

# Chapter 3

## Policy Matters Concerning the Career Transition of Students With ASD

### **ABSTRACT**

*This study examined the policy matters that influence the career transition of students who have autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The objectives were threefold: (1) to determine the levels of principals' and proprietors' ratings across six policy dimensions; (2) to assess the extent to which demographic characteristics predict variations in these policy practices; and (3) to analyse the results and identify areas for policy improvement that would better support students who have ASD in readiness for adult life. A quantitative, survey-based approach was used, involving the administration of a self-developed questionnaire to school leaders. The major findings indicate strong endorsement of leadership vision, staff training and inclusive structures, although data-driven practice and family engagement remained low. Regression analysis showed a limited predictive influence of demographic factors. Targeted leadership development, strengthened collaboration, and improved accountability systems are essential for effective transition policy implementation.*

### **BACKGROUND**

#### **Policy Defined**

A policy includes a formal and intentional set of codes, principles, norms or directives adopted by a government or organisation to guide decisions, regulate

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behaviour, and allocate resources toward achieving specific objectives (Eseadi & Diale, 2025; Gillies, 2024). Policies that support the career transition of students who have ASD (autism spectrum disorders) vary across regions due to differences in political will, resource availability, cultural interpretations of disability, and the growing recognition of inclusive education (IE). While there is a growing appreciation of the need to prepare individuals who have ASD for adult life, the degree to which countries translate policy commitments into effective transition pathways differs generally.

## **International Policy Context**

North America, particularly the United States, has one of the most developed policy environments regarding transition for students who have disabilities (SWD), such as students who have ASD. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act mandates the inclusion of transition planning within the Individualised Education Programme from age sixteen (or younger, if suitable) (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services U.S. Department of Education, 2000; Stone-MacDonald et al., 2016). This planning must include measurable post-school goals, coordinated activities, and linkages to employment or further education (Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Other legislation, such as the United States' Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which serves as a key federal framework for developing the workforce and reinforces interagency collaboration between schools and vocational services (Employment and Training Administration U.S. Department of Labour, 2016; Espinoza, 2018). The WIOA came into effect as a law on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2014. The WIOA seeks to improve individuals' access to jobs, training opportunities, educational pathways, and support services. Its broader goal is to strengthen the alignment between workforce needs and employer demands within the global economy (Employment and Training Administration U.S. Department of Labour, 2016; Espinoza, 2018). WIOA also continues the mandate of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which is specifically aimed at supporting people with disabilities (PWD) in obtaining suitable employment. The Rehabilitation Act, updated through Public Law 114–95 in 2015, serves as the principal federal statute guiding vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in the United States. It replaces earlier VR legislation and renews federal grant provisions that help states deliver employment-related support to PWD, with particular attention to PWD who have the most considerable needs. The Act broadens the federal government's role by strengthening research, training, and specialised responsibilities aimed at improving outcomes for PWD. It also establishes a formal relation between state VR programmes and the national workforce development system created under Title I of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (Senate and

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