

Special Education Leadership In Malaysia: A Review

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Abstract: Special education leadership is an aspect of comprehensive management related to special education operations that includes knowledge, leadership style and also the welfare of teachers and students. Good leadership for special education programs should implement the process of planning, organizing, directing and controlling the members of the organization as well as using all organizational resources to achieve specific goals for PPKI. The leadership practiced in special education needs to make the special education program improve and be able to carry out its functions properly. This study reviews several previous articles that discuss leadership in special education. The findings of this study are hoped to be a guide to future researchers in an effort to continue the continuity of special education leadership.

Keywords: educational leaderships, special education, unique leadership, special education leadership

INTRODUCTION

DiPaola and Walther-Thomas (2003) in their study stated that, principals in schools with special education programs need specific skills related to special education for good management. They also acknowledged that head teachers hold very important responsibilities in the management of special education in schools covering teachers and students. As a result of the study, they have proposed five principles in the best leadership for special education namely, defining and delivering the mission of school education, managing curriculum and teaching, supporting and supervising teaching, monitoring student progress and promoting conducive learning climate. The findings of their study are basically able to reduce the workload of teachers through the focus of headmasters on curriculum management and teaching of special education program integration (PPKI) teachers. As suggested by Mohamad and Yaacob (2013), leadership plays an important role in reducing the workload of PPKI teachers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Angela's (2010) study explores school leaders' perceptions of 10 key aspects of special education leadership namely, understanding laws and policies, improving teacher performance, improving student performance, creating an inclusive culture, collaborating with parents, participating in the teaching process, scheduling and service delivery, diversity of routine practices, resource allocation, and staff support. The survey involved all principals and directors of special education programs in public schools throughout North Carolina. Respondents gave an assessment of leadership skills through the 10 aspects above, through interviews to answer two open-ended questions in each aspect of leadership. Twenty-nine key themes were obtained in ten leadership categories from the responses of 183 principals and 14 special education program directors. The results of the study have identified five thematic categories that need to be given attention in special education leadership namely learning process, collaboration, data analysis, service delivery planning and implementation, and personnel development. This study is also suitable to provide awareness to head teachers in understanding the real situation of teaching in PPKI and further help teachers to achieve their job satisfaction (Mohamad & Yaacob, 2013).

A study by Eytan (2015) in turn explores the leadership style of head teachers and the perceptions of special education teachers towards head teacher leadership throughout Palestine. The study involved 15 headmasters and 81 primary special education class teachers in the country, most of whom were women and did not have much experience related to special education. The results of the study found that three types of leadership styles are practiced by the principals of special education primary schools there, namely transformational, transactional and Laissez-Faire. At the end of the study, researchers suggested that headmasters be smarter to adopt appropriate leadership styles in determining the smooth management of special education. This study revealed that head teacher leadership has a significant impact on PPKI teacher productivity (Erica & Raymond, 2009).

Rob (2014) examined the influence of the demographics and special education background of principals on their leadership styles in special education schools in Massachusetts. Their perceptions are based on the following aspects of leadership, namely the ability to make changes, teaching and learning, ways of

communicating and the direction of leadership. The analysis found that young, inexperienced and inexperienced head teachers with no special education knowledge led with low -achieving leadership, while older, more experienced and knowledgeable head teachers of special education practiced high -performing leadership. At the end of the study, the researchers suggested that head teachers gain sufficient experience and knowledge in leading schools that have special education programs. This study clarifies that sufficient knowledge related to special education is very necessary to head teachers in choosing leadership practices in PPKI (Abdul Ghani et al., 2013).

Martha (2014) conducted a qualitative study to explore the behavior, personality, skills and knowledge of principals in leading and supporting the success of special education programs in public schools. A total of 26 head teachers with an excellent track record in the administration of special education programs were involved in three cycles of the data collection and feedback process. The main findings of the study found that the personality of leaders and leadership behaviors affect the success of schools in general and special education programs in particular. Respondents noted that there are challenges in managing student diversity, in an effort to create a culture of collaboration and acceptance of the school community. Effectiveness of professional development, leadership through instruction and good communication give good results in leadership. The results of this study are proposed for the practice of headmasters in schools and assist other researchers in conducting follow -up studies related to the best practices of headmasters in managing PPKI.

DISCUSSIONS

Various studies were conducted to identify specific competencies in shaping effective special education leadership. The role of head teachers as instructors, the willingness of head teachers to lead special education, laws related to special education and the basic principles of special education were the main focus of the study. Using various research approaches, the findings show that four main themes are embodied to create effective special education leadership, namely classroom support, direct involvement, collaborative approaches and the latest professional development. The results of this study found that how important it is for a head teacher in PPKI to practice the right leadership attitude in the full success of PPKI in their respective schools. Therefore, a form of leadership model can be formed fundamentally as has been done by Norazmi (2020) as follows:

Norazmi Special Education Unique Leadership Theory

In maintaining the success of the special education program, the welfare of teachers and SNS needs to be taken into account (Norazmi, 2020). Therefore, the basis for this theory of leadership is based on leadership those focuses on:

- i. The Welfare of Special Education Teachers
- ii. Achievement of Special Education Students

To achieve this, leadership needs to control the task load of teachers and inculcate teachers' job satisfaction, so that SNS achievement can be enhanced. As a result, school administrators need to have five uniqueness in their leadership:

i. First Unique: Unique Leadership Style

In leading a school organization or program involving special education, a school leader must have uniqueness in their leadership. This means that the style of leadership practiced should be consistent with the guidelines for the implementation of the work and scope of the special education teacher's duties (Norazmi et al., 2019; Fauziyana et al., 2021; Zaid et al., 2020; Zaid et al., 2021). In addition, their leadership must also be special in considering the needs of the SNS. In other words, the practice of leadership needs to be consistent with the acceptance of special education teachers and students (Een et al., 2021; Aminah et al., 2021; Rosnee et al., 2021; Azlisham et al., 2021). In order to make the leadership relevant, it is sometimes necessary to emphasize things that involve teacher work performance and student achievement. This unique leadership style is at the center of the autocratic and democratic leadership styles.

ii. Second Unique: Unique Knowledge

Knowledge of leadership is very important in managing special education. The uniqueness of this knowledge is that their knowledge must be meticulously as bottom up process. School leaders need to have knowledge of basic education fundamentals such as policies, scope rules and so on (Firkhan et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2021). Then, knowledge also needs to be satisfied regarding each of the features of SNS and their capabilities. This knowledge of SNS is important to prevent school leaders from setting goals beyond their SNS capabilities (Mohd Norazmi et al., 2021). After that, the knowledge of special education teachers should be taken into consideration. Their basic background, their service, their way of working, their commitment to the school and

so on. On the top level, knowledge about leadership is needed in deciding what kind of leadership needs to be implemented.

iii. Third Unique: Unique Attitude

In addition to leadership styles and knowledge, school leaders also needs to have a unique attitude toward leading special education. Attitudes are concerned, empathy, love and more are at the discretion of deciding something for teachers and SNS (Roszi et al., 2021).

iv. Fourth Unique: Unique Experience

The experience of managing special education is a unique and meaningful journey. In order to succeed in effective leadership, a leader leading a special education program needs to have direct experience with special education. This means that the leader must be in the special education program, in the special education teacher condition and in the SNS abilities (Nik Nurharilida et al., 2021; Norazmi, 2020). Keep in touch with them, hear them, experience the learning process with special education teachers and SNS. Gain experience by engaging in activities with a special education community at school or outside of school.

v. Fifth Unique: Unique Qualification

In order to become a leader who is qualified to lead a special education program, one must place themselves at the ready with the hustle and bustle of special education. Not only academic requirements, but management qualifications, community engagement, always wanting to find special education related knowledge, ready to serve special education and always bear the responsibility of special education.

The theory introduced is in support of existing leadership theories and adapted to the situation in special education. In line with the findings of this study and previous studies, this theory is an attempt to make special education more consistently through competitive and responsible leadership. It is hoped that this theory will help the school leadership to implement leadership focused on special education.

CONCLUSION

Special education leadership will not shy away from focusing on the welfare of teachers as well as the well-being of students at one time. Leadership that is understanding, precise, loving and empathetic can foster a harmonious climate in special education. Although there are studies that discuss this special education leadership, from outside and within the country, further studies need to be done from time to time in improving the dynamic nature of special education leadership. Hopefully, future researchers will be able to pay attention to special education leadership as well as be able to suggest various forms of improvement.

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