Interagency Cooperation in Inclusive Higher Education for Persons with Intellectual Disability: A literature Review

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Abstract

A university/college plays one of the most essential roles in students' lives, helping them secure jobs and improving important skills for their daily needs. Thus, providing students with intellectual disability with necessary services, resources, and other forms of support through cooperative partnerships outside of the university/college is one of the most effective factors for the success of such students as well as of postsecondary education programs. These programs can provide many benefits to these students, because different types of participants—agencies, organizations, and individuals—serve these students in the programs and improve the quality of services offered to them.

This article aims to provide a brief review of inclusive higher education for people with intellectual disability in the United States in the scope of interagency cooperation in a university/college by reviewing the literature in this field. Two main themes emerged—interagency cooperation in postsecondary education and federal support as a focal point for interagency cooperation in college/university—which may encourage researchers and program decisionmakers to offer external collaborative partnerships to such students. Additionally, the results will may induce other countries to take similar steps to integrate such students into colleges/universities, and to pay close attention to the role of collaborative partnerships in developing the efficiency of postsecondary education programs.

Key Words: Intellectual Disability (ID), Postsecondary Education (PSE), Inclusive Higher Education, Interagency Cooperation, Inclusion, Integration.

التعاون بين الوكالات في التعليم العالي الشامل للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية: مراجعة أدبية

الملخص

تلعب الجامعة أو الكلية دور من أهم الأدوار في حياة الطلاب، حيث تساعدهم في تأمين الوظائف وتحسين المهارات الهامة لاحتياجاتهم اليومية. وبالتالي، فإن تزويد الطلاب ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية بالخدمات والموارد الضرورية وغيرها من أشكال الدعم من خلال إقامة شراكات تعاونية خارج الجامعة أو الكلية هو أحد العوامل الأكثر فعالية لنجاح هؤلاء الطلاب وكذلك لنجاح برامج التعليم ما بعد الثانوي. يمكن أن توفر هذه البرامج العديد من الفوائد لهؤلاء الطلاب حيث يتواجد مجموعة مختلفة من المشاركين سواء على هيئة وكالات أو منظمات أو أفراد وذلك لخدمة هؤلاء الطلاب في تلك البرامج والعمل على تحسين جودة الخدمات المقدمة لهم.

تهدف المقالة الحالية إلى تقديم مراجعة موجزة للتعليم العالي الشامل للأشخاص ذوي الإعاقة الفكرية في الولايات المتحدة في نطاق التعاون بين الوكالات في الجامعة أو الكلية من خلال مراجعة الأدبيات في هذا المجال. كما ستناقش هذه المقالة موضوعان رئيسيان وهما التعاون بين الوكالات في التعليم ما بعد المرحلة الثانوية والدعم الفدرالي كنقطة محورية للتعاون بين الوكالات في الكلية أو الجامعة والتي قد تشجع الباحثين وصناع

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القرار في تلك البرامج على تقديم شراكات تعاونية خارجية لهؤلاء الطلاب. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، قد تحث نتائج هذه المقالة البلدان الأخرى على اتخاذ خطوات مماثلة لدمج هؤلاء الطلاب في الكليات أو الجامعات، إضافة إلى توجيه الاهتمام الوثيق بدور الشراكات التعاونية في تطوير كفاءة برامج التعليم ما بعد المرحلة الثانوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإعاقة الفكرية، التعليم ما بعد الثانوي، التعليم العالي الشامل ، التعاون بين الوكالات، الدمج ، التكامل.

Introduction

Access to colleges and universities was once considered to be an unachievable dream for adults with intellectual disability (ID) (Rayan, 2014). This dream came to light as a result of the efforts of those who advocated for the integration of students with ID into inclusive settings; these advocates included parents, researchers, and practitioners. This activism ultimately helped these students gain access to colleges and universities (Grigal, & Hart, 2010; Warm, & Stander, 2011).

Inclusive higher education programs for students with ID have been in existence in the US since the 1970s (Grigal, Hart & Papay, 2019). However, interest and availability of these programs has increased greatly since the 1990s following federal funding for technical assistance and model demonstration projects. At present, there are nearly 265 postsecondary education (PSE) programs for students with ID in the US (Think College, 2019).

Griffin and Papay (2017) pointed out that opening the doors of US colleges/universities to adults with ID has been a national concern for more than ten years. The PSE programs in US colleges/universities have supported such students in attending inclusive college classes, practicing career skills, and providing additional support to facilitate access to paid jobs, especially the latter. As of 2018, nearly two-thirds of US jobs require a postsecondary degree or certification (American Association of Community Colleges, 2012). Consequently, higher education for students with ID is popular among students, families, high schools, colleges, universities, and communities.

The positive outcomes of these PSE programs have proven that students with ID can continue their higher education alongside students without disabilities (Grigal et al., 2010; Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, & Shaver, 2010). Lee, Rozell, and Will (2018) noted that in the last eight years, PSE programs for students with ID have significantly expanded to 31 states at 93 institutions of higher

education to include 3,350 students with ID. Papay, Trivedi, Smith, & Grigal (2017) conducted a one-year follow-up study with 59 individuals with ID who had studied at either a four-year PSE (64% of the sample) or a two-year PSE (36% of the sample). Of this sample, 61% had obtained a paid job after completing the PSE program, compared with only 17% of adults with ID in the general population.

The PSE programs for students with ID may have been successful because all students are classified in terms of their strengths rather than their differences, regardless of disability (Mercier, 2017). In turn, colleges and universities have offered programs designed for persons with ID to meet their unique needs in inclusive higher education (Klinert et al., 2012), by focusing on their strengths and capabilities instead of their weakness and disability (Cook, Hayden, Wilczenski, & Poynton, 2015). These programs are also unique in that they concentrate on more areas than academics and focus on providing considerably more support to students with ID than other students (Plotner & Marshall, 2016).

It should be noted that there are a variety of factors that have contributed to the promotion of PSE programs for students with ID across the US. One of the main factors is the role of interagency cooperation that has played a leading role in PSE for students with ID. Interagency collaboration is an essential component of higher education for students with ID (Francis et al., 2018) in the transition process to obtain favorable outcomes in PSE (Kohler, 1993).

Interagency collaboration can be defined procedurally as diverse agencies work together to address multiple issues related to the determination of efforts, coordination, financial support, and the provision of services (Peterson, 1991) for students with ID in PSE. This process needs high levels of collaboration and coordination to support students with disabilities in accessing the PSE, engaging in training, obtaining jobs, and living independently (Antosh et al., 2013).

On the other hand, there is a lack of Arabic literature in the field of PSE programs for students with ID. One of the critical topics in this field is interagency cooperation, which is the backbone of these

programs. As a result, the current article aims to highlight the US efforts to promote inclusive higher education programs for students with ID in the domains of interagency cooperation in PSE and the federal support as a focal point for interagency cooperation in PSE for these persons.

This article tries to answer the following question:

- What efforts has the United States made to promote inclusive higher education programs for students with ID in the areas of interagency cooperation and federal support from the point of view of studies?

The findings of this article will be presented as themes supported by evidence from the literature reviews as follows:

Interagency Cooperation in PSE

Interagency cooperation is defined as "a clear, purposeful, and carefully designed process that promotes cross agency, cross program, and cross disciplinary collaborative efforts leading to tangible transition outcomes for youth" (Rowe et al., 2014, p. 10).

According to Kleinert, Jones, Sheppard-Jones, Harp, & Harrison (2012), persons with ID can access higher education and choose their jobs due to interagency partnership and the use of co-financing sources. There is collaborative responsibility, statewide interagency, and authority concerning coordinating services for these students (Winsor & Landa, 2015). Mock and Love (2012) indicated that the growth of higher education programs for students with ID is a combined and cooperative responsibility among service providers such as school, agencies, members of families, and community. Moreover, Flowers et al., (2018) also emphasized the importance of cooperation among all stakeholders, such as students, families, employers and service providers, through interagency collaboration that helps students with disabilities acquire necessary skills, more significant experiences in post-school life and work, and independence.

Interagency collaboration is deemed as the primary factor affecting the lives of students with disabilities after high school (Antosh et al., 2013). For example, researchers have indicated that interagency collaboration is a positive indicator of PSE effectiveness

for individuals with disabilities in the areas of employment and education (Flowers et al., 2018). Gowdy, Carlson, & Rapp (2003) found that interagency collaboration between different agencies, such as educational community and adult service agencies, contributes to obtaining positive outcomes for persons with disabilities.

Interagency cooperation in a PSE program at Western Carolina University

According to Kelley and Westling (2019), PSE programs targeting students with ID in universities cannot succeed in the absence of partnerships with actors outside the campus, such as community agencies, organizations, individuals, and businesses. As there is no single agency that can offer all the services and support required by persons with ID, interagency cooperation in PSE programs gains importance in light of the fact that coordinated efforts of multiple agencies are required to meet their diverse needs in workplace and other settings (The IRIS Center, 2016).

The University Participant (UP) Program in Western Carolina University (WCU) is a two-year inclusive program for students with ID, which aims to help them in the process of transition from secondary school to adult life and provides them an experience in learning, employment, and independent living (Western Carolina University, 2019). Kelley and Westling (2019), who are directors of the program, present their experience in making cooperative partnerships outside of the UP Program at WCU. They believe that the more cooperative partnerships they build, the more benefits students with ID and the UP Program will receive. A collaboration of this kind with other agencies, organizations, individuals, and others opens up a wide variety of superior options for the UP Program to choose from in terms of educational programs, sources of support, and services for students with ID. The primary partners in PSE programs in the community and their roles, which have been highlighted by Kelley and Westling (2019) and Grigal and Hart (2010), are presented in Table 1.

Table 1 :- Primary partnerships in PSE programs for students with ID

Community partner	Description of partner	Nature of collaboration of PSE program with partner	Roles of partner in PSE program
Local businesses	Creates employment sites PSE students and alumni	PSE staff collaborate with local businesses to identify employment options for students	Employ students in part-time or unpaid internships during and after the PSE program
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)	State-level agency authorized by Congress and operated and funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).	PSE staff work with VR counselors and invite them to become a part of the students' college experience	Assist PSE programs and students by providing funding and services in education and training, which helps them find and keep jobs, preferably in careers of their choice
Benefits counselors	They are part of the Work Incentives Planning and Assistance program of the Social Security Administration; placed in regional areas of each state to help students and their families derive benefits	PSE programs develop an association with benefits counselors	Provide a variety of accurate information to students and their families, such as terms and conditions regarding income, savings, and ownership and ways in which key benefits can be retained while pursuing typical life outcomes
Public transportation	Provides public transportation to students and their parents	PSE staff familiarize themselves with all aspects of the transportation system, including the routes, schedules, fees, payment methods, stops, and accessibility	Offer students public transport so that they can commute with ease. PSE program staff and students receive a transportation schedule, which can be used to coordinate students' and staff's activities and schedules
Local management entities (LME)/managed care organizations (MCOs) and community service agencies	Manage the funds distributed by the state for residential and community-level services for persons with ID	PSE staff familiarize themselves with the LMEs/MCOs and the community service agencies in their respective areas, especially those providing services to any of their students	Determine students' eligibility for available types of support and the hours of weekly support or funding available to students; LMEs/MCOs provide funding for service providers at community service agencies

Community partner	Description of partner	Nature of collaboration of PSE program with partner	Roles of partner in PSE program
Family support networks	Facilitate the formation of informal connections between students' families	PSE staff are responsible for continuous communication with students and their families to work together in the transition, update themselves with students plans in the program, and respond to queries	All students, including former students, and their family members share information, suggestions, and ideas with each other and act as mentors to each other; students' families also discuss the process of planning the transition, know the goals of their children, and support their children in developing skills
Other colleges and schools	Other colleges and schools where PSE programs for students with ID are being implemented	PSE staff interact with the PSE staff at other colleges and schools to gain knowledge about each other's experience in the program	Other colleges and schools might be useful partners through sharing useful insights into funding, organization, and research
Advocacy organizations	Organizations that may be active at the local, state, and national levels; partners in PSE programs and allies of the students and their families	PSE staff interact with advocacy organizations, including the State Developmental Disabilities Council, the state-level Postsecondary Education Alliance, the state-level University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD), the Arc, Disability Rights, and TASH	Support students, with high expectations of their ability to go to college, along with providing support services and helping them find paid employment

An example of interagency cooperation at a state level

There is a strong history of interagency cooperation in Iowa, where the Iowa Governance Group contains the Iowa Department on Aging, the Iowa Department for the Blind, the Iowa Department of Education, the Iowa Department of Human Rights, the Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council, and Iowa Workforce Development. The heads of these agencies meet yearly. The Governance Group works to resolve some issues through state agencies, such as inconsistent information and practices in providing beneficial plans, and to address the shortages of standard methods of collecting data on employment outcomes. All these procedures lead to the assessment of systematic efforts to achieve employment results (Winsor & Landa, 2015).

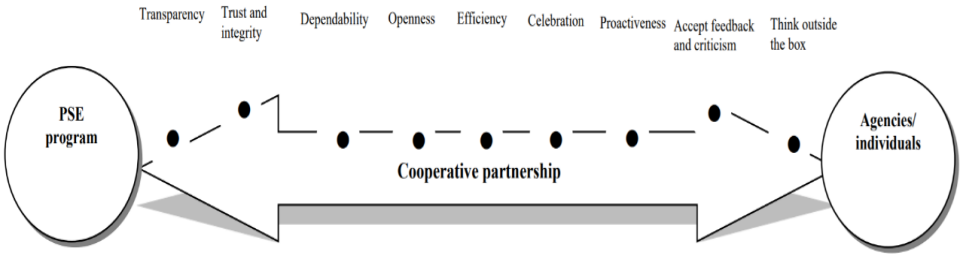
The Operations Team, which is under the Governance Group, has regular meetings that aim to improve policy and practices and disseminate resources to local communities that lead to enhancing positive employment outcomes for persons with special needs. There is another team called the Iowa Coalition for Integrated Employment (ICIE) consortium, which includes community organizations, service providers, persons with ID, and families. The ICIE team identifies employment obstacles and resolves issues in collaborative ways (Winsor & Landa, 2015).

The lesson learned from Western Carolina University and Iowa is that without interagency collaboration, students, their families, and adult agencies will face challenges in planning to provide the services and support required by persons with ID (Hart, Zimbrich, & Whelley, 2002), which negatively influences the quality of their lives.

Fundamental principles of successful cooperative partnerships in PSE programs for students with ID

Kelley and Westling (2019) suggest a few fundamental principles to forge successful cooperative partnerships with actors that are not a part of the university or college to enhance the services and quality of PSE programs offered to students with ID. These principles are represented in the Figure 1.

Figure 1. Principles for forging successful cooperative partnerships in PSE programs for student with ID



As illustrated in Figure 1, building a successful cooperative partnership between PSE programs and organizations or individuals that the relationship should be reciprocal based on a set of principles. For example, the first requirement for establishing a successful cooperative partnership requires is transparency in the PSE program. For example, the UP Program keeps its doors of communication with other agencies and individuals open. This allows everyone to know about and learn from the UP Program, its procedures, and values. Second, honesty should be a key principle in the PSE program. The UP Program staff communicate with honesty to gain stakeholder trust and establish good rapport with them. The PSE programs also need to be dependable. In that regard, the UP Program works towards creating new opportunities and relationships with other people and agencies. Although the UP program accepts that the staff faces some issues regarding students at WCU, the program is accessible to all. Furthermore, PSE programs should practice openness with others, whether these are individuals, organizations, or agencies. In this regard, the UP Program staff believe that they have designed a new social and educational project in a regular university by practicing openness with others and explaining the content and objectives of the program, in addition to making modifications, when necessary, in the interest of the program. Efficiency is an important principle that PSE programs must exhibit. PSE programs are always busy, what with the staff, the faculty, the officials, and the students being fully occupied with work during working hours. However, the UP Program works with the belief that no one in the program should be saddled

with workload. The program staff believe that if a system already exists, there is no need to create a new one. Therefore, in the UP Program, a heavy workload is uncommon unless accompanied by financial compensation. In addition, the UP Program staff also believe that the success of the program, which lies in the diversity and inclusion of students with ID, should be celebrated together with program partners by giving due credit to them. However, given the nature of the PSE programs, these programs are linked to risks, which must be identified and managed by the program staff. Further, in order to develop PSE programs, the program staff should invite feedback and attempt to resolve problems. Finally, the UP Program staff recommend thinking outside the box, which means being open to thinking in different ways and never considering the need of make changes in the program an indication of failure or inadequacy of the program (Kelley & Westling, 2019).

Federal support for students with ID in PSE as a focal point for interagency cooperation

Another significant effort to promote PSE for students with ID is federal support, which comes in line with the US history of promoting education to improve citizens' quality of life and maintain democracy (Grigal, Hart, & Weir, 2012b). The federal support for students with ID in PSE comes as a focal point for interagency cooperation.

The US has federally mandated education for all through the enactment of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, regardless of circumstances, whether individuals have disabilities or other conditions. Along with this obligation, the federal government funds educational programs to aid students who are inadequately supported and promotes strategies to help them complete their education successfully. The federal government also covers all the needs of students with ID, including education, healthcare, accommodations, and a range of technical and therapeutic aids are provided to students through federal financial support. Further, the federal government works with civic groups and state and local authorities to resolve various educational issues, ensure equality in education for all (US State Department, 2010), and

encourages coordination among agencies (Shu-Hsien, 2004), to serve students with ID through adopted legislation and laws. For example, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 2004 encourages interagency cooperation and coordination to facilitate all services required for students with ID in PSE (National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, 2016). In addition, the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act of 2014 (WIOA) made a significant contribution to enhancing and improving the US workforce system including training for persons with disabilities, including ID in addition to encouraging employers to employ them. This law affirms interagency cooperation and provision of services to adults and those with significant disabilities, such as Pre-Employment Services and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds for students with ID in PSE and the promotion of competitive employment. The last significant low which is Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 (HEOA) also gives priority to cooperation with VR agencies in relation to Transition and Postsecondary Programs for Students with Intellectual Disability (TPSID) grant requirements, the HEOA prefers to offer the TPSID grants provided by the US Department of Education to applicants who have partnerships with agencies such as VR agencies (Lee, Rozell, & Will, 2018).

These and other laws support persons with ID at federal and state levels in order to help them reach all educational levels, including higher education, passing two pieces of federal legislation: HEOA and WIOA. These pieces of legislation contribute to allowing these individuals access to the PSE, training them for obtaining a job, and living independently (Grigal et al., 2012b). Therefore, there are federally funded centers that help people with special needs to live independently in their location of choice, together with those who wish to live with them (US State Department, 2010). There are also vocational training centers for many sectors supported by federal support. In addition, training centers for families of children with special needs, which inform them of their rights, and how to advocate for their children (US State Department, 2010).

Moreover, according to Center for Parent Information and Resources, (2016), there are many agencies and organizations cooperate with other university/college to serve people with special needs, including persons with ID, examples include, but are not limited to:

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agency, which has a key role in determining the way transitional services, including employment services, PSE, and independent living as adults will reach these students to help them become employed and independent. Federal and state funds fund VR agencies.
- Independent living centers (ILCs) are non-residential community-based agencies founded to help people with disabilities achieve self-sufficiency in their lives.
- The Social Security Administration (SSA) runs a program that is funded by the federal government to help people with ID and other severe disabilities who cannot work. Various programs are provided to such persons, including Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Plans to Achieve Self-Support (PASS), Medicaid, and Medicare.
- Service Agencies for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities or Mental Health Concerns are provided depending on the students' individual needs

It is noticeable that federal government support is in line with interagency cooperation efforts to promote inclusive higher education for students with ID, which is a significant point that should be noted by other governments, stakeholders, officials, and decision makers interested in inclusive university education for people with ID.

Other countries' experiences in PSE for students with ID Canada:

PSE for students with ID starts from the province of Alberta in Canada, which has a leadership role for the rest of the PSE programs in other Canadian provinces. Students with ID access PSE programs in Alberta through including them in academic classes and campus activities. In addition to providing all support needed to these students, faculty, and peer mentors. These programs aim to prepare

these students for the job appropriate to their capabilities (Aylward & Bruce, 2014).

Australia: Gadow & MacDonald, (2019), reported Australia experience in PSE for students with ID. They mentioned that inclusive higher education for students with ID remains limited in Australia. There are only two higher education initiatives for these persons to date. The university of Sydney is one of these initiatives, which is called *uni 2 beyond*, and was established in 2012. There was an evident challenge regarding enrollment students with ID at a university who do not meet the traditional requirements of university acceptance. The experience of Australia in PSE for students with ID is probably unknown (Gadow & MacDonald, 2019). The uni 2 beyond was succeed as results of a variety of factors which follow:

- Forming relationships with champions through the state government, local disability and advocacy organizations, and university is a significant step which would make an initiative a success.
- Review international models in inclusive higher education for students with ID.
- Parents, friends, advocates, and other supporters play a vital role in the Uni 2 beyond, where these supporters usually meet together to discuss important topics.

Ireland: PSE for students with ID is also unheard. Since 2007, the University of Iceland offers a vocational diploma program for these students in inclusive environment (Stefánsdóttir & Björnsdóttir (2015).The locate of this program is at the School of Education. Students with ID are trained to work at pre-primary schools, after school clubs and within the field of disability such as self-advocacy. These students learn at the university as a result of multiple efforts made for them including, accommodating the general curricula, providing all support needed for these students, using appropriate teaching methods, and cooperating among the program staff such as faculty members, coordinators, student mentors, and students with ID (Björnsdóttir, 2017).

Conclusion

Colleges and universities are suitable environments for students with ID to improve their abilities and skills (Kleinert et al., 2012). In recent years, there has been a recognition of the importance of higher education for people with ID, a group that has traditionally faced exclusion in college admission (Plotner & Marshall, 2015). Advocacy for inclusion of people with ID across their lifespan and an acknowledgment of the benefits of higher education for all have led to the development of opportunities for students with ID to access higher education with their peers without disabilities. Such opportunities offer them "the chance to explore, define, and redefine personal goals related to adult leaning, employment, and social connections" (Grigal & Hart, 2010). PSE programs for students with ID will be effective if the concerned individuals, agencies, and organizations work in an integrated manner to support the students in the transition process, and the more partners, the greater the success, stability, and understanding of these programs (Kelley & Westling, 2019).

This paper presented a case of interagency cooperation in PSE for students with ID in the US, in addition to the federal support as a focal point. Undoubtedly, interagency cooperation has a huge impact on PSE programs (Hart, Zafft, & Zimbrich, 2001). The US experience of interagency cooperation in PSE programs for students with ID offers several learnings in terms of supporting persons with ID, defending their right to higher education, and providing adequate support for them to do well and succeed in college or university.

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