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Introduction/ Background

Young people with disability often face challenges transitioning into adulthood (McCollin & Obiakor, 2010). Challenges include: not graduating from school, finding it hard to find employment, needing to rely on families and government services, and limited opportunities for post-secondary training (McCollin & Obiakor, 2010).

In Australia, between 2008 and 2016, there has been more and more students with disability enrolling into university (Universities Australia, 2017). There are only two inclusive university programs for people with intellectual disability (ID) in Australia: the 'Up the Hill Project' (UTHP) at Flinders University; and the uni 2 beyond program at the University of Sydney.

There are many benefits for people with intellectual disability attending university, including more likely to get a job (employment), increase in self-determination, and to have an important role like other people in society (Baum, Kurose, & McPherson, 2013; Carnevale, Rose, & Cheah, 2013; Hart, Grigal, & Weir, 2010; Leonhardt, 2011; Plotner & May, 2017; Schultz & Higbee, 2007; Wehman, 2013). Even though there are these benefits and good things, there are also some barriers and challenges. These barriers make it harder for people with intellectual disability to access university (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017; Berg, Jirikowic, Haerling, & MacDonald, 2017; Connor, 2013; Cook, 2017; Griffin, McMillan, & Hodapp, 2010; Griffin & Papay, 2017; Hafner, Moffatt, & Kisa, 2011; Hart et al., 2010; Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012; Stodden, Conway, & Chang, 2003). One of the barriers is that people with ID may not get help to make a decision about what to do when they finish

school (like going to university). This means that we need to know more about how people with ID make a choice about what they want to do when they finish school. We also need to know more about why and how people with ID choose to go to university; or why they choose to do something else, like get a job or do a recreation activity.

Methods

For this research interviews were conducted with five people with intellectual disability. They were aged from 18 to 31 years. The participants discussed their experiences in decision-making during moving on from school to post-school (transition).

Findings

This research considered the influence of lots of things when transitioning from school to post-school. These things were: themselves, parents, siblings, paid supports, friends, school, and transition programs. Now we will tell you a bit more about each of these.

Self

Participants described their decision-making opportunities. People who wanted to go to university were more likely to be involved in making major decisions. Dreams, desires, and decisions about post-school options were explored. For one participant this involved going to university; *“I had a dream of going to university...”* (Maddy).

Self Determination

Self-determination skills such as self-advocacy, self-awareness and goal setting are important in university preparation (Morningstar et al., 2010). Participants who wanted to go to university appeared more confident and sure within themselves (self-assured). Those who did not mention university appeared unsure of their responses to questions about these skills.

Parents

Parents play an important role in the decision-making process about post-school options. Within the study parents' expectations of what their son/ daughter with ID would do after finishing school varied.

Siblings

Participants who chose post-school options did not have much influence from their siblings. However, other research has said that siblings potentially have strong influences on life choices (Tomeny, Ellis, Rankin, & Barry, 2017).

School

Participants attended lots of different types of schools: mainstream schools, with and without a disability unit, and specialised disability schools. Findings from the study suggested those who attended mainstream schools were more likely to express an interest in attending university. This links to other research which found that the longer a student is in mainstream schooling the more likely they are to go to university (Hart et al., 2010; Martinez et al., 2012; Wintle, 2015).

Professional relationships/ Paid Supports

Many people with ID consider paid support staff as their friends because they often give social support (Friedman & Rizzolo, 2018; Fulford & Cobigo, 2018; Rickson & Warren, 2018). Participants had relationships with support staff, but there didn't appear to be an influence from support staff about post-school options.

Friends

Participants who attended mainstream schools discussed the importance of talking about post-school options with their school friends. However, participants who did not go to mainstream schools did not talk as much about these conversations with school friends.

Findings suggested that if the person with ID talks with more peers without disability, they are more likely to consider university as an option when they finish school.

Transition

Vocational Education Training (VET) courses was one pathway discussed by participants. Other participants also talked about dedicated transition programs for people with disability. Findings show when participants were involved in one or more transitional pathways, they were more likely to want to attend university.

A link between how involved a student feels and how involved they are during the transition into post-school environment was found. Some participants within the study were not aware of the transition process. These same participants described feelings anxious about transition.

What does all of this mean? (Implications)

More emphasis should be placed on including students with ID through the transition process. There is a need to increase the awareness of university as an option for people with ID as well as the possibility that NDIS funding could be used to get help to go to university. Schools and transition programs should make sure they include inclusive university programs as an option for students with ID when they transition from finishing school. Participants were not aware of the National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) program. It helps to coordinate services in the transition from school to the post-school (ACIL Allen Consulting, 2017). Therefore, more people need to know about the NDCO. Finally, it is very important to make sure there is more research about post-school pathways into higher education. This is so that people with ID have the opportunity to participate in further education if they want to. This was highlighted by a participant, James, who reinforced the importance of education for him:

“...being educated really does help you in some ways, it really does help you understand how the world works, and also what you can contribute”.

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