

**Perspectives on School-to-Work Transition Services for Youth With Autism in China:
Insights From Key Constituents**

Abstract

School-to-work transition is a crucial phase for youth with autism, requiring a comprehensive understanding of helpful practices and the challenges encountered during the process. This qualitative study used semi-structured interviews to explore the school-to-work transition experiences of six youth with autism in China, focusing on the perspectives of the youth themselves and other constituents who are involved in their transition processes (i.e., parents, teachers, and employers). The findings identified four key practices that facilitate transition (school-based transition program, parental involvement, work modifications, and stakeholder partnerships), two significant challenges in current transition services (conflict in employment expectations and gaps in autism-focused supports), and two main recommendations for improvement (developing individualized transition plans and strengthening government support). These findings reveal similarities with Western practices and challenges, while reflecting the unique cultural and political contexts of China. The study provides insights for enhancing school-to-work transition services for youth with autism and offers a distinctly Chinese perspective to the discussion on autism transition services.

Keywords: autism, youth, transition to work, employment, China

Perspectives on School-to-Work Transition Services for Youth With Autism in China: Insights From Key Constituents

School-to-work transition is critical for youth with disability, including people with autism, as employment enhances dignity, self-esteem, psychological health, and quality of life, while bringing economic benefits (Almalky, 2020; Jacob et al., 2015). People with autism often have extensive, lifelong needs for sustained support in areas such as communication, emotion, behavior, and cognition (Wehmeyer et al., 2016). Relatedly, they may experience extra challenges in transitioning compared to other groups, including difficulties in communicating with coworkers, coping with change, and managing sensory sensitivities and time (Baldwin et al., 2014; Hedley et al., 2017). External barriers like restricted resources, few job opportunities, insufficient stakeholder collaboration, and inadequate workplace accommodations further complicate their transition experiences (Awsumb et al., 2022; Brenner & Dymond, 2023; Snell-Rood et al., 2020). Despite legislative efforts worldwide, including in the U.S. and China, to reduce employment discrimination, youth with autism experience low employment rates globally (Dreaver et al., 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2011), even compared to other disability groups (Roux et al., 2015). A survey of 3,581 parents across 71 Chinese autism service organizations revealed that fewer than 10% of youth with autism gained employment (China Association of Persons with Psychiatric Disability and their Relatives [CAPPDR], 2014). Those who are employed typically work in carwashes, hotels, or catering, doing repetitive tasks for relatively low pay (Wong, 2017; Zhu & Yan, 2019).

The Chinese government has enacted legislation over the past two decades to secure vocational education and employment rights for individuals with disabilities (Ge et al., 2021). Vocational education emphasizes employability and job-specific skills, primarily provided

through special education schools or vocational training organizations (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2022). Special education schools are encouraged to design tailored majors/courses for students with autism (State Council, 2022). Vocational training programs, managed by the China Disabled Persons' Federation (CDPF), which works directly with the government, as well as by non-profit, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), also offer free vocational rehabilitation for those who have not attended high school or seek further vocational training post-graduation (State Council, 2007). Recent policies require special education schools and vocational training organizations to provide school-to-work transition services for students with disabilities (State Council, 2022), with local governments providing well-trained job coaches to support them (State Council, 2021). However, regulations lack precise requirements for service implementation and staffing, leaving schools and organizations to develop their own school-based/organization-based transition services, resulting in service gaps. A nationwide survey of 371 parents of people with autism (ages 16 and older) found that only 15.8% received employment support, and 43.5% participated in vocational education (Guo, 2022).

International studies have examined practices that improve employment outcomes for youth with disabilities, focusing on insights from youth and their stakeholders. Identified key practices include autism-focused interventions (e.g., behavior-shaping techniques, social skills interventions, and daily living skills training), pre-employment work opportunities, family involvement, workplace support, and collaborative services (Hedley et al., 2017; Kuo et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2019; Nicholas et al., 2018). These practices align with Kohler's Taxonomy for Transition Programming, a widely recognized framework of quality transition practices (Kohler et al., 2017). However, there is little known about the implementation of effective transition services for youth with autism (Baker-Ericzén et al., 2022).

In China, research on school-to-work transition for individuals with disabilities is limited, and research on autism primarily draws on overseas practices rather than local empirical data. Although some experimental studies offer insights, such as using visual task analysis in vocational skills training (Lee et al., 2020), the lived experiences of youth with autism remain underexplored. Few qualitative studies have explored their transition to employment. McCabe and Wu (2009) focused on one youth, interviewing family, government leaders, and coworkers, and conducting observations, identifying the importance of maternal involvement in transition. This reflects a culturally deep-rooted division of labor between parents in China, where mothers are expected to be primary caregivers (Li et al., 2023) - a phenomenon also observed in other contexts (Acar et al., 2021; Gau et al., 2010). Similarly, Zhang (2021) explored the perspectives of parents, teachers, and employers, revealing role conflicts and overlapping responsibilities among these groups that hinder collaboration in transition services. While these studies provide valuable insights, the voices of youth with autism remain relatively unheard, and their transition experiences still need further exploration.

Therefore, this study gathered firsthand experiences from youth with autism, along with their parents, teachers, and employers, regarding school-to-work transition services in China. By understanding both supportive practices and challenges encountered during the transition, this research aimed to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the school-to-work transition process and inform improvements in transition services for individuals with autism. The study was guided by two research questions: (1) What practices have been implemented to support school-to-work transition for youth with autism? (2) How do youth with autism and their parents, teachers, and employers perceive the transition services they have received?

Method

An interpretive epistemology was adopted to understand the subjective meanings of social phenomena as experienced by participants (Willis et al., 2007). To explore their perspectives and interpretations of transition services, a qualitative interview approach was conducted with youth with autism, their parents, teachers, and employers.

Settings and Recruitment

Ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the authors' university. Participants were recruited from two special education schools in Southeast China, both only including students with disabilities and having over 15 years of experience in vocational education. School A provided nine years of compulsory education followed by three years of vocational education in 13 majors, emphasizing community inclusion, vocational skills, and quality of life. Its seven-teacher employment support team facilitated the school-to-work transition service. School B offered 15-year education, from preschool to high school vocational education, with 12 vocational courses aimed at improving employment outcomes. Both schools collaborated with local businesses (e.g., hotels and carwash stores) for internships and employment opportunities, and invited business employees as external vocational teachers. However, both reported lower employment rates for students with autism compared to peers with other disabilities.

A purposive sampling approach, including snowball sampling, was used. Youth with autism meeting the following criteria were recruited: (a) having a formal diagnosis of autism, (b) being in the final year of secondary education or having graduated within two years, and (c) volunteering to participate in this research. Considering the limited number of successful employment youth (i.e., maintaining jobs for over three months), employed youth were

prioritized to identify facilitating transition practices, while those facing challenges were also included to better understand the transition services. Parents, teachers, and employers who had supported these youth and knew their transition processes well were also recruited.

Recruitment began by approaching headteachers from three special education schools with whom the authors had personal connections, and getting approval from two. Recruitment information was then distributed school-wide, and with written consent from three youth and their transition constituents, we asked them to recommend others. In total, six youth with autism and 18 other constituents participated with written consent. Although parents provided proxy consent for their children, youth also signed consent forms to acknowledge their contribution. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw or skip uncomfortable questions.

Participants

Table 1 presents demographic information of six youth participants, listed by data collection completion. Only one is female, reflecting the higher prevalence of autism in males (Kogan et al., 2009). Three youth (Chi, Xin, and Quan) had paid, full-time jobs (at or above local minimum wage) for over three months: Chi as a receptionist at a carwash, Xin as a hotel linen attendant, and Quan as an office assistant at an autism organization. Kai and Han, who graduated over a year ago, were unemployed. Kai's parents said he was receiving local CDPF's free vocational rehabilitation while seeking employment. Han was sharpening his drawing skills at a private vocational school, planning to open an art studio. Xie, a third-year student, was in vocational training, awaiting an employer's assessment to determine her job eligibility.

All six youth were described by their parents and teachers as requiring ongoing support across multiple domains (see Table 1), like communication, emotional regulation, and healthcare. They utilized diverse communication modalities to express themselves and varied in their

receptive language levels. Chi spoke in long sentences and could respond to questions like “why.” Kai and Xin used short sentences and could follow simple verbal prompts, though occasionally missing key points. Xie, Quan, and Han primarily used non-verbal communication, such as gestures or repeating others’ words, and were described by their parents as understanding commonly used words in daily life and sometimes could respond to questions, such as “who” and “what.” Although Quan rarely spoke, his employer reported that he sometimes could answer by typing or writing phrases or short sentences. Except for Quan, five youth were identified as experiencing emotional challenges, and two occasionally showed self-injurious behaviors (e.g., slapping and headbanging). Chi, Kai, Xie, and Han’s mothers quit or suspended their jobs to provide full-time care.

Eight parents, seven teachers, and three employers participated in interviews (Table 2). Some teachers provided data on more than one youth and took multiple roles. Three teachers were also school administrators: one directed vocational education at School A, and two led high school departments. The externally hired teacher at School B was employed by the paper art company where Xie interned. She taught a vocational course on paper art and supported students during their internships, particularly helping them adjust to the workplace. She also had a family member with autism. The carwash manager, whose child had an intellectual disability, offered internships for School A and employed 15 people with disabilities, including two youth with autism. The paper art company manager had a child with severe autism, providing vocational training and jobs for School B, but could hire no more than five youth (hence called Xie’s “potential employer”). The third employer worked in an autism organization, supported employment for adults with autism, and hired two employees with autism.

Data Sources

Data sources included semi-structured interviews, field notes, and photos. The first author conducted all interviews under the second author's supervision, with assistance from an undergraduate student in special education, who assisted by asking a few follow-up questions and helping with audio recording. Semi-structured interviews explored the following areas: (a) school-to-work transition processes, (b) support from families, schools, businesses, and others, (c) participants' perceptions of services, and (d) suggestions for improvement. Eight key questions were adapted for participant roles, with follow-up questions as needed. Hand-written field notes by the first author documented verbal and non-verbal information during interviews, including all participants' expressions, body language, tone, and interactions. Photos of work environments or relevant objects (excluding people), as emphasized by all youth participants, were taken by the first author as supplementary data to enhance understanding of participants' experiences and to particularly reflect the voices of non-verbal youth. They also supported triangulation by complementing the field notes and interview data.

To accommodate the diverse communication styles among the youth, we consulted with parents, offered simply worded questions, and sent them in advance, with options for individual interviews or having family members present. Kai requested his parents' presence, and Han's parents chose a family interview. Additionally, Xie, Quan, and Han's parents suggested brief conversations instead of long interviews. In total, 17 individual interviews and two group interviews (one family and one couple) were conducted with three youth who mainly use verbal speech (Chi, Kai, and Xin) and 18 other participants.

To involve the other three youth, we had brief conversations (within ten min) with Quan and Xie at their workplaces, and with Han during the family interview. Topics included job

support and vocational training. Quan chose to respond with gestures, such as pointing to objects around his workspace, with head nods indicating thoughts. For instance, when asked what his employer did to help him, he pointed to a “communication book” on his desk. Xie and Han often repeated words from the questions. For example, when asked, “How does the (internship) company help you?” Xie repeated the company’s name. Xie’s mother suggested observing her tasks with the external teacher’s guidance. To ensure accuracy, the meanings of gestures and non-verbal cues were validated through discussions with parents or employers. Noting gestures and body language helped us capture their perceptions of transition. Additionally, since all youth struggled to respond to the “challenges” topic, we rephrased it as, “Are you happy with the help, or not?” and followed up with “Why?”, “What?”, or “Who?” as needed.

Interviews were conducted in convenient locations for participants, including homes, offices, and cafes, in Mandarin and audio-recorded with consent. A total of 1,326 minutes of recordings produced 226 pages of transcripts, along with notes. Interviews ranged from 18 to 132 min and averaged 69 min. In addition, two conversations totaled 18 min.

Data Analysis

All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim by the undergraduate assistant, after which the first author reviewed and verified the transcripts line by line, incorporating field notes into the transcripts, within one month of completing data collection. Consensus on all transcribed text was then reached between the two to ensure accuracy. These were then imported into NVivo 12.0 for data management and coding. Photos were treated as supplementary data but not analyzed, only the related field notes (e.g., expressions, words, or gestures of participants) were analyzed. Pseudonyms were used for confidentiality, and coding was conducted in Mandarin, with only themes, categories, and selected quotes translated into English.

Data analysis followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. First, the first author repeatedly read all transcripts alongside recordings to familiarize with the data. Next, initial codes were generated inductively. Guided by research questions, the first author independently labeled data units based on their meaning, regardless of length (e.g., words, phrases, or sentences), to reflect their core content (Campbell et al., 2013; Miles et al., 2020). While no preset codes were used, the existing literature and theories, particularly Taxonomy for Transition Programming (Kohler et al., 2017), informed the naming and categorization of codes. Three authors then read transcripts, reviewed, and refined the codes.

To search for themes, all authors compared and clustered codes with shared ideas into categories, and then identified potential thematic patterns across the datasets. Regular meetings refined themes to ensure they were distinct, accurately represented the datasets, and aligned with the research questions. The first author wrote analytic memos to document ideas about themes and their relationships, making the coding process and reflections manageable (Glaser, 1978).

To ensure reliability, regular review meetings were held. In the first meeting, 176 initial codes were reviewed. The second and third authors agreed on data unitization but suggested adjustments to clarify or consolidate unclear codes for consistency. Based on feedback, codes unrelated to research questions were discarded, and overlapping codes were refined, such as combining "co-teaching with employees" and "inviting staff from businesses" into "hiring external teachers." In the second meeting, 59 refined codes were agreed upon for theme development. Subsequent meetings focused on reviewing categories, themes, and definitions. During these meetings, we noticed an overemphasis on positive practices, while challenges in transition were underrepresented, leading to disjointed themes. To address this, we reconducted second-cycle coding, reviewing relationships among codes and categories. This involved

regrouping codes into more coherent categories, merging overlapping categories and themes, and promoting some categories to new themes. For example, the category “student-centered plans” initially under the theme “school-based transition programs” was reassigned to the theme “recommendations for enhancing transition services” and renamed “developing individualized transition plans.” New categories, like “conflict in employment expectations” and “gaps in autism-focused supports” evolved by reorganizing the codes. The iterative coding process, ongoing discussions, and team consensus ensured a cohesive and comprehensive interpretation of the data, resulting in three key themes and eight categories (see Table 3).

Trustworthiness

To ensure trustworthiness, we employed strategies from Creswell (2013), such as triangulation, member checking, and self-reflexivity. Triangulation strengthened validity by incorporating multiple perspectives across participants and researchers. In some cases, different participant groups expressed divergent views. These were treated as valuable data reflecting the complexity of transition experiences and were presented in the findings. For member checking, participants reviewed their transcript summaries for accuracy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), with two participants providing clarifications on vocational courses and teaching responsibilities. Additionally, thick descriptions of settings, interactions, and participants’ varied experiences, and discrepant cases presenting divergent perspectives, were included to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive view of transition services, enhancing the transferability of the study.

Positionality

All three authors are native Chinese speakers, pursuing or holding PhDs in Education in English-speaking contexts. The first author shared educational experiences with some teachers, facilitating rapport. The second and third authors were specialists in special education, providing

external perspectives. The second author's prior familiarity with schools and some participants was acknowledged. Regular review meetings were held to address biases. We conducted self-reflexivity, considering how our experiences and prior knowledge might influence data collection and interpretation while recognizing participants as experts on their experiences.

Findings

Three overarching themes developed from four participant groups' experiences of school-to-work transition services: practices that promote transition, challenges in current services, and suggestions for service improvement. Each theme is illustrated below with representative quotes, presented in the order they were emphasized by participants.

Practices for Facilitating the Transition

Participants identified several key practices that could facilitate the transition of youth with autism from school to work and help them maintain their jobs, including school-based programs, parental involvement, workplace modifications, and partnerships.

School-Based Transition Programs

Key elements of school-based transition services emphasized by participants included vocational skills training, job shadowing, pre-job adaptation training, and follow-up workplace support. Teachers noted that vocational training aligned with local market demands and available resources. Beyond traditional courses like cooking, cleaning, and services, School B offered featured courses based on traditional local crafts, such as brick carving, incense making, and lacquer painting. Both schools used a "non-graded system," allowing students to take job skills training across rooms and year groups. They also emphasized "soft skills," with courses covering "workplace professionalism, efficiency, diligence, and punctuality." As Xie's teacher explained, "We aimed to develop career awareness and ensure they understand workplace expectations."

Both schools provided job shadowing and workplace visits to help students explore their interests, gain a sense of the actual workplace, and strengthen specific job skills. Unpaid school positions like “newspaper delivery” and “daily cleaning,” further enriched students’ vocational training. Youth also participated in job shadowing or work placements lasting two weeks to six months, aligned with their strengths and interests. Before placements, students received pre-job training. As the youth participant Xin noted, “Teachers conducted mock interviews...guided us to the hotel...I...familiar with the environment.”

Teachers emphasized that transition is a long-term process requiring ongoing support. Both schools provided at least a year of follow-up services to help youth sustain jobs. School A’s employment support team leader stated, “Our goal isn’t just the employment rate, but ensuring they maintain it.” School B shared a similar commitment, with its high school department head describing this support as “a lifelong service”: “No matter how long it’s been since graduation, we will always stand behind them.”

Parental Involvement

Parents’ support was highly valued by all participants. For them, parental involvement meant advocating for children and preparing them for employment at home. Five mothers took flexible jobs or left work, and one father adjusted his schedule. Parents actively participated in interventions, improving their understanding of autism and advocacy skills. For example, Xin’s mother, a former nurse, became a certified special education teacher at School B, noting: “I never expected to become a teacher halfway through my life. But I’m determined to fight autism to the end. It’s not just a career, it’s my life.” When exploring vocational education options for Xin, she joined School B during its staff recruitment, joking: “I was a spy, scouting the path for him.”

Some parents were dedicated to finding meaningful employment for their children,

rejecting options that merely listed youth as employees for tax benefits. Quan's class teacher noted: "Though some companies offered to pay Quan without requiring work, his parents insisted on real work experience." Parents also advocated for seeking services and opportunities. Quan's father joined local parent gatherings and online groups of the community CDPF to learn about employment and policies. In another example, Xie's potential employer, a father of a child with autism, opened a paper art company employing youth with autism, saying, "As parents, we hope they have something to do, even the simplest work." A few teacher participants also encouraged parents to use their networks and community resources. As the class teacher of four youth participants said, "They can ask friends and neighbors about available positions."

All participants acknowledged the importance of parents teaching independent living skills, including personal hygiene, housekeeping, transportation, and money management skills. Kai's parents explained, "so he can leave a good impression on employers." During the interview, the youth Xin prepared a fruit tray for us, carefully inserting toothpicks into each piece, saying, "After the interview, I go to the bank...collect salary...buy groceries." Chi valued his mother's support: "Mom always asked me to do things by myself. I became independent."

Work Modifications

Given that sensory sensitivities and behavior patterns can affect productivity, School A's vocational education director suggested work modifications such as "flexible work procedures, hours, and reducing noise and distractions." Employer participants made several accommodations for youth with autism, including modifications in tasks, time schedules, and workplace settings, which helped youth navigate their work and improve productivity. For example, Xie's external teacher assigned tasks that matched her strengths, like rolling and gluing paper strips, which Xie demonstrated during the conversation. Her mother noted: "The difficulty

suits her and gives her a sense of achievement; she can stay focused. You see, she didn't shout recently." Quan's employer offered a flexible timetable to help him avoid crowded transit times and provided step-by-step task instructions: "For a new typing task, we gave him a clear example." Youth participants recognized the value of non-verbal cues. Quan, for example, showed us a "communication book" on his desk, created with his employer's help, containing pre-set sentences like, "It's 11 o'clock, I'm going to mop the floor." to assist him in communicating with colleagues. Reminders for end-of-day tasks were also set up (see Figure 1). Chi pointed to large, visible work rules ("Be polite, Be tidy, Help each other.") in the office reception area, saying with a smile, "Every time I see this, I know what I should do here."

Partnerships Between Families, Schools, and Employers

Participants discussed the importance of collaboration between families, schools, and employers. Parents saw schools as a "bridge" connecting families with businesses (organizations engaged in commercial activities aiming for profit). As Kai's mother stated: "The school connected us with resources that we couldn't access." Schools actively promoted school-family partnerships through activities like parent-teacher conferences. School A's vocational director stated: "We conveyed our educational beliefs to parents, built collaborative relationships, shared successful transition examples, and provided suggestions on how they could support their children." Chi's mother agreed, saying: "They emphasized the importance of employment, the available resources, and how we could contribute." However, School B focused more on mental health support, offering services such as "mental health hotlines" and "free counseling." Xie's mother commented, "I don't have any psychological problems. I need real help, parent training."

As youth started internships, family-employer collaboration strengthened. The youth, Chi, recounted how his mother worked with his employer to address issues during his probation:

I was angry and kicked a customer's car. My boss called my mom. She asked me to write a letter promising not to repeat this mistake. The next day, my boss severely criticized me and told me the cars were customers' private property.

Xie's experience demonstrated an example of three-way collaboration. When asked who provided the most help, Xie immediately pointed to her external teacher, who coordinated with Xie's class teacher, parents, and employer via a WeChat group to track students' progress across different settings. This teacher explained, "We're all working together, the class teacher prepares them for work, parents support them emotionally. My job is to help them understand their work."

Challenges in Current Transition Services

Challenges in current school-to-work transition services include conflicts in employment expectations among different participant groups and deficiencies in autism-focused supports, which hinder effective support for youth with autism.

Conflict in Employment Expectations

Parents of youth with autism often play a leading role in job decisions, sometimes overriding their children's choices. Teachers and employers emphasized the importance of gaining work experience, noting that some parents were too "selective," which limited job opportunities. However, some parents argued that they were rejecting jobs that did not align with their children's interests or abilities. For example, over a year after graduation, the youth Kai shared that he was "doing leisure activities in a [community] vocational rehabilitation center" without any job experience. His parents stressed that job selection should prioritize "his interests." Nevertheless, when Kai expressed an interest in "selling mobile phones" three times, his mother discouraged him: "Don't say 'sell phones' anymore, what else do you want to do? (Kai remained silent for 10s)...Do you need to think for that long?" His parents had also rejected

jobs like car washing and room service, explaining: “They are too repetitive and simple.”

School A’s vocational education director acknowledged parents’ concerns: “Some parents don’t want their children to live so hard. They may think, so tiring, maybe he’ll only earn 2,000 yuan a month, but do we need it?” This also reflects that job options for youth with autism were often low-wage, though they met “the local standard for minimum wage.” Given limited opportunities, she stressed that even simple jobs can offer chances for individual growth. Quan’s employer echoed this opinion, noting: “Some parents set high goals and pursued decent jobs. If it’s just doing chores, mopping floors, or washing dishes, they would reject them, seeing them as tiring and disgraceful. Finally, job opportunities became scarce.” Xin’s mother advised parents to adjust their expectations: “Just seize the chance! Think of it as a training opportunity.”

Additionally, teacher, parent, and employer participants reported that some parents were overprotective, fearing their children would be hurt, bullied, or cheated. Xie’s mother admitted: “I know such protection may not be good for her, but I can’t help worrying.” Similarly, Quan’s father was initially hesitant to let him travel alone but after seeing Quan’s independent transportation skills, reflected, “He was overprotected before!”

Gaps in Autism-Focused Supports

Another recurring challenge identified by parent and teacher participants was the lack of autism-focused support, particularly in emotional regulation and communication. Teachers noticed that workplace challenges for employees with autism often stemmed from these issues, yet few targeted interventions were implemented. Employers prioritized emotional regulation over vocational skills when hiring, as Chi’s employer explained: “I don’t mind youth yelling, but it may scare customers.” Parents and teachers reported that five of the six youth participants had difficulty with emotional regulation, displaying behaviors like head-banging, shouting, damaging

objects, or unexplained anger, yet they rarely received emotional management training. Chi recounted an outburst at work triggered by mishearing: “I was so unhappy, I couldn’t control myself and kicked a customer’s car.” Without support, families often stepped in to fill the gap, for example, Xie’s mother accompanied her during her internship to manage emotional outbursts. Gaps in communication support further restricted job opportunities. Although Quan was described as “gentle with no aggressive behavior,” his father noted that his communication modalities led to rejections: “He can’t answer questions at all.” Some parents linked children’s emotional difficulties to challenges in expressing feelings verbally. As Han’s parents explained, “When he’s angry, he can’t explain it, so he may become frustrated and lose his temper.”

Despite these obvious needs, support within schools and social organizations for our youth participants was limited. Xie’s mother noted that most programs served children, not adults: “Our children have significant social and language difficulties, but there are no organizations offering interventions or training for them.” Both schools reported only adopting “general strategies” such as “identifying and reducing triggers” or “talking with students,” but lacked autism-targeted interventions. School A’s employment support team leader emphasized the need for recruiting specialists from social organizations, saying, “Professional matters require well-trained professionals.” Additionally, augmentative or alternative communication (AAC) systems were rarely mentioned, instead focusing on spoken language. A few parents, like Han’s father, advocated for more school attention to communication training, proposing activities such as practicing phone calls, but he noted, “No teachers adopted my suggestion.”

Recommendations for Enhancing Transition Services

Participants emphasized the need for individualized transition plans tailored to individual needs and the importance of stronger government support to provide better services.

Developing Individualized Transition Plans

Teachers and parents agreed that youth with autism require individualized instruction because of their diverse strengths and needs. Assessment was seen as the first step in providing personalized transition services. Xie's class teacher explained, "Assessment provides meaningful information about students' abilities and parents' expectations, guiding students toward their full potential." Influenced by Western practices, many teacher and parent participants acknowledged the importance of the Individual Transition Plan (ITP) as part of the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for supporting employment. All teachers reported that they provided individualized services for youth with autism based on assessments and daily performance. For instance, Han's parents said, "The class teacher noticed that Han was good at drawing, so she intentionally cultivated this talent and connected him to some companies for artwork design."

However, concerns were raised about the application of ITPs. The vocational education director at School A stated: "What's the point of making a lengthy plan if we don't follow it? So, no formal written plans have been made." Similarly, the head of the high school department at School B noted, "We don't have a systematic ITP, only individual transition goals." Xie's class teacher expressed: "I know IEPs are important, but I don't want to write them. I think I'm teaching well, so why do it?" The main reason cited by both schools for not developing formal written plans was to "avoid unnecessary paperwork." The high school department head at School A added, "We do want to make ITPs, but need technology to reduce the workload."

Nevertheless, all parent participants expressed the need for individualized plans to improve transition services, particularly in promoting school-family collaboration. For example, Chi's mother expressed as follows:

I hope schools can make an individualized plan based on the assessment. What are this

child's strengths? What areas need improvement? This plan should tell us this information. I also hope the plan can guide us, as we lack knowledge about the transition.

Similarly, Xie's mother said: "Really hope the school could show me a plan, so we know what we should do and how to collaborate with the school."

Strengthening Government Support

Most participants expressed a need for stronger government support. While they appreciated local government efforts, such as training funds and rehabilitation services, these efforts fell short of expectations. As Xie's mother remarked: "Maybe it's better than other small cities, but it still hasn't met our expectations." Teacher participants suggested clarifying government responsibilities in school-to-work transition, noting that "schools are overloaded with work duties." School A's vocational education director proposed that government agencies or the CDPF, should take on employment transition duties so that schools could focus more on education: "Schools would hand students over to that agency as a transfer station, where they can connect with businesses. Then school resources can focus on education and teaching."

Most participants noted a need for professional support personnel, such as job coaches, to assist youth with autism in adapting to the workplace. In their absence, teachers, parents, and employers had to step in. Chi's mother described her child's employer as a "social and vocational bridge," helping youth develop skills for workplace adaptation and independence, and questioned: "Why doesn't the government provide us with such personnel support?" Some teachers and employers suggested that NGOs, like autism intervention institutions, parents' organizations, and vocational rehabilitation institutions, could complement government support. For example, Quan's employer noted that their organization previously offered job-coach and job-seeking programs, but funding interruptions led to the loss of trained job coaches. She said:

“We rely on social charity organizations for funding. If the government provides financial support, our organization will ensure stable and sustained staffing.”

Increased funding for transition services was another key need identified by employer participants, like incentives for businesses employing youth with autism. While companies could receive tax exemptions for hiring people with disabilities, employers requested additional support to “survive.” Xie’s potential employer noted: “We’re not a charity. We hope for priority in government projects.” Similarly, Quan’s employer suggested subsidies for organizations hiring youth with autism, so that “more organizations would be willing to do so.”

Finally, most participants emphasized the need for government-supported job opportunities. When talking about aspirations, the youth Han, pointed to his T-shirt with his artwork printed on it. Han’s father expressed a wish for government support in setting up an art studio for his son: “Even 10-20 square meters from the government would help.” Chi’s employer emphasized the limits of private efforts, explaining: “I can’t help such a large group, only the government can.” Chi’s class teacher gave an example: “Government projects like gardening could employ 2-3 students each year, and parents might be happy with such jobs.” The youth Chi also noted: “If state-owned enterprises or public sectors provide positions for us, we’d find greater stability and happiness.” Chi’s mother envisioned a holistic approach, calling for collaboration among government, schools, businesses, and parents to improve transition services: “*Tian, Shi, Di, Li, Ren, He.*” (Chinese idiom, meaning the right time, place, and people.)

Discussion

The findings highlight key practices, challenges, and recommendations for improving school-to-work transition for youth with autism in China. These insights confirm and extend international findings while placing them in the unique context of China, broadening the

understanding of transition services for youth with autism.

The first theme identifies helpful practices. Participants emphasized the importance of school-based transition programs in preparing youth with autism for employment, similar to the U.S., where schools provide most transition services, including some community-based ones (e.g., Wehman et al., 2020). In China, vocational education has traditionally been school-based, aligned with the government's focus on promoting economic growth (Xue & Li, 2021). Teacher and employer participants stressed both hard skills and soft skills, echoing findings from Western contexts. Both are essential for employment readiness and maintenance (Wehman et al., 2018). In this study, teachers emphasized reliability, diligence, and dedication as strengths in employment. While these traits are widely admired in Chinese cultures (Lyu, 2020), they are also valued in the U.S. workplace, such as rule-following, focus, and reliability (Anderson et al., 2021), reflecting a shared cross-cultural appreciation for these qualities.

Parental involvement was also valued. Consistent with McCabe's (2008, 2010) findings, parents viewed their involvement as a duty to secure services, provide financial and social support, and even sacrifice their careers for their children. This dedication reflects both the limited availability of services for youth with autism and the strong sense of affection and duty rooted in Chinese family traditions (Holroyd, 2003). Notably, while all mother participants viewed their involvement as a given, reflecting a cross-cultural expectation of maternal involvement (Acar et al., 2021), one father made a similar commitment. However, career disruption, especially for mothers, can exacerbate gender inequalities in the workplace and lead to their social exclusion. An encouraging finding is that one mother remained actively employed and thrust herself into new careers while supporting her child. Moreover, while parents actively sought support from schools, parent networks, and local communities, community involvement

remains underutilized in China compared to Western contexts, where it significantly contributes to employment opportunities for youth with disabilities (Bumble et al., 2018).

Work modifications were another facilitator, widely reported in Western contexts (e.g., Dreaver et al., 2020; Hagner & Conney, 2005), but rarely addressed in Chinese research. Three employers in this study provided tailored modifications to suit the youth's characteristics. Interestingly, all these employers had personal experience with autism or disability. This connection may have influenced their willingness to offer accommodations. Additionally, our research found that successful transitions rely on collaborative services, particularly partnerships between schools, businesses, and families, aligning with other countries' findings (e.g., Nicholas et al., 2018). However, in our study, these partnerships were primarily driven by schools, particularly focusing on school-business collaboration for effective vocational education and employment outcomes, in line with national vocational education policies (Zhou & Xu, 2023).

The second theme highlights two significant barriers to youth transition: conflicting employment expectations and gaps in autism-focused supports. While these challenges are not unique to China, they are particularly pronounced in the Chinese context due to cultural values and service limitations. Parents' involvement in career decision-making may lead to mismatched employment goals, with some setting overly ambitious goals for their children compared to the harsh job market, while others are over-protective. High parental expectations may stem from the elitism shaped by Confucian philosophy in Chinese culture, which encourages parents to aspire to careers with high social recognition, prestige, or income (Hou et al., 2023). Similar patterns are observed among American parents, who may set ambitious expectations but overlook the necessary support (Curtiss et al., 2021). Parental overprotection, driven by concerns about their children's social and communication challenges (Gau et al., 2010) or a reluctance to let them

endure hardship, can further constrain youth development.

While autism-focused supports were valued by participants, challenges in their availability were evident. Echoing findings from developed countries (e.g., Chiang et al., 2013), participants acknowledged the need for interventions to address social-communication challenges and related emotional and behavioral difficulties in the workplace. However, it is concerning that schools did not provide specific support for emotional regulation or social-communication skills for youth with autism, highlighting the challenges in translating research into practice. Notably, AAC for non-verbal youth with autism was rarely mentioned. AAC is recognized worldwide as a foundational support for individuals with non-verbal communication across the lifespan (Light & McNaughton, 2012). However, its application and empirical research in China remain limited. Most AAC research in China has focused on early intervention (Li et al., 2024), with little attention to its role in employment transition. This gap in research and practice likely explains why AAC was not referenced by participants, despite its potential to support communication and address emotional and behavioral challenges for people with autism.

Participants stressed two critical areas for improvement: ITPs and increased government support. Although China has no specific legislative requirements for ITPs, both schools in this study provided some form of individualized transition services. Unlike the U.S., where cross-disciplinary and interagency collaboration in ITPs is established (though still challenging) (Snell-Rood et al., 2020), transition planning in China overwhelmingly relies on schools, with insufficient policy guidance. Teacher and parent participants agreed on the need for more formalized plans, with parents advocating for ITPs to improve transition services. However, schools struggled with excessive paperwork and resource constraints. Addressing these challenges remains crucial for improving transition services for youth with autism in China.

Moreover, participants, including youth with autism, suggested the need for clearer responsibilities and greater government support in transition services. Schools were burdened with tasks that could be shared with other agencies, while teachers, parents, and employers took on additional roles to fill service gaps. There were calls for job coaches and other professionals to assist with the transition process. Parents expressed frustration with limited adult services, resulting in challenging transition experiences for their children. Many urged the government to provide funding, professional support, and stronger encouragement for involving NGOs. Increased funding for businesses that hire youth with autism and better utilization of government resources were also recommended to create more job opportunities and incentives.

Limitations, Strengths, and Future Research

This qualitative study sought in-depth data from a small group of participants living in two economically advanced cities in China, which may not fully reflect the experiences of youth with autism from other regions. Furthermore, parent and teacher participants outnumbered youth and employers, which may leave the voices of non-verbal youth underrepresented. Additionally, not all authors independently reviewed the data, which may have influenced how the data was interpreted and coded. Despite these limitations, the current study is one of the few studies investigating the school-to-work transition for youth with autism beyond the Western context. The diverse experiences and viewpoints of participants triangulated our findings and provided insights for researchers, educators, and other stakeholders to better understand the school-to-work transition experiences of youth with autism.

Further research is needed to explore how evidence-based transition practices can be implemented with greater fidelity to ensure their consistent application and make better-informed decisions about policies and services. Future studies should include participants with broader

backgrounds and perspectives, especially youth with diverse communication preferences, by making interviews more flexible and adaptative to their response styles (Hollomotz, 2018). For example, visual research methods, such as providing cameras to youth to record their educational environments and workplaces, could help capture the perspectives of individuals who express themselves non-verbally (Banks, 2007), providing deeper insight into their experiences.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Our findings underscore the need for systematic and coordinated transition services for youth with autism. Chinese transition services are primarily school-driven, with parental involvement. To reduce the burden on schools and parents, policymakers should clarify the accountabilities and responsibilities of stakeholders like the CDPF, and promote formalized, cross-disciplinary ITPs, while minimizing administrative strain. Moreover, stronger partnerships between schools, businesses, social organizations, and communities are needed to expand vocational training and employment opportunities. Parents, often acting as advocates due to service gaps, should have their roles legally recognized and supported, ensuring their voices are valued rather than overly relied upon. Addressing the shortage of professional services is also crucial. The government should invest in training, standardize qualifications, and expand autism-focused supports such as emotional and social-communication interventions, and assistive technologies like AAC. Moreover, offering incentives for businesses that hire youth with autism is needed for a more inclusive workforce.

Conclusion

Our findings reveal the supportive practices and gaps in China's current transition services for youth with autism. While school-driven programs, parental involvement, work modifications, and collaborative partnerships facilitate transitions, challenges such as

mismatched employment expectations and inadequate autism-focused supports hinder the transition process. Participants called for structured ITPs and greater governmental involvement to enhance employment outcomes. Addressing these challenges requires policy refinement and multi-agency collaboration, engaging schools, families, businesses, communities, policymakers, and NGOs, to offer a more sustainable employment transition service.

References

- Acar, S., Chen, C.-I., & Xie, H. (2021). Parental involvement in developmental disabilities across three cultures: A systematic review. *Research in Developmental Disabilities, 110*, 103861. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ridd.2021.103861>
- Almalky, H. A. (2020). Employment outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities: A literature review. *Children and Youth Services Review, 109*, 104656. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104656>
- Anderson, C., Butt, C., & Sarsony, C. (2021). Young adults on the autism spectrum and early employment-related experiences: Aspirations and obstacles. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 51*(1), 88-105. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-020-04513-4>
- Awsumb, J., Schutz, M., Carter, E., Schwartzman, B., Burgess, L., & Lounds Taylor, J. (2022). Pursuing paid employment for youth with severe disabilities: Multiple perspectives on pressing challenges. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 47*(1), 22-39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969221075629>
- Baker-Ericzén, M. J., ElShamy, R., & Kammes, R. R. (2022). Current status of evidence-based practices to enhance employment outcomes for transition age youth and adults on the autism spectrum. *Current Psychiatry Reports, 24*(3), 161-170. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-022-01327-2>

- Baldwin, S., Costley, D., & Warren, A. (2014). Employment activities and experiences of adults with high-functioning autism and Asperger's Disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 44(10), 2440-2449. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-014-2112-z>
- Banks, M. (2007). *Using visual data in qualitative research*. SAGE.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101. <https://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Brenner, H. R., & Dymond, S. K. (2023). Teachers' perspectives on challenges to providing work-based learning experiences for students with extensive support needs. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 48(4), 186-202. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15407969231204611>
- Bumble, J. L., Carter, E. W., McMillan, E., Manikas, A. S., & Bethune, L. K. (2018). Community conversations on integrated employment: Examining individualization, influential factors, and impact. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*, 28(4), 229-243. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044207317739401>
- CAPPDR. (2014). *Blue papers on needs of parents with autistic children in China*. Huaxia Publishing House.
- Campbell, J. L., Quincy, C., Osserman, J., & Pedersen, O. K. (2013). Coding in-depth semistructured interviews: Problems of unitization and intercoder reliability and agreement. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 42(3), 294-320. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0049124113500475>
- Chiang, H. M., Cheung, Y. K., Li, H., & Tsai, L. Y. (2013). Factors associated with participation in employment for high school leavers with autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 43(8), 1832-1842. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-012-1734-2>

- Curtiss, S. L., Lee, G. K., Chun, J., Lee, H., Kuo, H. J., & Ami-Narh, D. (2021). Autistic young adults', parents', and practitioners' expectations of the transition to adulthood. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 44(3), 174-185.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2165143420967662>
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dreaver, J., Thompson, C., Girdler, S., Adolfsson, M., Black, M. H., & Falkmer, M. (2020). Success factors enabling employment for adults on the autism spectrum from employers' perspective. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 50(5), 1657-1667.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-03923-3>
- Gau, S. S., Chou, M. C., Lee, J. C., Wong, C. C., Chou, W. J., Chen, M. F., Soong, W. T., & Wu, Y. Y. (2010). Behavioral problems and parenting style among Taiwanese children with autism and their siblings. *Psychiatry and Clinical Neurosciences*, 64(1), 70-78.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1819.2009.02034.x>
- Ge, Z.-M., Chen, R.-X., Tang, W.-Z., & Cong, Y. (2021). Why strong employment support for persons with disabilities has not brought about positive outcomes? A qualitative study in mainland China. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 121, 105839.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105839>
- Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical Sensitivity*. Sociology Press.
- Hagner, D., & Cooney, B. F. (2005). "I do that for everybody": Supervising employees with autism. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, 20(2), 91-97. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10883576050200020501>
- Hedley, D., Cai, R., Uljarevic, M., Wilmot, M., Spoor, J. R., Richdale, A., & Dissanayake, C.

- (2017). Transition to work: Perspectives from the autism spectrum. *Autism*, 22(5), 528-541. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361316687697>
- Hollomotz, A. (2018). Successful interviews with people with intellectual disability. *Qualitative Research*, 18(2), 153-170. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794117713810>
- Holroyd, E. E. (2003). Chinese cultural influences on parental caregiving obligations toward children with disabilities. *Qualitative Health Research*, 13(1), 4-19. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732302239408>
- Hou, Y., Yan, T., & Deng, M. (2023). A qualitative study on parental experience of involvement in the transition from kindergarten to primary school for Chinese children with intellectual and developmental disabilities. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 53(12), 4872-4887. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-022-05743-4>
- Jacob, A., Scott, M., Falkmer, M., & Falkmer, T. (2015). The costs and benefits of employing an adult with autism spectrum disorder: A systematic review. *PloS One*, 10(10), e0139896. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0139896>
- Kogan, M. D., Blumberg, S. J., Schieve, L. A., Boyle, C. A., Perrin, J. M., Ghandour, R. M., Singh, G. K., Strickland, B. B., Trevathan, E., & van Dyck, P. C. (2009). Prevalence of parent-reported diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder among children in the US, 2007. *Pediatrics*, 124(5), 1395-1403. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2009-1522>
- Kohler, P. D., Gothberg, J. E., & Coyle, J. (2017). Using the taxonomy for transition programming 2.0 to guide transition education. In A. L. Ellis (Ed.), *Transitioning children with disabilities: From early childhood through adulthood*. Sense Publishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6351-134-6>
- Kuo, A. A., Crapnell, T., Lau, L., Anderson, K. A., & Shattuck, P. (2018). Stakeholder

- perspectives on research and practice in autism and transition. *Pediatrics*, 141, S293-S299. <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-4300F>
- Lee, E. A. L., Black, M. H., Tan, T., Falkmer, T., & Girdler, S. (2019). “I’m destined to ace this”: Work experience placement during high school for individuals with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 49(8), 3089-3101. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-04024-x>
- Lee, G. T., Pu, Y. H., Xu, S., Lee, M. W., & Feng, H. (2020). Training car wash skills to Chinese adolescents with intellectual disability and autism spectrum disorder in the community. *Journal of Special Education*, 54(1), 16-28. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022466919852340>
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Li, J., Sun, Z., Wang, X., Li, W., Ding, W., & Xie, R. (2023). Parental involvement and Chinese children’s learning engagement: Promotion and arousal. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 106, 102325. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2023.102325>
- Li, Y., Lee, G. T., Qi, Y., & Xu, S. (2024). A systematic review of picture exchange communication system interventions for children and adolescents on the autism spectrum in Mainland China. *Review Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40489-024-00442-5>
- Light, J., & McNaughton, D. (2012). The changing face of augmentative and alternative communication: Past, present, and future challenges. *Augmentative and Alternative Communication*, 28(4), 197-204. <https://doi.org/10.3109/07434618.2012.737024>
- Lyu, X. J. (2020). Work engagement in the context of Confucian culture: A case of Chinese civil servants. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.573146>
- McCabe, H. (2008). Autism and family in the People’s Republic of China: Learning from

- parents' perspectives. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities*, 33(1-2), 37-47. <https://doi.org/10.2511/rpsd.33.1-2.37>
- McCabe, H. (2010). Employment experiences, perspectives, and wishes of mothers of children with autism in the People's Republic of China. *Journal of Applied Research in Intellectual Disabilities*, 23(2), 122-131. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-3148.2009.00512.x>
- McCabe, H., & Wu, S. (2009). Helping each other, helping ourselves: A case of employment for an adult with autism in Nanjing, China. *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, 30(1), 57-66. <https://doi.org/10.3233/jvr-2009-0453>
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- MoE. (2022). *Law on vocational education*. Retrieved from: http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/sjzl_zcfg/zcfg_jyfl/202204/t20220421_620064.html
- Nicholas, D. B., Zwaigenbaum, L., Zwicker, J., Clarke, M. E., Lamsal, R., Stoddart, K. P., Carroll, C., Muskat, B., Spoelstra, M., & Lowe, K. (2018). Evaluation of employment-support services for adults with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism*, 22(6), 693-702. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361317702507>
- OECD. (2011). *Inclusion of students with disabilities in tertiary education and employment, education and training policy*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264097650-en>
- Roux, A. M., Shattuck, P. T., Rast, J. E., Rava, J. A., & Anderson, K. A. (2015). *National autism indicators report: Transition into young adulthood*. Drexel University.
- Snell-Rood, C., Ruble, L., Kleinert, H., McGrew, J. H., Adams, M., Rodgers, A., Odom, J.,

- Wong, W. H., & Yu, Y. (2020). Stakeholder perspectives on transition planning, implementation, and outcomes for students with autism spectrum disorder. *Autism, 24*(5), 1164-1176. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361319894827>
- State Council. (2007). *Regulations on employment for persons with disabilities*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/gongbao/content/2007/content_571566.htm
- State Council. (2021). *Notice on the “14th Five Year” plan for the protection and development of persons with disabilities*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2021-07/21/content_5626391.htm
- State Council. (2022). *Plans to boost special education during “14th Five Year”*. Retrieved from: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/content/2022-01/25/content_5670341.htm
- Wehman, P., Schall, C., McDonough, J., Sima, A., Brooke, A., Ham, W., Whittenburg, H., Brooke, V., Avellone, L., & Riehle, E. (2020). Competitive employment for transition-aged youth with significant impact from autism: A multi-site randomized clinical trial. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 50*(6), 1882-1897. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10803-019-03940-2>
- Wehman, P., Taylor, J., Brooke, V., Avellone, L., Whittenburg, H., Ham, W., Brooke, A. M., & Carr, S. (2018). Toward competitive employment for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities: What progress have we made and where do we need to go. *Research and Practice for Persons with Severe Disabilities, 43*(3), 131-144. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1540796918777730>
- Wehmeyer, M. L., Shogren, K. A., Kurth, J. A., Morningstar, M. E., Kozleski, E. B., Agran, M., Jackson, L., Jameson, J. M., McDonnell, J., & Ryndak, D. L. (2016). Including students with extensive and pervasive support needs. *Advances in Special Education, 31*, 129-155.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/S0270-401320160000031009>

Willis, J., Jost, M., & Nilakanta, R. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. SAGE Publications.

Wong, S. W. (2017). Challenges encountered by 17 autistic young adults in Hong Kong. *Support for Learning*, 32(4), 375-386. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9604.12181>

Xue, E., & Li, J. (2021). Improving the quality of vocational and technical education in China. In E. Xue & J. Li (Eds.), *Creating a high-quality education policy system: Insights from China* (pp. 121-136). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-3276-1_9

Zhang, C. (2021). *A study on the role of stakeholders in the transition to work process of ASD students* [Master's thesis, Central China Normal University]. CNKI. <https://kns.cnki.net/KCMS/detail/detail.aspx?dbname=CMFDTEMP&filename=1021157882.nh>

Zhou, Y., & Xu, G. (2023). Vocational school-enterprise cooperation in China: A review of policy reforms, 1978-2022. *ECNU Review of Education*, 6(3), 433-450. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20965311231167895>

Zhu, J. G., & Yan, G. W. (2019). From sheltered employment to supported employment: Multiple case studies on work integration social enterprises for the disabled in Guangdong. *Disability Research*, (1), 48-57.