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Assessment on the Implementation of Transition Program Skills Packages Among Learners with Autism in SOCSARGEN

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Abstract

Objectives: This study assessed the implementation of transition program skills package for students with autism in public secondary schools in the Province of South Cotabato, Sarangani Province, and General Santos City (SOCSARGEN), Philippines. It looks forward to learning from the experience of its learners and stakeholders in order to improve the K to 12 Transition Curriculum for learners with disabilities in particular for those with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) so that this curriculum is pertinent and effective in preparing them for life post-school.

Methodology: Utilizing the principles of the Social-Ecological Systems Theory (SEST) and the Input-Process-Output model, this research employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design. The quantitative strand consisted of 32 students from nine SOCSARGEN public schools in the school year 2022-2023, and the qualitative strand accessed the perceptions of eight learners with autism as key informants and 18 stakeholders through focus group interviews in rural and urban areas.

Results: Outcomes reveal that the implementation of skills packages was moderately satisfactory, with teacher competence and stakeholder cooperation being its strengths. Teachers exhibited high competencies in the provision of skills training, with cooperation from parents, local industry, and government entities assisting in supporting program implementation. Deficiencies were seen in alignment of curriculum, methodologies for assessing learners, and availability of necessary resources like ICT tools and practical training facilities. Limited availability of assistive technology, out-of-date learning content, and lack of adequate exposure to work environments inhibited the full potential of the program. Stakeholders highlighted the demand for improvement in curriculum, improved financing, and better coordination with training schools to enable easier transition for learners into employment or further learning.

Conclusion: The transition program skills packages for students with autism had moderate success, with positives in teacher competence and stakeholder engagement. Gaps still exist in learner profiling, curriculum relevance, ICT equipment, and on-the-job training. It is important to develop TESDA coordination, ICT accessibility, funding, and industry linkage. Future studies must investigate resource accessibility, cultural sensitivity, and curriculum flexibility to enhance learners' employability and independent living.

Keywords: *Autism spectrum disorder (ASD), transition program, skills packages, learners' experiences, stakeholder collaboration, educational assessment, mixed-method research*

INTRODUCTION

Students with autism face numerous challenges in schooling (Nuske, et al. 2019), hence the need for specialized interventions that will aid them as they move to adulthood. Challenges are immense and need proper implementation of curriculum in order to equip schools and other stakeholders with requisite tools to be able to cope with the distinctive needs of students with autism. As Kraemer et al. (2020) argue, inclusivity and better educational performance can be promoted by involving learners with ASD in relevant learning experiences. Zeidan et al. (2022)

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also note the contribution of individualized programs in eliminating education inequalities among learners with disabilities. The incorporation of learner input into program planning ensures that it reflects their ambitions and requirements, as noted by Krzeminska and Hawse (2020).

In the Philippines, transition programs are mandated by the Republic Act No. 11650 (2022) and DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2020, in developing Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) for students with special needs, equipping them with more life skills as they proceed. All of these are centered on the K to 12 Transition Program Skills Packages, special learning modules of the program that focus on equipping the child for independent living, higher studies, or any type of gainful employment. These packages address the most critical aspects of functional academics, pre-vocational skills, socio-emotional development, and use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The skills packages narrow the gap between secondary schooling and post-secondary opportunity by promoting relevance and targeted intervention as preparation for adulthood.

The particular areas focused on are functional academics, life skills in practical matters to enable the person to be independent, and vocational training for certification programs to be attained, like those of Technical Education and Skills Development Authority or TESDA (Pawilen, et al., 2018)**.** Recognizing the significance of these programs, this study identifies to what extent the K to 12 Transition Curriculum has been implemented in schools in the SOCSARGEN region for students with autism. In particular, this paper quantifies stakeholders' skills packages and improves their integration for optimal educational result and intervention.

Pawilen et al. (2018) identified gaps in the application of individualized transition program skills packages. Research tends to provide fragmented information and overlook how the interplay between curriculum implementation, teacher training, and ICT integration affects the success of the program. Additionally, students with ASD's transition experiences are not well-studied, and therefore, little is known about their needs during this critical period (Kraemer et al., 2020). Although well-designed skills packages, particularly those with clear standards and assessment criteria, seem to offer all the blueprints required for successful implementation, there are still significant challenges due to resource shortages that undermine teacher quality, as well as restricted access to ICT enabling students to have access to these skills package.

While quantitative information proves useful in relation to giving some insight into patterns or trends, it is unsuitable for use when analyzing issues that are systemic, such as in the example of Pawilen et al. (2018) discussion regarding general issues of implementation and not specifically the issue of individual barriers such as the lack of certain resources or training. Qualitative research is needed to offer contextual understanding that might enable a greater insight into how schools manage to navigate these challenges and find effective practices that can be used to inform inclusive education policies.

Another underexplored but important field of research is stakeholder partnerships and ICT integration supporting transition programs. Zeidan et al. (2022) emphasize the importance of school-family-community collaboration; still, more specific frameworks are needed to ensure optimal collaboration. In the same vein, ICT tools have the ability to enhance learning outcomes for students with ASD, yet they remain underexploited, as Schneider (2018) noted. For further integration into the K to 12 Transition Program Skills Packages, it is crucial to look into how ICT can be utilized inclusively to create improved educational outcomes.

Objectives

The problem addressed in this study revolved around evaluating the implementation of the K to 12 Transition Program Skills Packages among learners with autism (DepEd Order No. 021, s. 2020). The study aimed to understand the effectiveness of various components of the program and to identify areas needing improvement.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What was the level of implementation of the K to 12 Transition Program Skills Packages among learners with autism in terms of the following components:
   1.1. Curriculum implementation;
   1.2. Teachers' proficiency;
   1.3. Assessment for the learner;
   1.4. Quality of facilities and equipment;
   1.5. ICT development;
   1.6. Quantity of learning materials;
   1.7. Administration and management; and
   1.8. Stakeholders' partnership?

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2. How did learners with ASD describe the implementation of transition program skills packages?
3. What were the participants' views on the perceived level of school performance in implementing transition program skills packages?
4. Based on the study's results, what development program could be proposed to improve the implementation of the transition curriculum for learners with disabilities, particularly those with autism, in secondary schools?

This study's theoretical framework was drawn from Bronfenbrenner's Social Ecological System Theory (SEST), which emphasized the interdependence between various environmental systems that influenced an individual's development. Bronfenbrenner (1994) provided a number of levels, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem, which influenced one another to shape personal characteristics, learning, and daily interactions. This model provided a framework through which to examine how different environmental factors affected the implementation of the K to 12 Transition Program Skills Packages for students with disabilities.

In order to systematically evaluate program implementation, the research employed the Input-Process-Output (IPO) model, as conceptualized by Davis (1998). Input involved key resources such as content of the curriculum, capability of the teacher, facilities, learning resources, ICT integration, and collaboration of stakeholders. Process referred to the implementation strategies, teaching practices, evaluation mechanisms, and administrative support that facilitated the realization of the program. The output was focused on the learners' outcome, the efficacy of the program, and areas of improvement.

With the integration of SEST and IPO, the study investigated how organized processes and environmental conditions assisted in making the transition program effective. The model facilitated a comprehensive analysis of the program's impact on disabled students and provided guidance on where the program could be enhanced. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework for the study.

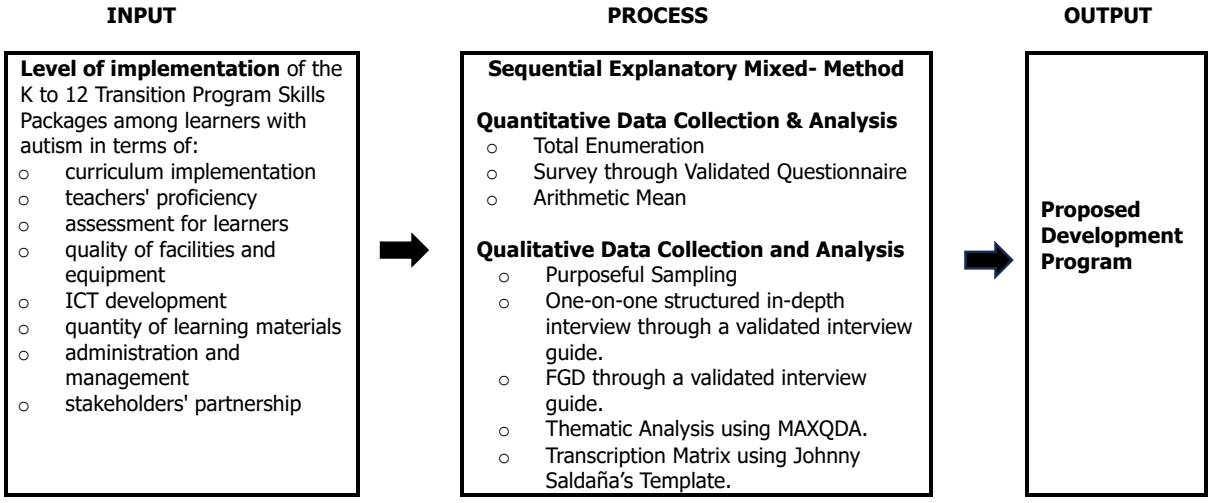

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

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METHODS

Research Design

A mixed-method research design was employed by the study in question, with the specific application of a sequential explanatory research design. It entails two distinct phases, starting with an initial quantitative phase and followed by a qualitative phase. This makes sure that the qualitative findings will be building upon and explaining the quantitative results. Procedures in the Sequential Explanatory Research Design are as depicted in Figure 2.

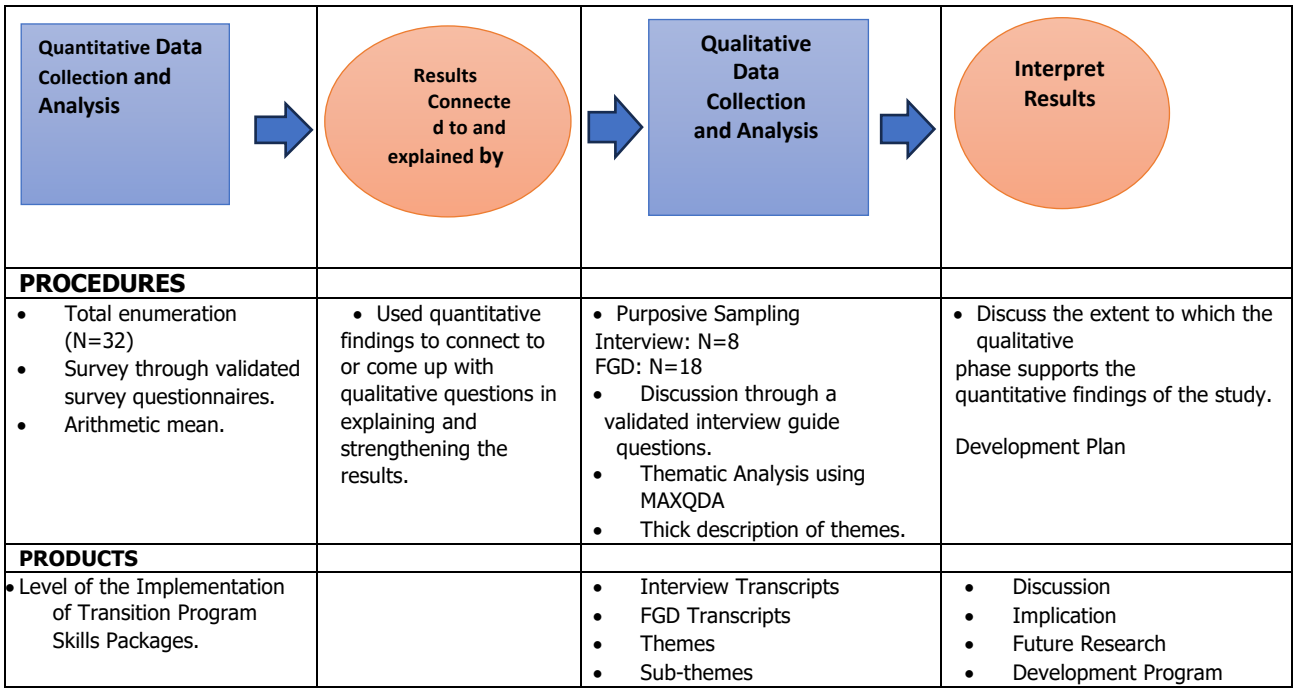

Figure 2. Explanatory Sequential Mixed Method Research Design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

Figure 2 illustrates a sequential explanatory mixed-method design, integrating a quantitative approach with a qualitative approach to explain the implementation levels of transition program components among learners with ASD. This process involved a structured two-phase process where the first quantitative phase assessed the levels of program implementation, and the second qualitative phase provided contextual insights to enrich and explain the numerical findings. This approach therefore ensured a strong understanding of both the measurable outcomes and the experiences of the stakeholders involved.

Population and Sampling

The study involved 32 learners with autism, selected through total enumeration based on specific inclusion criteria. These criteria included a formal diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and participation in the K to 12 Transition Program as part of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) during the school year 2022-2023.

For the qualitative phase, in-depth data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eight learners and two focus group discussions (FGDs) involving 18 key stakeholders. These stakeholders included principals, teachers, parents, and learners, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives on program implementation and outcomes.

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Instrument

The study employed a mix of tools that were customized to the research objectives. The survey questionnaires captured the quantitative data, which included demographic profiles and levels of program implementation. Key informant interview protocols and focus group discussion guides were used in gathering qualitative data, which covered stakeholder experiences, challenges, and perceptions on the effectiveness of the program.

Data Collection

The data were gathered, read, and analyzed following the objective of the study and in adherence to all protocols in the coduct of research.

Treatment of Data

The statistical analysis of the research used a combination of qualitative and quantitative analyses to fully evaluate the implementation of the K to 12 Transition Program Skills Packages for students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). For quantitative analysis, descriptive statistics such as means were utilized to ascertain the general level of program implementation on eight critical variables: curriculum implementation, teachers' competency, assessment of learners, facilities and equipment, ICT development, learning materials, administration and management, and partnership of stakeholders. A three-point Likert scale was utilized to classify the level of implementation as low (1.00–1.49), moderate (1.50–2.49), or high (2.50–3.00).

For qualitative data analysis, the interview and focus group discussion data were transcribed word for word and analyzed using Johnny Saldaña's Framework thematically (Saldaña, 2016). Initial coding entailed assigning definite codes to each response based on their meaning. Then came the step of categorization, whereby codes with similar meanings were compiled into larger categories. The theme development was the final step in which general themes were determined in order to contain the major take-home points of participants. A Transcription Matrix was used to systematically set up and present themes and sub-themes to provide a clear interpretation of qualitative results.

To synthesize the quantitative and qualitative findings, a triangulation approach was applied to cross-validate statistical results with qualitative observations. Descriptive and inferential statistics offered quantifiable trends, but thematic analysis grounded these results within participants' lived experiences. Synthesis emphasized similarities and differences between numerical data and qualitative accounts, providing a more holistic understanding of the transition program's effectiveness. This mixed-methods design facilitated a rich interpretation of results so that the findings could provide evidence-based suggestions to improve the transition program for students with ASD.

Ethical Considerations

Strict ethical standards were followed to ensure the integrity of the research and to safeguard the rights of the participants. The study was approved by the Mindanao State University Institutional Ethics Review Committee (Approval No. 216-2023 MSUGSC-IERC). All participants were assured of confidentiality and that their participation was voluntary. Data confidentiality measures were strictly implemented throughout the study to ensure compliance with ethical standards and to maintain participant trust.

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RESULTS and DISCUSSION

1. Level of Program Implementation

Table 1 presents the Level of Implementation of the Transition Program Skills Packages.

Table 1
Level of Implementation of Transition Program Skills Packages

Components	Mean	Description
1. Curriculum Implementation	2.32	Moderate
2. Teachers' Proficiency	2.51	High
3. Assessment for Learners	2.19	Moderate
4. Quality of Facilities and Equipment	2.20	Moderate
5. ICT Development	1.81	Moderate
6. Quantity of Learning Materials	2.34	Moderate
7. Administration and Management	2.36	Moderate
8. Partnership between School and Stakeholders	2.40	Moderate
Overall Mean	**2.27**	**Moderate**

Legend: High 2.50 - 3.0 Moderate 1.50-2.49 Low 1-1.49

The overall implementation of the Transition Program Skills Packages was assessed as moderate, with a mean score of 2.27. While certain aspects of the program were effectively executed, significant improvements are necessary to optimize its impact. Among the assessed areas, teachers' proficiency received the highest rating of 2.51, classified as high, indicating that educators are well-qualified to deliver the program. However, several components, including curriculum implementation (2.32), learner assessment (2.19), facilities and equipment (2.20), learning materials (2.34), administration and management (2.36), and school-stakeholder partnerships (2.40), were rated as moderate, highlighting areas needing further development.

Notably, ICT development received the lowest mean score of 1.81, emphasizing the urgent need for enhanced technology integration within the program. The study confirmed that while the transition curriculum for learners with autism in SOCSARGEN was moderately effective, gaps in learner assessment, ICT infrastructure, and individualized learning materials hinder its full potential. The strength of the program lies in teacher proficiency, particularly in career guidance and the development of Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs), demonstrating educators' ability to provide specialized support. However, expanding work immersion opportunities and specialized skills training remains a priority.

These results are consistent with earlier research highlighting the need for quality facilities and resources (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019), ongoing teacher training in new instructional approaches (Hattie & Donoghue, 2018), individualized learning plans (Lee et al., 2019), and the transformative power of ICT in developing necessary skills (Schwab, 2018). Closing these gaps through enhanced funding, technology, and curriculum integration will increase the inclusivity and efficacy of the transition program.

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2. Learners' Description on the Implementation of Skills Packages

Table 2 is a transcription matrix of learners' descriptions on the implementation of transition program skills packages.

Table 2

Learners' Descriptions on the Implementation of Transition Program Skills Packages for Learners with Autism

Refined Themes	Transcript Excerpt	Analysis/Interpretation
Hands-On and Interactive Learning	"I really enjoy the hands-on activities because they make learning fun and easier to understand." (P1, Lines 1-5)	Hands-on activities are effective in making learning enjoyable and comprehensible for students.
Peer and Community Support	"I have many friends in the regular class now." (P3, Lines 12-13)	Social integration with peers in regular classes enhances the learning experience.
Positive Learning Outcomes	"I learned a lot and found the tasks easy." (P4, Lines 14-15)	Positive learning outcomes are evident through students' satisfaction and ease of learning.
Learning Challenges	"Math is hard, and I need help from my teachers and family." (P5, Lines 16-19)	Students face challenges in certain subjects, indicating a need for additional support.
Project-Based Teaching	"I completed a science project with help from my teachers." (P6, Lines 20-22)	Project-based learning enhances student engagement and understanding.
Practical Life Skills Development	"We practiced cleaning nails and dressing properly." (P7, Lines 23-27)	Development of practical life skills is crucial for students' daily lives.
Economic and Vocational Empowerment	"I earn money from the massage skills I learned in the program." (P8, Lines 28-30)	Vocational training provides students with economic benefits and employment opportunities.

Seven major themes describing how students with autism viewed the Transition Program Skills Packages: Hands-On and Interactive Learning, Peer and Community Support, Positive Learning Outcomes, Learning Challenges, Project-Based Instruction, Development of Practical Life Skills, and Economic and Vocational Empowerment were found by the study. Data were collected from eight students with autism who were shifting to the K to 12 program.

Hands-On and Interactive Learning became an important method for engaging students and promoting their comprehension. Students reported that hands-on learning made lessons more fun and contributed to better comprehension, critical thinking, problem-solving, and motor skills. Peer and Community Support also became an important factor, as students enjoyed the social integration offered in ordinary classes. Such support created a sense of belonging, increased self-esteem, and promoted active engagement in academic and social environments.

Students indicated Positive Learning Outcomes, reporting that they found tasks manageable and fulfilling, which enhanced their confidence and motivation. Nonetheless, they also indicated Learning Challenges, especially in mathematics, where they needed more support from teachers and family members. This observation underscores the necessity for differentiated instructional strategies and enhanced collaboration between parents and educators.

Project-Based Teaching was identified as an effective strategy in stimulating engagement and comprehension. Students appreciated the interactive aspects of projects, which enabled them to advance collaboration and problem-solving skills along with enhancing retention of knowledge. Furthermore, the program helped shape Practical Life Skills, including personal grooming and dressing, which aided in their independence and self-sufficiency.

One dominant theme of the study was Economic and Vocational Empowerment, as the students felt proud to learn employable skills. The vocational training programs equipped them with marketable skills, improving their prospects for economic independence and successful employment.

Generally, students reported satisfactory experiences within the transition program, especially where teachers were involved and supportive. Partnerships with communities and local government were important in terms of offering resources and inclusion. Curriculum implementation and learning materials were only moderately good,

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suggesting that better quality resources should be made available to encourage student participation and learning outcomes.

Upon the site visit, the researcher saw makeshift learning materials and outdated ICT equipment that were in disrepair, mirroring gaps in evaluation techniques, infrastructures, and technology implementation. The observation supports the finding of Carter, Brock, and Trainor (2019) that transition program needs adequate funding and resource allocation. These shortfalls undermined the learning process and the effectiveness of the program. The students pointed to the requirement of interactive hands-on approaches, vocational life skills training, and peer assistance in order to be more adequately prepared for higher education, employment, and independent living which aligned to the finding of Sung et al. (2019).

These results concur with Kurth and Keegan (2018), who stressed the need for curriculum alignment and efficient assessment practices. Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) also pointed out the need for competent instructors and adequate facilities in providing high-quality education. Closing these gaps will be critical in developing a more inclusive and effective transition program for students with autism.

3. Participants' Views on the Implementation of Skills Packages

Table 3 presents the participants' responses categorized into various themes essential for understanding the effectiveness of transition program implementation for students with autism.

Table 3

Participants' Views on the Implementation of Transition Program Skills Packages for Learners with Autism

Refined Themes	Transcript Excerpt	Analysis/Interpretation
Implementation Challenges	"The perceived level of school performance in implementing transition program skills packages in SOCSARGEN is moderate overall, with high implementation levels in teacher involvement and school management. However, there are opportunities for improvement in areas like curriculum alignment, assessment methods, facilities, ICT integration, and provision of learning materials." (FGD, SPED Teacher 4 (P13), Lines 1-6)	While teacher involvement is high, there are significant challenges in curriculum alignment and resource provision that need to be addressed to improve the implementation of transition programs.
Resource and Support Needs	"The purpose of the implementation is to help learners to be independent young adults. It needs support, especially in the financial aspects. The school lacks essential resources needed for learning development." (FGD, Parent C(P17), Lines 19-23)	The goal of helping learners become independent is hindered by financial constraints and lack of resources. There is a need for increased financial support and essential resources to achieve this goal.
Influential Factors	"The perceived level of school performance in implementing transition programs has many aspects and is influenced by the quality of the program, availability of resources, student and parent engagement, evaluation processes, and community partnerships." (FGD, SPED Teacher 2 (P4), Lines 7-10)	The quality of transition programs is influenced by various factors including resource availability and community partnerships, which play a crucial role in the success of these programs.
Resource Constraints	We really lack the resources. Because if we had the resources, there would be a great opportunity for the children to engage in hands-on activities. (FGD, SPED Chairman (P11), Lines 73-78)	Limited resources restrict the ability to provide hands-on activities, despite teachers' best efforts. There is a need for increased resource allocation to support hands-on learning.
Refined Themes	**Transcript Excerpt**	**Analysis/Interpretation**
Infrastructure and	"I think three of the most important things needed are	The growing number of enrollees necessitates

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Training Needs	additional rooms, additional facilities & additional skilled teachers for Transition Program Skills." (FGD, Receiving Teacher 2 (P16), Lines 33-37)	additional infrastructure and skilled teachers to effectively cater to the needs of students.
Parental Involvement	"Kanang expectation nila dili nakakaabot didto ang atong available materials." "Their expectations are not met by the materials we have available." (FGD, School Representative (P10), Lines 84-89)	Limited parental support affects the effectiveness of program activities and resource provision. Enhanced parental involvement is necessary for the success of transition programs.
Transition and Certification Challenges	"*So Nakita nako na for transitioning from special classes usually moadto sila sa TVL ang problema once na magkuha sila ug TVL sa Senior High School wala ta naka tie-up sa TESDA. So, wala silay NC II."* [So I noticed that for transitioning from special classes, they usually go to the TVL (Technical-Vocational-Livelihood track), but the problem is that once they take TVL in Senior High School, we don't have a tie-up with TESDA. So, they don't get an NC II (National Certificate II).] (FGD, Parent C (P17), Lines 63-67)	Lack of coordination with TESDA results in students not receiving NC II certification, affecting their transition success. There is a need for better coordination to ensure certification.

The research identified a number of dominant themes that reflect strengths and weaknesses of the Transition Program Skills Packages. These themes are Implementation Challenges, Resource and Support Needs, Influential Factors, Resource Constraints, Infrastructure and Training Needs, Parental Involvement, and Transition and Certification Challenges.

Implementation Challenges indicate that although teacher participation and school administration are high, there are serious impediments in curriculum alignment, assessment strategies, facilities, ICT integration, and learning materials availability. These areas need to be addressed to increase the effectiveness of the program and address the various needs of the students.

Resource and Support Needs was a major concern, since budget constraints do not allow schools to provide full support to students' transition into independent living. Proper funding and improved resource provision would allow schools to invest in the necessary tools, materials, and programmes that directly impact the learners. In the same way, Resource Constraints also limit practical learning because there are no materials. Greater financial assistance would allow for more participatory and experiential learning opportunities.

The Influential Factors theme emphasizes the significance of resource availability, parental and student engagement, assessment processes, and collaboration with the community. Enhancing these areas may result in improved support for students.

Infrastructure and Training Needs highlight the escalating need for additional classrooms, enhanced facilities, and hiring trained instructors. Investing in these areas is essential to handle the rising student population and provide specialized instruction.

Parent Involvement is critical to the success of the program. Limited parental involvement impacts the effectiveness of program operations and provision of resources. Nuske, et al. (2019) supports the idea that schools ought to encourage active participation of parents in order to establish a shared learning environment that helps learners at school as well as at home.

Transition and Certification Challenges emphasize the necessity of intensified coordination with TESDA to certify students appropriately, for instance, NC II, for increased job opportunities. Enhancing interagency collaboration can make students more job ready and economically independent.

The research discovers that teacher effectiveness and stakeholder engagement are the areas of strength, but many others need urgent focus, including curriculum alignment, resource use, and integration of ICT. The remediation of these needs demands more funds, improved infrastructure, and increased community participation. Armstrong et al. (2020) indicate that parental engagement impacts educational outcomes, corroborating the research that ineffective parental engagement has an impact on program activity effectiveness and the distribution of

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resources. While both sources agree that parent-school cooperation is necessary, Carter, et al. (2019) suggest that formal programs should be offered to support parents, whereas the study makes voluntary parental involvement a priority.

In the same vein, Anderson et al. (2020) emphasize the requirement for supportive learning environments that are personalized to the needs of students with autism. This corroborates the findings of the study that curriculum alignment, specialized facilities, and ICT integration are required for program success. Nonetheless, Anderson et al. give more prominence to individualized learning plans and behavioral interventions, factors that were not fully investigated in the study.

Wehman et al. (2018) also corroborate the findings of the study by reiterating the significance of interagency coordination in enhancing employability among students. Their study reinforces the study's contention that TESDA certification, like National Certificate II or NC II, is crucial to job readiness. Sung et al. go further by pointing out the role of mentorship programs and industry linkages in enhancing employability—areas not examined thoroughly by the study. Similarly, Hattie and Donoghue (2018) emphasize the need for curriculum alignment and proper assessment techniques in enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. This is consistent with the research finding that curriculum implementation gaps and assessment techniques require immediate attention. But Hattie and Donoghue also identify self-regulated learning as the most important ingredient for success, while the research is mainly interested in external ingredients, like buildings, teacher professional development, and money, but not student-initiated learning techniques.

Moreover, Epstein (2018) emphasized the importance of teacher training and funding in student achievement, reinforcing the study's findings that these conditions have a large impact on learning outcomes. Their study emphasizes ongoing teacher development and availability of state-of-the-art facilities, supporting the study's demand for improved infrastructure and integration of ICT. However, Darling-Hammond et al. believe that even expert teachers perform poorly in under-resourced environments and both should be simultaneously enhanced. Whereas the study gives teacher training prominence as an area of strength but identifies resource issues as a limitation.

4. Integration of Findings

Table 4 presents the integration of quantitative and qualitative results on the implementation of transition program skills packages.

Table 4

Table 4 Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results on the Implementation of Transition Program Skills Packages

Indicators	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Participants' Code
National Competency Assessment (TESDA)	**Moderate Level (M= 2.00)**	Lack of coordination with TESDA results in students not receiving NC II certification, affecting their transition success. There is a need for better coordination to ensure certification.	(FGD, P17 Lines 63-67)
ICT Equipment	**Moderate Level (M= 1.88)**	The quality of transition program is influenced by various factors including resource availability and community partnerships, which play a crucial role in the success of these programs.	(FGD, P4 Lines 7-10)
Training for ICT operations	**Moderate Level (M= 1.72)**	Limited resources restrict the ability to provide hands-on activities, despite teachers' best efforts. There is a need for increased resource allocation to support hands-on learning.	(FGD, P11, Lines 73-78)

Table 4 indicates some of the most important themes regarding the moderate level of implementation of transition programs for students with autism in SOCSARGEN. The biggest challenge is the absence of coordination

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with TESDA, which bars students from receiving the National Certificate II (NC II), which is a prerequisite for employment readiness. To overcome this, school programs must be harmonized with TESDA standards to enable smoother transition into employment. Another persistent concern is resource inadequacies such as a scarcity of ICT resources, finance, and practical learning materials. The inadequacies hinder interactive and practical learning as well as both the development of skills and teachers' capacity to use innovative instructional approaches. The success of the transition program also depends on instructional strategies, availability of learning materials, students' and parents' participation.

Increasing teacher professional development and stronger partnership with families are key to program outcome improvement. Furthermore, weak partnerships with communities and inadequate monitoring and evaluation do not allow the program to meet changing student needs. More rigorous community engagement and routine feedback mechanisms may offer further resources and sustain continuous program development.

In order to meet these challenges, a suggested development plan sets out three primary objectives: enhancing learning equipment and facilities, improving assessment methods, and developing ICT infrastructure and training. These are designed to provide a more inclusive, effective, and supportive learning environment that prepares learners with autism to successfully enter further education, employment, or independent living.

The combination of quantitative and qualitative data in Table 4 supports the findings. Quantitative findings report moderate implementation in priority areas including TESDA certification, ICT equipment, and skills training. Qualitative information adds depth, showing barriers such as insufficient TESDA coordination, poor ICT resources, and lack of funds for hands-on learning. These results are consistent with existing research highlighting the need for aligned curricula, technology integration, and resource availability for successful program implementation (Hattie & Donoghue, 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2019).

Student feedback also highlights the importance of improving programs. The lack of TESDA partnerships deprives students of such certifications, and hence, lower their employability. A participant shared, Once they enroll in TVL in Senior High School, we don't have a tie-up with TESDA. So, they don't receive an NC II. This establishes the urgency of closer coordination with TESDA so that school programs are synchronized with certification requirements and more defined career paths are established.

Equally, resource constraints hamper interactive learning experiences. A respondent underscored, If we had resources, there would be a huge chance for the children to do activities by hand. This corroborates Zosh et al. (2018), who stressed that hands-on learning supports cognitive and social-emotional development. Bridging these deficits through enhanced resource mobilization, community partnerships, and policy reforms will immensely enhance the effectiveness of the transition program and provide improved career prospects for autism learners.

5. Proposed Development Plan

Table 5 shows the Proposed Development Program for Improving Transition Program Implementation for Learners with Autism in SOCSARGEN.

Table 5
Proposed Development Plan for Improving Transition Program Implementation for Learners with Autism

Objective	Activities	Resources Needed
Strengthening Coordination with TESDA	- Establish formal agreements between schools and TESDA to facilitate seamless coordination. - Organize regular meetings between school administrators and TESDA representatives to discuss program updates, certification processes, and student needs. - Conduct workshops to inform students and parents about the requirements and benefits of obtaining NC II certification.	- Funding for workshops and meetings - Communication materials for students and parents
Objective	**Activities**	**Resources Needed**
Enhancing ICT Resources	- Conduct an assessment to identify specific ICT needs in schools. - Apply for grants and funding to purchase necessary ICT	- Funding for ICT equipment and teacher training

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	equipment such as computers, projectors, and software. - Provide professional development for teachers on using ICT tools effectively in their teaching.	- Grant application support
Increasing Resource Allocation for Hands-on Learning	- Review and adjust school budgets to prioritize funding for hands-on learning materials and activities. - Organize fundraising events and campaigns to gather additional resources from the community. - Establish a resource-sharing network among schools to maximize the use of available materials.	- Fundraising materials and event support - Community engagement strategies
Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation	- Implement regular feedback mechanisms, such as surveys and focus groups, to gather input from students, parents, and teachers. - Conduct periodic performance reviews to assess the effectiveness of implemented strategies and make necessary adjustments. - Use data from quantitative and qualitative sources to continuously improve program components.	- Evaluation tools and software - Data analysis training for staff

Improving the learning environment for students with autism needs a multidimensional intervention aimed at enhancing physical facilities, resources, and instructional strategies. The schools need to improve infrastructure to develop an inclusive and conducive setting that suits the special needs of these students. This entails guaranteeing accessibility, sensory-integrated spaces, and an environment that promotes academic achievement, work-readiness, and social competence.

Innovative and inclusive teaching methods, including ICT-based and adaptive teaching, are required to meet different learning needs. Interdisciplinary collaboration between educators, parents, and stakeholders helps ensure that education is personalized and effective. Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of student progress also help sustain a facilitative learning environment. Periodic progress monitoring should be undertaken to evaluate teaching strategies, resources on hand, and the overall learning environment. Guidance from these assessments will assist in sharpening strategy and improving learner outcomes in academia, vocational training, and socialization. Such programs should also be aligned with national policy guidelines on inclusiveness and address emerging education needs. Long-term investment is required for sustained improvement and to equip learners with autism with the opportunities necessary to succeed in an increasingly globalized world. The planned program addresses five areas of prime importance to develop a more effective and inclusive learning atmosphere:

Strengthening Coordination with TESDA – Ties with TESDA would be strengthened so that students could get NC II certification, making them more job-ready. Hattie and Donoghue (2018) highlight curriculum alignment and effective assessment as crucial for addressing the needs of students.

Infusing Contemporary Technology into Instruction – Developing ICT facilities and facilitating teachers' professional development will render learning more interactive and accessible and help the students acquire important digital literacy. Darling-Hammond et al. (2019) suggest that high-quality educators and adequately equipped facilities are essential in providing quality education.

Providing More Funds for Hands-On Learning – More funding for hands-on learning activities and materials will enable students to acquire hands-on experience, which will contribute to their social-emotional development and cognitive abilities. Zosh et al. (2018) emphasize that students learn most from experiential learning, as it provides them with an opportunity to put their knowledge into practice in actual situations.

Enriching Community and Parental Participation – Developing close relationships with the community and volunteers can offer schools additional support and resources. Schwab (2018) identifies that engaging parents and the community maximizes the quality and effectiveness of educational services.

Continuous Monitoring and Evaluation – Ongoing feedback and performance assessments will make the program continually relevant as the needs of students change. Insights from data will inform required adjustments, maintaining long-term gains and improved educational results.

By tackling these five primary areas, the program will foster a more inclusive, efficient, and sustainable learning environment that enables learners with autism to prepare for future education, employment, and independent living. The five key domains under the program would provide a cohesive and effective learning environment. For one, building coordination with TESDA would open doors to enrolling learners who would eventually

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enhance their NC II certifications for enhanced preparation in the job market. As Hattie and Donoghue (2018) add, curriculum congruence coupled with effective testing should be requested to address the students' needs.

Second, incorporating up-to-date technology in education via improving ICT infrastructures and issuing professional training to instructors will facilitate learning to become interactive and achievable and will bestow students with the required IT skills. Trained teachers and adequately equipped resources, as described by Wehman et al. (2020), guarantee the production of quality education.

Third, invest in more hands-on learning materials and activities to impart experience to learners for improved cognitive and social-emotional development. Zosh et al. (2018) posit that students ought to get involved in the practical methods of learning because there are chances of them applying whatever they learn into practice settings. This means having a strong relationship with volunteers and the community who can prove to be valuable to the schools. Schwab (2018) also states that incorporating parents and the community will provide value and efficiency in educational programs. Ongoing assessment and monitoring using regular feedback and performance review will enable the program to remain updated as student needs change. Data-driven findings will be applied in maintaining the gains; hence, its elements can be enhanced further for enhanced learning results.

Conclusions

1. The transition programme skills packages were moderately effective with teacher proficiency as their strength and learner assessment, facilities, ICT development, and learning materials as their weaknesses. This is an excellent area where improvement is necessary to enable learners with autism to have a well-balanced learning environment.
2. Students with autism valued teacher support and stakeholder engagement but noted difficulties in ICT resources, experiential learning opportunities, and involvement in the curriculum. Practical learning and skill acquisition are very important for their preparation for adulthood.
3. Stakeholders highly valued the teacher's competence and collaboration with communities but offered a call for enhanced curriculum congruence, assessment of students, infrastructure, and ICT. Enhanced funding, coordination, and certification procedures improve program efficiency.
4. Both datasets showed a moderate rate of implementation, particularly in coordination with TESDA and ICT materials. It will enhance the output of the students in case of gaps filling through enhanced funding, trainer strengthening, and practice opportunities.
5. Five-point program targets improving TESDA coordination, enhancing ICT facilities, experiential learning of additional funds, community partnership, and periodic evaluation for learners with autism to make the transition curriculum more effective.

Recommendations:

1. Invest more to develop a differentiation curriculum, improve teacher training in managing students with autism, perform improved assessment on students, improve facilities and other ICT tools in favor of students with autism. Improve stakeholder collaboration and expand immersion in workplaces to make an educational setting more accessible.
2. Invest in comprehensive curriculum materials with customized learning contents and improved modes of assessment for enhancing relevance and mirroring what the learner constructs. Enhance participatory learning environments, promote relevant life skills as well as community engagement to promote integrative student growth.
3. Emphasize curriculum alignment to the learners' needs, enhance assessment strategies, enhance facilities and ICT, and boost financing for practical learning activities. Engage parents actively and enhance community partnerships to provide extra resources and assistance.
4. Enhance coordination with TESDA such that graduates would be accredited and better equipped for their future profession. ICT facilities be improved; equip teachers, sponsor more on hands-on experiences, and enter into partnership with communities to create a collaborative learning environment.
5. Enhance the transition curriculum by aligning school programs with TESDA standards, incorporating new technology with ICT upgrades, and experiential learning experiences. Develop volunteer programs, enhance community support, and periodic evaluations for effective adjustment to students' needs.

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