

## The Perception of Special School Teachers on Functional Adult Life Skills for Student with Intellectual Disabilities

Yungkeun Park

Department of Special Education, Sehan University, South Korea  
a5890@naver.com

### Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to investigate the current perceptions of special education teachers about functional adult living skills of students with Intellectual Disabilities (ID) for successful transition to adult life. The results of this study are as follows. First, overall special education teachers for students with ID perceived the importance of teaching six functional adult living skills areas in order to help students with ID have successful transition to adult life. Second, although, special education teachers for students with ID perceived the importance of teaching six functional living skills areas, the teachers perceived their implementation level of these skills as relatively low. Through Importance - Performance Analysis (IPA) of 6 functional adult life skills by using the mean difference between the perception of importance and performance of teachers, 4 areas such as concentrate here, keep up the good work, low priority, possible overkill are suggested. There are some suggestions based on the results of the research.*

**Keywords:** *Functional adult life skills, Students with intellectual disabilities, Teacher perception*

### 1. Introduction

Today, special education is aimed at the practical community inclusion of students with special educational support needs. Practical community inclusion refers to the integration that allows students to live as a member of society in the community through employment, even after they have graduated from school, beyond integration in the school-aged school environment [1].

Thus, most special education teachers and parents of students with disabilities focus on preparing to live as an independent adult after graduating from high school [2] and productive members of the community [3]. Therefore, special education teachers should provide a curriculum that focuses on preparing students to live an adult life, such as participation in the community, participation in leisure and hobbies, admission to higher education, and employment after they become adults [4].

Because students with intellectual disabilities have limitations in the conceptual, practical, and social adaptation skills, as well as intellectual deficiencies, compared to their age, the school curriculum is designed to enable them to acquire functional life

---

#### Article history:

Received (December 31, 2018), Review Result (February 5, 2019), Accepted (April 1, 2019)

skills through appropriate transition education tailored to their individualized special needs [5].

Although students with intellectual disabilities have received special education through three years of junior high school, three years of high school, and two years of postsecondary education, they have not achieved the successful transition outcome. Although there is a growing awareness of importance about functional life skills through transition education in the field of special education, the practical implementation of transition service is relatively low.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the level of awareness about the importance level and the performance level of special education teachers on functional adult life skills that students with intellectual disabilities should learn so that they can have a successful transition into adult life. Through this, this study is to provide basic information to enhance the importance and performance of functional adult life skills needed in the field so that students with intellectual disabilities can have transitioned into successful adult life.

The specific objectives of this study are:

(1) To determine teachers' perceived importance and performance of teaching functional adult life skills to students with intellectual disabilities transitioning into adulthood.

(2) To investigate functional adult life skills that needs to be taught for adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

## **2. Study method**

### **2.1. Participant**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perception of special teachers on the functional adult life skills of students with intellectual disabilities, the subjects of this study were secondary special education teachers in special schools and special classes nationwide. To select the subjects of this study, 269 questionnaires were distributed and 238 questionnaires were collected with the cooperation of special education school teachers and special class teachers in secondary schools nationwide. A total of 233 questionnaires were analyzed, excluding 5 questionnaires that were not completed properly.

### **2.2. Survey questionnaire**

To examine the teachers' perceived importance and performance of teaching students with intellectual disabilities the functional adult life skills required for a successful transition to adult life, the researcher used a questionnaire developed by Jung [6] based on the areas of functional adult life skills suggested by Steere, Rose, and Cavaiuolo [7].

The first part of the questionnaire was designed to examine the background variables of the special education teachers as participants and the second part is to examine teachers' perceptions of functional adult life skills of students with intellectual disabilities. The questionnaire is on the 5 points Likert scale, and the items are 28 items. Chronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated to investigate the internal consistency of each questionnaire item. The Chronbach's alpha coefficients for each

item are overall .70 or higher, thus the questionnaire has a reasonable internal consistency.

### 2.3. Data analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 21.0. An independent t-test was conducted to compare the perceived importance and performance and then investigate the functional adult life skills that need to be taught for adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

Using the mean difference between the perception of importance and performance of teaching functional adult life skills, the Importance - Performance Analysis (IPA) proposed by Martilla and James [8] are implemented.

## 3. Results

### 3.1. Teachers' perceived importance and performance of teaching functional adult life skills for with intellectual disabilities

The teachers' perceived importance of teaching functional adult life skills for students with intellectual disabilities to successfully transition into adult life were examined based on 6 domains: home living skills, community utilization skills, employment skills, financial planning and consumption skills, entertainment and leisure skills, and health and safety skills [Table 1].

Table 1. Perceived importance and performance of teaching functional adult life skills

Domain	Independent living skills	Importance	Performance	t
		M(SD)	M(SD)	
	Home living skills	4.03(0.67)	3.31(0.72)	10.090***
	Community utilization skills	4.39(0.65)	3.32(0.82)	14.326***
	Employment skills	4.21(0.66)	3.19(0.99)	12.850***
	Financial planning and consumption skills	4.18(0.72)	2.98(0.97)	14.144***
	Entertainment and leisure skills	4.05(0.68)	3.38(0.86)	10.327***
	Health and Safety skills	4.16(0.67)	3.07(0.94)	13.387***
	Total	4.17(0.57)	3.20(0.74)	18.412***

[Table 1] shows the mean and standard deviation of each domain and questionnaire item, related to special education teachers' perceived importance of teaching functional adult life skills required for a successful transition to adult life. The overall level of recognition of the perceived importance of special education teachers in teaching functional adult life skills for successful adult life of students with intellectual disabilities is 4.29, which is generally considered 'important'.

These results show that, the special education teachers in Korea consider that it is important for them to teach six functional adult life skills areas for successful transition of students with intellectual disabilities.

The teachers' perceived performance of teaching functional adult life skills for students with intellectual disabilities to successfully transition into adult life were examined based on 6 domains: home living skills, community utilization skills, employment skills, financial planning and consumption skills, entertainment and leisure skills, and health and safety skills. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation of

each domain and questionnaire item, related to special education teachers' perceived performance of teaching functional adult life skills required for a successful transition to adult life.

The overall level of recognition of the perceived performance of special education teachers in teaching functional adult life skills for successful adult life of students with intellectual disabilities is 3.20. These results show that, although the special education teachers think that it is important to teach six functional adult life skills areas, their performance level is relatively low.

### 3.2. Functional adult life skills that need to be taught for adolescents with intellectual disabilities

As shown in [Table 3], the average difference between the level of perceived importance ( $M=4.17$ ,  $SD=.57$ ) and the perception level of actual performance ( $M=3.20$ ,  $SD=.74$ ) of teaching the 6 domains of functional adult life skills to adolescents with intellectual disabilities transitioning into adulthood was statistically significant ( $t=18.412$ ) at the .1% level.

Special education teachers considered all 6 domains of functional adult life skills to be important, but the degree they actually teach these domains in class was significantly lower than the level of their perceived importance. In view of these results, teachers are aware of the importance of their roles in teaching the skills required for a successful transition to adulthood, but they generally fail to put their thoughts into practice.

[Table 2] shows the top 10 functional adult life skills with the largest difference in the level of perceived importance and the perception level of actual performance. The greater the difference is, the more it is required to teach that skill at this point for the successful transition of adolescents with intellectual disabilities.

Table 2. Functional adult life skills that need to be taught more intensively

Functional adult life skills	Domain	Importance	Performance
Reading and following the medicine dose accurately	Health and safety skills	4.32(0.85)	2.96(1.10)
Managing money safely	Financial planning and consumption skills	4.31(0.81)	2.99(1.10)
Spending money on person's own capacity	Financial planning and consumption skills	4.09(0.95)	2.70(1.10)
Accessing to community services such as hospitals, banks and dry cleaners	Community utilization skills	4.21(0.92)	2.90(1.06)
Using banks, ATM machines, debit and credit cards Properly	Financial planning and consumption skills	4.06(0.91)	2.80(1.11)
Purchasing somethings from community supermarkets or large marts	Community utilization skills	4.41(0.79)	3.25(1.06)
Safely storing and using food	Health and safety skills	4.45(0.78)	3.33(1.12)
Crossing the crosswalk safely	Community utilization skills	4.66(0.66)	3.61(1.03)
Reading the bill and paying the correct amount	Financial planning and consumption skills	4.39(0.83)	3.27(1.10)
Safe use, maintenance and management of workplace tools	Employment skills	4.47(0.75)	3.42(1.13)

### 3.3. Importance - Performance Analysis of special education teacher on teaching functional adult life skills

[Table 3] and picture1 shows Importance - Performance Analysis (IPA) of teaching 6 functional adult life skills by using the mean difference between the perception of importance and performance of teachers. 6 functional adult life skills are divided into 4 areas such as concentrate here, keep up the good work, low priority, possible overkill.

Table 3. Importance - Performance Analysis of teaching functional adult life skills

Domain	Functional adult life skills
Concentrate here	Financial planning and consumption skills
	Employment skills
Keep up the good work	Community utilization skills
Low priority	Health and safety skills
Possible overkill	entertainment and leisure skills
	Home living skills

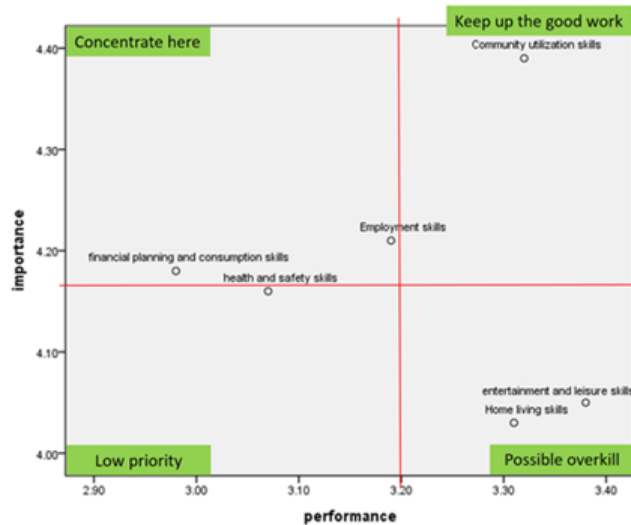


Figure 1. Importance - performance analysis

### 4. Discussions and conclusion

The discussion and conclusion derived from the research results are as follows. The perceived importance was highest for the domain of community utilization skills and employment skills, followed by financial planning and consumption skills, health and safety skills, entertainment and leisure skills, and home living skills. The perception level of actual performance was highest for entertainment and leisure skills and community utilization skills, followed by home living skills, employment skills, health and safety skills, and financial planning and consumption skills. Although special education teachers think that it is importance to teach 6 functional adult life skills for students with intellectual disabilities to effectively transition into adult life, their perceived performance level was lower than the perceived importance level. There was a significant difference between the perceived importance and actual performance,

significantly community utilization skills and financial planning and consumption skills domains. This could hinder the achievement of the goals of transition education to enhance their quality of life and to promote their social integration of students with intellectual disabilities **Error! Reference source not found.** Based on the difference between the perceived importance and actual performance of teaching functional adult life skills for transition education, it is necessary to find the reasons of these phenomenon and to teach the skills showing a large discrepancy by primary orders for students with intellectual disabilities through the school curriculum.

Through importance - performance analysis, it is verified that special education teacher should focus on financial planning & consumption skills, employment skills, and community utilization skills and not focusing on health and safety skills and entertainment and leisure skills.

Based on the results of this study, some suggestions are as follows.

First, among the items of adult life skill domain, teacher 's performance is low in areas requiring high understanding and logical thinking like financial planning because students with intellectual disabilities are becoming increasingly serious. Therefore, in order for special education teacher to teach this high level of skills, it is necessary to provide concrete education contents and methods from the transition periods of elementary school or preschool **Error! Reference source not found.**

Second, because these adult life skills are not skills that can be learned over a short period of time, the curriculum should be developed so that the contents of functional skills can be included throughout the curriculum. The school curriculum should be composed of the comprehensive knowledge and functions necessary for various life scenes **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.**

Third, there is a generally low performance for teaching using facilities in the community, such as hospitals, banks and dry cleaners. This means that there is needs to build close relationship between the school and the institutions in the community. In order to do so, it is necessary to establish an agreement and cooperation system in advance regarding the use of institutions and the use of facilities **Error! Reference source not found. Error! Reference source not found.** The contents of the 5 items which show the greatest perception difference between the importance and the performance of the special teacher are as follows: reading and following the medicine dose accurately, spending money on person's own capacity, managing money safely, using public transportation, accessing to community services such as hospitals, banks and dry cleaners, using banks, ATM machines, debit and credit cards Properly

In this way, functional adult life skills, which are difficult for special education teachers to teach practically although they perceive the importance of teaching these skills, are not skills to be learned in school classrooms. Therefore, if the utilization of facilities in the school and the local community are activated, these limitations will be overcome.

In addition, the skills that special education teachers perceive as the most important in the area of functional living skills are 'crossing the crosswalk safely', 'recognizing and safely responding to fire risks', 'safely using, maintaining and managing workplace tools' Safe storage and use'. In this respect, it can be seen that the area in which special education teachers think most important when teaching functional adult life skills is related to the safety of students. Because Students with intellectual disabilities have a lack of awareness and coping skills, especially for dangerous situations, it is necessary

that the school curriculum include preparation skills for a risk situation of students with intellectual disabilities.

## References

- [1] Y. Park, "Analyzing the quality of secondary special education program for students with intellectual disabilities based on transition services program: a mixed-method study," *Journal of Special Education & Rehabilitation Science*, vol.53, no.2, pp.69-90, **(2014)**
- [2] B. Kraemer and J. Blacher, "Transition for young adults with severe mental retardation: School preparation, parent expectations, and family involvement," *Mental Retardation*, vol.39, pp.422-435, **(2001)**
- [3] Y. Park and K. Park, "The significance of family involvement and promoting strategies in the transition process: A mixed-method study," *Journal of special education: theory and practice*, vol.15, no.4, pp.439-460, **(2014)**
- [4] D. Biklen and N. Zollers, "The focus of advocacy in the LD field," *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, vol.19, pp.579-586
- [5] Y. Park, "Analyzing dilemmas faced by special education teachers in implementing transition services - A qualitative analysis based on the dilemmas framework," *Disability and Employment*, vol.23, no.4, pp.29-57, **(2013)**
- [6] Y. Jung, "Special education teacher's perception of functional adult living skills for students with intellectual disabilities," Master thesis, Graduate school, Daegu University, **(2014)**
- [7] D. Steere, E. Rose, and D. Cavaulolo, "Growing up: Transition to adult life for students with disabilities," Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, **(2006)**
- [8] J. A. Martilla and J. C. James, "Importance-performance analysis," *Journal of Marketing*, vol.2, no.1, pp.77-79

***This page is empty by intention.***