

## Implementation of Career Development Programs For Children With Special Needs

Premeilani<sup>a,1\*</sup>, Suharyanto H. Soro<sup>b,2</sup>

<sup>a,b</sup> Universitas Islam Nusantara, Bandung, Indonesia

<sup>1,2</sup>, [premeilani@uninus.ac.id](mailto:premeilani@uninus.ac.id), [suharyantosoro@gmail.com](mailto:suharyantosoro@gmail.com)

\*Correspondent Author Premeilani

*Received: 09-03-2025*

*Revised: 23-04-2025*

*Accepted: 26-06-2025*

### KEYWORDS

Career development,  
Career planning,  
Children with special  
needs,  
Inclusive education,  
Vocational training.

### ABSTRACT

Career development represents a critical paradigm in conceptualizing the future trajectories of children with special needs. Consequently, these individuals require targeted, equitable, and specialized educational services to actualize their latent potential. Career development programs serve as a concrete pedagogical manifestation designed to equip students with pragmatic abilities, vocational competencies, and psychosocial readiness. This research aims to describe, analyze, and discover the specific models of career development program implementation for children with special needs at SLB BC YPLAB Cibaduyut and SLB BC YPLAB Banjaran. Anchored in a qualitative constructivist paradigm utilizing a case study approach, the research involved vocational educators, Special Job Exchange (Bursa Kerja Khusus/BKK) coordinators, and students with hearing impairments as primary respondents. Data were systematically gathered through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation matrices. The findings reveal that the career program is actualized through four main dimensions: (1) The provision of structured services encompassing orientation, vocational information, and strategic placement; (2) The deployment of adaptive pedagogical methods including direct demonstration, step-by-step instruction, project-based assignments, and continuous training; (3) The management of complex cognitive and communicative barriers through individualized mentoring; and (4) The facilitation of real-world exposure through internships and parental collaboration. Ultimately, the successful implementation of career programs for children with special needs necessitates a holistic synthesis of environmental conditioning, familial support systems, specialized learning experiences, and adaptive coping mechanisms for vocational tasks.

### Introduction

Education constitutes an unalienable fundamental right and a crucial element for human development, obligated to be accessible to every citizen regardless of their physical, cognitive, or socioeconomic standing. Education is systematically realized through continuous learning processes aimed at acquiring knowledge, mastering specialized skills, and providing an inclusive environment for individuals to cultivate their inherent potential. This universal

right to education extends unconditionally to children with special needs, moving beyond traditional normative boundaries to embrace neurodiversity and physical variance. In the Indonesian context, this is legally enshrined in the National Education System Law No. 20 of 2003, Article 32, paragraph 1, which explicitly states that special education is designated for learners who experience significant difficulties in following standard educational processes due to physical, emotional, mental, or social anomalies, or those possessing exceptional intelligence and distinct talents. This legislative mandate confirms that children with special needs are constitutionally guaranteed equal opportunities to receive proper, dignified, and empowering education.

Unlike neurotypical children, individuals with special needs face a myriad of systemic and intrinsic barriers that complicate their educational journey. These challenges stem from specific physical, emotional, mental, and social deviations, yet these individuals simultaneously harbor unique talents and specialized intelligence that require careful pedagogical nurturing. Recent demographic data emphasize the urgency of this issue; according to the Central Statistics Agency (BPS), the population of children with special needs in Indonesia reached approximately 1.6 million (Desaryanti, 2019). The primary objective of special education is to systematically assist learners with these varied conditions in developing their cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills to achieve functional independence (Aniska, 2016).

Institutions such as SLB BC YPLAB Cibaduyut and SLB BC YPLAB Banjaran serve as critical educational sanctuaries for these demographics, accommodating diverse classifications of special needs, including visual impairment, hearing impairment, intellectual disability, and autism spectrum disorders. Within these institutions, instructional leadership and teacher professional competence are paramount. Educators in special education must transcend traditional pedagogical roles, adopting highly individualized strategies to manage the diverse characteristics within a single classroom (Nazirwan, 2019). The complexity of teaching children with special needs demands profound emotional resilience, specialized didactic skills, and an acute understanding of qualitative learning nuances.

One of the most profound secondary impacts of these inherent limitations is the marginalization of individuals with special needs in the competitive workforce, precipitating a crisis in career development and employment continuity. Systemic discrimination remains a pervasive barrier; as noted in a testimonial by a deaf individual, many corporations systematically reject applications based solely on physical impairments or anticipated communication hurdles, reflecting a broader societal apathy toward the fulfillment of disability rights (Gunawan, 2012; Carter et al., 2012). Consequently, special education schools are mandated to design and execute robust career development programs. These programs are conceptualized to endow students with practical skills, foster creative autonomy, and introduce them to the realities of the workforce, thereby ensuring that post-graduation, they possess a coherent, actionable career plan.

Career development is theoretically defined as a continuous, lifelong sequence of attitudes, experiences, and work-related activities (Gibson & Mitchell, 2011). It is a structured process assisting individuals in optimizing their potential, talents, and personality constructs to achieve occupational success (Aryani & Rais, 2017). Furthermore, it is a conscious self-improvement mechanism aimed at achieving desired vocational outcomes through targeted interventions (Rivai, 2013). Thus, early career intervention is not merely an educational additive but a vital transitional bridge, enabling children with special needs to navigate societal barriers, achieve self-determination, and participate meaningfully in the socioeconomic fabric.

## Method

This study is anchored in a qualitative research paradigm, specifically utilizing a case study approach to conduct a deeply contextualized investigation. A case study approach is a scientific endeavor consciously undertaken to examine single or multiple phenomena using comprehensive data collection methods to describe and deeply explore qualitative findings (Soro, 2023). Qualitative methodology fundamentally seeks to construct meaning, understanding, and holistic interpretations of human phenomena by directly engaging with the

natural setting being investigated (Yusuf, 2017). Through this constructivist lens, the researchers immersed themselves in the socio-educational ecosystem to capture the lived realities of the subjects (Moleong, 2018). Furthermore, case studies provide an empirical inquiry investigating contemporary phenomena within their real-life context, particularly when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018, as cited in Nur'aini, 2020).

The subjects of this research were carefully delineated prior to field entry, as subject selection is pivotal to the integrity of qualitative design (Arikunto, 2002). Sampling was conducted using a purposive sampling technique, which involves selecting data sources based on specific criteria—namely, individuals who possess the most profound experiential knowledge regarding the phenomenon under study (Lenaini, 2021). Consequently, the primary informants comprised two vocational educators actively leading career development initiatives at SLB BC YPLAB Cibaduyut and SLB BC YPLAB Banjaran, alongside one student representing the recipient perspective.

Data collection utilized three primary qualitative techniques. First, in-depth interviews were conducted via systematic face-to-face interactions to extract rich, unstructured narratives from the informants regarding their pedagogical strategies and challenges. Second, participant observation was employed, functioning as an active scientific recording of phenomena using specialized instruments to capture the intricate dynamics of the vocational classroom (Hasanah, 2017). Finally, documentation analysis was utilized to review official curricula, institutional records, and visual artifacts pertaining to the program's execution, serving as vital supplementary evidence to triangulate the findings (Maulida, 2020).

## Results and Discussion

### Results

#### 1. Identification of Systemic and Intrinsic Challenges in Career Development Implementation

The execution of career development programs within special education settings is fraught with layered complexities that intersect cognitive limitations, behavioral variables, and environmental constraints. Observational data gathered from the vocational workshops—specifically within the culinary arts, woodcraft, and macramé (talikur) weaving classes—reveal that a significant portion of the student populace struggles to achieve standard vocational competencies. This lack of mastery is not indicative of an absence of potential, but rather points to profound intrinsic barriers specific to their diagnoses. For students with intellectual disabilities (tuna grahita), the primary impediment is sustained cognitive focus. Educators report a pervasive pattern of diminished attention spans and acute memory retention deficits. When tasked with multi-step vocational procedures, these students frequently forget immediate prior instructions, leading to frustration, task abandonment, and unregulated behavior, such as leaving the learning environment prematurely.

Interviews with Respondent EMF elucidate the daily reality of these challenges: "The most frequent issue I encounter, particularly with students facing intellectual barriers, is their absolute lack of concentration and high susceptibility to boredom. Often, they abandon their assignments halfway through, demonstrating a stark refusal to see a task to its conclusion." This behavioral disengagement is compounded by the structural difficulty of managing a heterogeneous classroom. Respondent R corroborated this, highlighting that students with hearing impairments (tuna rungu) face entirely different, yet equally severe, obstacles related to instructional comprehension. The communicative barrier inherently isolates them from standard auditory cues, necessitating constant, individualized physical prompting.

Furthermore, social contagion presents a unique challenge within the special needs classroom. As noted by the educators, if one student with an intellectual disability shifts their attention to a peer's new task before completing their own, it triggers a chain reaction of disruptive impatience. The compulsion to mimic peers without understanding the sequential necessity of the task results in compromised final products and emotional outbursts. Beyond the classroom, environmental and familial barriers significantly stunt program efficacy. A

recurring theme in the data is the phenomenon of parental overprotection or skepticism. Many parents exhibit high reluctance to permit their special needs children to enter formal workforce environments or internships, fearing workplace exploitation, bullying, or an inability to cope with standard labor pressures. This lack of familial support truncates the career development pipeline, effectively rendering the school's vocational training an isolated academic exercise rather than a functional bridge to post-graduate employment.

## **2. Strategic Pedagogical Approaches and Micro-Interventions in Vocational Training**

To navigate the complex barriers identified above, educators at SLB BC YPLAB have engineered a series of highly adaptive, individualized micro-interventions and strategic pedagogical solutions. Recognizing that generalized instruction is entirely ineffective, teachers have shifted to a model of full, intensive scaffolding (*pendampingan penuh*). This requires the educator to operate not merely as an instructor, but as a continuous cognitive and physical guide. The operational strategy begins with the extensive use of concrete visual pedagogy. Abstract verbal instructions are translated into tangible visual steps using direct props, raw materials, and modeled behaviors before any student begins practical application.

For example, within the culinary arts track, safety protocols and ingredient recognition are heavily prioritized. Respondent R elaborated on this preventive approach: "Prior to any practical activity, we establish a rigid foundation of comprehension. We explicitly detail the safety hazards of the kitchen, introduce the recipe visually, and require the students to physically handle and identify each raw ingredient. Post-activity, to reinforce memory retention, students are required to document the recipe and procedural sequence according to their own cognitive understanding." This dual-layered approach—pre-task visual conditioning and post-task cognitive recall—serves to build neural pathways that combat the memory deficits typical of intellectual disabilities.

Moreover, individualized instruction is paramount. Respondent M detailed the differentiated approaches utilized for different disability classifications: "For students with hearing impairments, I utilize physical tutorials. I demonstrate the cooking technique directly beside them, allowing them to compare their output with mine in real-time. Subsequently, they must articulate the process in their own language to verify comprehension. Conversely, for students with intellectual disabilities, physical guidance is literal. Because their fine motor skills are often delayed, tasks like chopping garlic require me to hold their hands and guide the knife step-by-step." This level of granular, one-on-one intervention ensures that fine motor limitations do not prevent participation. Additionally, to manage classroom dynamics, students are strategically grouped based on their specific cognitive load capacities and micro-talents, ensuring that peer influence acts as a supportive scaffolding mechanism rather than a disruptive force.

## **3. Comprehensive Career Development Services: Orientation, Information, and Strategic Placement**

The institutional framework for career development at the researched schools is systematically divided into three interconnected service domains: orientation, information dissemination, and strategic vocational placement. The overarching objective of these services, as articulated by the school's Special Job Exchange (BKK) coordinators, is to meticulously prepare students for eventual integration into the community workforce by equipping them with both hard vocational skills and the soft skills required for workplace adaptability.

The Orientation Service serves as the foundational entry point. Educators introduce students to the diverse array of both academic and non-academic vocational tracks available within the institution. This early exposure is designed to naturally stimulate intrinsic interest. By familiarizing students with the physical workshops, the tools of the trade, and the tangible outcomes of the labor (e.g., tasting the baked goods, touching the carved wood), educators spark a psychological connection between the student and a potential future trade.

The Information Service operates on both micro and macro levels. On a micro level, it involves the daily dissemination of technical knowledge regarding specific tasks, such as

material functions and tool maintenance. On a macro level, it encompasses critical labor market information. Teachers explicitly connect the daily classroom task to its real-world economic value. For instance, when a student bakes bread, the teacher explicitly explains the commercial viability of the product, detailing how the student could hypothetically sell it independently or utilize the skill to secure employment in a commercial bakery. Furthermore, the school's BKK actively sources job vacancies from allied industries. When a vacancy arises, educators break down the job requirements into accessible language for the students, outline the interview processes, and directly assist families in preparing administrative portfolios.

The Placement Service is the culmination of the program. Internally, it involves assigning students to specific vocational tracks (culinary, woodcraft, macramé) based on a prolonged period of observation regarding their fine motor skills and personal inclinations. Externally, and most critically, the placement service facilitates real-world internships. The schools have cultivated Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with local enterprises—such as commercial car washes, local bakeries, and regional restaurants. By placing students in an immersive, two-week full-time internship program, the school forces a controlled exposure to standard industrial pressures, effectively transitioning their learning from simulated environments to authentic socioeconomic participation.

#### **4. Pedagogical Methodologies and the Execution of Experiential Learning**

The delivery of the career development curriculum heavily relies on adapted pedagogical methodologies that prioritize experiential and repetitive learning over theoretical instruction. Traditional didactic lecturing is minimized, serving only as a brief introductory mechanism to establish the day's objective. The primary modes of instructional delivery are the Demonstration Method, Direct Practice (Experiential Learning), and Structured Assignment.

The Demonstration Method is the cornerstone of vocational instruction for children with special needs. Given the prevalent linguistic and cognitive barriers, physical modeling bypasses the need for complex verbal processing. Educators perform the vocational task in highly exaggerated, segmented steps, allowing students to observe the precise psychomotor movements required. This is immediately followed by Direct Practice, where students attempt to replicate the modeled behavior under strict, immediate supervision. The immediacy of the practice is crucial to prevent memory decay, particularly for those with intellectual disabilities.

Respondent EMF highlighted the necessity of cyclical repetition: "The demonstration method is paramount because physical skills must be visually modeled and then repeated endlessly. Only through relentless repetition and continuous practical training can we gauge the actual evolution of a student's technical capability." Furthermore, educators employ a Structured Assignment Method to bridge the gap between the controlled school environment and the home environment, thereby encouraging independent living skills. For example, in the culinary and craft tracks, students are assigned homework that requires them to apply their newly learned skills autonomously. A student might be tasked with measuring and cutting macramé cords at home, or recreating a simple recipe. To enforce accountability and integrate modern technology, students are often required to document their home-based tasks via photographs or video recordings, which are then submitted to the teacher via WhatsApp. This specific pedagogical cycle—demonstrate, practice, assess, and assign—ensures that the vocational competency is thoroughly internalized and generalized beyond the confines of the special education workshop.

### **Discussion**

The empirical findings from SLB BC YPLAB Cibaduyut and SLB BC YPLAB Banjaran provide a profound insight into the mechanics of career development for marginalized demographics. The data demonstrate that career intervention for children with special needs cannot be treated as a peripheral extracurricular activity; rather, it must be embedded as a core, intensive pedagogical process demanding hyper-individualized strategies. The alignment of the schools' practices with established theoretical frameworks reveals both the efficacy of

their approach and the systemic hurdles that remain endemic to inclusive education in developing contexts.

The implementation of orientation, information, and placement services observed in this study strongly correlates with the foundational tenets of career development theory articulated by Gibson and Mitchell (2011) and Rivai (2013), who posit that self-understanding and environmental awareness are prerequisites for vocational success. However, for children with special needs, this process is significantly more complex. Super's Lifespan, Life-Space Career Theory (1990) suggests that vocational maturation involves moving through stages of growth and exploration. The students in this study, due to their cognitive and communicative barriers, experience delayed progression through these developmental stages. The school's reliance on explicit visual demonstration and intensive one-on-one scaffolding serves as an artificial accelerant, helping to push students from vocational latency into active exploration. By simulating real-world labor through internships (*magang*), the educators are actively closing the experiential gap that typically isolates individuals with disabilities from the socioeconomic mainstream.

Furthermore, the data highlight a critical intersection between pedagogical methodology and cognitive disability management. The use of repetitive demonstration and task-decomposition directly addresses the working memory deficits prevalent in students with intellectual disabilities (*tuna grahita*). This aligns with contemporary inclusive pedagogical frameworks which emphasize that direct, experiential learning—supported by robust visual and tactile prompts—is the most effective mechanism for skill acquisition in neurodivergent populations (Carter et al., 2012). The educators' strategy of breaking down complex tasks into singular, manageable actions (e.g., guiding the hand to chop garlic, visually separating ingredients in labeled containers) prevents cognitive overload and mitigates the emotional outbursts associated with task frustration.

A significant thematic finding requiring deeper academic scrutiny is the sociocultural barrier posed by parental skepticism and broader societal discrimination. As noted in the results, even when the school successfully cultivates a vocational competency within a student, the transition to employment is frequently blocked by parental reluctance to expose their child to the workforce. This phenomenon highlights a critical gap in the Social Cognitive Career Theory (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1994), which emphasizes the role of self-efficacy and environmental support in shaping career trajectories. In the context of special education, the 'environmental support' variable is disproportionately heavily weighted. The individual student's self-efficacy is often rendered moot if the family unit or the receiving corporate environment harbors prejudiced assumptions regarding disability capability (Test et al., 2009). The schools' efforts to establish localized MoUs with businesses, and the active role of the Special Job Exchange (BKK) in mediating between employers, parents, and students, represents a necessary systemic intervention. It proves that career development for this demographic is not merely about teaching a skill; it is about engaging in sustained social advocacy to alter local labor market paradigms.

The use of digital assessment, such as requiring students to record their homework via WhatsApp, represents a modern, highly adaptable form of authentic assessment. It bridges the gap between institutional learning and home-based independence, forcing the student to rely on their internalized knowledge without the immediate physical scaffolding of the teacher. This fosters a sense of agency and self-determination, which are critical predictors of post-school success for youth with disabilities (Wehmeyer et al., 2011).

In synthesis, the implementation of career development programs at the studied institutions transcends basic vocational training. It is a highly intricate, constructivist process that demands educators to operate simultaneously as instructional designers, psychological counselors, and societal advocates. The success of such programs is contingent not solely upon the pedagogical methods deployed within the classroom, but equally upon the systematic dismantling of external environmental barriers, the cultivation of robust family-school partnerships, and the securing of inclusive corporate alliances.

## Conclusion

The career development programs implemented at SLB BC YPLAB Cibaduyut and SLB BC YPLAB Banjaran represent a highly structured, adaptive, and vital educational intervention designed to foster vocational independence in children with special needs. The services provided are comprehensive, encompassing meticulous orientation to stimulate intrinsic interest, targeted information dissemination regarding both technical skills and labor market realities, and strategic placement in internal workshops and external internships. Pedagogically, the reliance on direct demonstration, experiential learning, and repetitive task-based assignments has proven highly effective in bypassing the severe cognitive and communicative barriers characteristic of the student population.

Prior to these targeted interventions, students lacked systematic vocational direction and possessed limited understanding of the professional world. Post-intervention, supported by full-time educator scaffolding and the mediating efforts of the Special Job Exchange (BKK), students exhibit marked improvements in technical reliability and psychological readiness for employment. Ultimately, the successful execution of these programs is predicated on a holistic ecosystem: the integration of highly individualized teaching methodologies, the proactive management of student psychological barriers, the mitigation of parental skepticism, and the forging of inclusive partnerships with the local industrial sector. Continuous, factual evaluation and societal advocacy remain imperative to ensure these graduates can transition from the margins of society into active, economically empowered participants in the workforce.

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