Students with specific learning disabilities and
- Students with physical disabilities

## **GREEN PAPER**

The 1999 Green Paper of the Ministry of Education Youth and Culture, emphasized the importance of the provision of a wide array of skills and competencies that are necessary for integration into the marketplace. The paper further highlighted the case of students of higher education, whose training must be more than the traditional subject content curriculum.

## **POST-SCHOOL OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

- Research in outcome measures is near non-existent in Jamaica and by extension in the Caribbean Region.
- In 2002, a study of graduates and school leavers with blindness and visual impairment focused on issues of post-school outcomes.
- The results were expected to provide support for advocacy, programme planning, and inform policy for maximizing potentials.

## **INSTRUMENT**

- A three-part questionnaire was designed and refined through professional consultations.
- Content validity was established through the developmental process. Reliability of item consistency to the total instrument yielded a score of .86

### **Questionnaire designed to provide data on:**

- education and transition training
- attributions for success
- self-determination
- employment success

### **Demographics and Background Information of respondents:**

- They graduated from the school for the blind – the residential educational facility for learners with visual impairment/blindness
- They graduated from regular secondary schools
- They graduated during the period 1980 to 2002
- The number was 44 adults (initial number was 50)
- The ages ranged from 19 years – 51 years
- The number represented 28 males & 16 females
- The largest age group was the 31 – 40 years, age range
- The number represented 33 blind and 11 low vision/visually impaired
- Most lived in the parish of St. Catherine (23) a neighbouring parish to the Capital City, Kingston

### **Demographics and Background Information of respondents:...**

- The largest civil status group represented was single – 31
- Living situation had wide variations with large numbers living with parents and extended family. Several indicated combinations of 2 or more types of living situation, e.g. – with significant other and parents or children and siblings.
- 100% completed elementary education
- 93% completed secondary education
- 38% completed tertiary education
- 67% were still in school pursuing tertiary education-including 8 in Masters programme and 2 in doctoral programmes.

## **The Investigation**

### **The study sought to find:**

- The relationship between the respondents' background characteristics and their educational training, transitional training, self-determination and attribution for

success.

- The relationship between the respondents' educational and transitional training, self-determination, perceived attributions for success and their employment success.
- The best predictor of the respondents' employment success

**The results indicated:**

- **Significance** of background variables (such as, who lived with others or lived alone, age (group 31 – 40), being single, low vision/blind, tertiary education, income level – at or above the minimum wage), education and transition training and self-determination on success.
- Respondents who lived alone showed more attributions for social success.
- Respondents who lived alone indicated more transition skills.
- Education and training was indicated as different for the 31-40 age group.
- Those who were single showed more self-determination.
- The majority of respondents were employed to the workforce, earned income that allowed them to live a quality of life that on average placed them in the middle working class socioeconomic class structure of the country.
- A general conclusion can be made that post-school outcomes for successful adjustment measured by employment success may be influenced by background characteristics and the study variables.
- There were significant correlations with training and self-determination.

**Research has shown that a functional relationship exists with transition training, educational training and self-determination for people with disabilities.**

- Attribution for success factors (such as self-advocacy, self-esteem, communication skills, etc.) showed significant correlations among themselves and with educational training...
- The employment status/success factor showed significant correlations with self-determination. Several of the respondents who perceived themselves as successful, attributed this success to educational achievement, being employed, experiencing insignificant problems on the job, feeling a sense of satisfaction with the job, having good social interactions and the feeling of well-being that came as a result of their economic empowerment.
- Of all the study variables, the results showed that only self-determination was a significant predictor of employment success.

**According to the findings the higher the respondents' ratings on their self-determination, the greater were their employment successes measured by income level, job satisfaction and problems on the job**

## IMPLICATIONS OF OUTCOMES FOR SUCCESSFUL ADULT ADJUSTMENT

- It is important for educational aspects such as transition training, attributions for success and self-determination concepts to be incorporated in programme development and curriculum structure for people with disabilities, to maximize their potentials and increase the likelihood of success.
- Training and preparation specifically addressing adult living for people with visual impairments, are important and necessary for success in the workplace and successful adjustment in adulthood.

**Outcome measures for successful adjustment to adult living for people with disabilities, is an important area of focus to fully prepare young people for successful and productive lives. Realistically, focus should be on the development of a wide array of skills and competencies and on the acquisition of skills that can be applied. In addition, work-based activities should make it possible for young people with disabilities to learn skills in authentic, real-world settings, while familiarizing them with the demands and rigors of the work world.**

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