

## **Elements Of Qualification In The Leadership Construct Of Special Education Headmasters In Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** The issue of workload of special education teachers arises due to five factors such as teachers, students, facilities, curriculum and also the leadership of head teachers. However, the leadership factor of the head teacher is the most important factor in the realization of this issue. There are studies that have found that head teachers play an important role in shaping the direction of school organization and teacher welfare. This factor is also one of the main factors in ensuring job satisfaction of teachers in schools. Among all the elements related to the leadership of head teachers, the element of their qualifications is also one of the causes of the issue of teacher workload. This qualitative study was conducted to detail the qualification elements of headmasters in their leadership practice in the integration special education program (PPKI). This study involved 11 coordinators of the program in the state of Johor, Malaysia. The findings of this study can be used as a reference for future researchers related to the study of special education leadership.

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**Keywords:** educational leadership, headmaster, special education, qualification element

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Zaid et al. (2020) have listed five basic things that need to be done by headmasters dealing with students with special needs (MBK) in school, namely, understand local norms before implementing policies, have a basic understanding of special education such as services, law, finance and others, understand local policies and their impact on schools, participate in continuing education related to leadership philosophies and facilitation strategies for both types of students whether normal or with special needs, and, are aware of current changes and developments in special education. All the basics mentioned require a leader who has basic qualifications related to special education, so that all the things can be implemented effectively (Aminah et al., 2021; Azlisham et al., 2021; Saadiah et al., 2021; Firkhan et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2021; Ashari et al., 2021). However, this is not the case because most of the head teachers placed in schools with PPKI do not have the proper qualifications (Norazmi et al., 2019; Fauziyana et al., 2020; Norazmi, 2020; Zaid et al., 2020; Zaid et al., 2019; Zaid. et al., 2021). This situation has caused the development of MBK as well as the welfare of teachers to be disrupted (Mohd Norazmi et al., 2021; Rosnee et al., 2021; Roszi et al., 2021; Nik Nurhalida et al., 2021; Een et al., 2021; Yusaini; et al., 2021). A responsible head teacher should need some basic things in leading special education.

### **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. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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. 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

**METHODOLOGY**

The elements of each construct were explored by conducting interviews. This qualitative approach was carried out by interviewing 11 coordinators for the PPKI program throughout the state of Johor. A total of 11 respondents involved are a coordinator for each district in the state of Johor. Each element is explored for each construct in this study. The results of the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis methods. Each element obtained through the thematic analysis was included as a dimension.

**FINDINGS**

Through the coding process, the qualification elements result from the respondents' statements, namely service background, teaching options and first placement (open coding), which form the professional qualification (axial coding) and academic qualification, as well as the academic certificate (open coding) form the academic qualification (axial coding). Both statements on the axial coding, are summarized as qualifying elements in the selective coding process as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis Process for Qualification Elements

<i>Open Coding</i>	<i>Axial Coding</i>	<i>Selective Coding</i>
Service background	professional qualification	Qualification
Teaching options		

First placement		
Academic qualifications	Academic qualification	
Academic Certificate		

Details of the results of the thematic analysis related to the qualification elements are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Qualification Elements Agreed by Respondents

Element	Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Qualification	RT1	Yes. He used to go to a normal school. Ordinary school principal used to be.
	RT2	He also has an English option. Not special education.
	RT5	Administration, especially head teachers who have no special education background, less knowledge, less experience.
	RT6	Background is not special education. Professional I am not mistaken Malay studies. But what is definitely not special education.
	RT7	In the first time, the headmaster didn't seem to care much about PPKI. Lagipon each background is different.
	RT8	If possible, qualified head teachers are given priority. Indeed that is an option.
	RT10	In the background chapter, the headmaster is not from the special education option. So he doesn't really understand.
	RT11	To my knowledge, this headmaster has no options related to special education. Their qualifications in administering special education are lacking.

## DISCUSSION

The details of the results of the analysis also show that, the qualification element for this headmaster leadership construct was agreed by eight out of 11 respondents. They stated that these elements influence the workload and job satisfaction of PPKI teachers. The respondents involved acknowledged that the majority of headmasters assigned to schools with PPKI, do not have professional or academic qualifications related to special education. Although the matter related to this qualification is difficult to explain because it is a matter of ministry policy, but it is the hope of PPKI teachers that priority is given to headmasters who have special qualifications and educational background to be placed in schools with PPKI.

According to the eight coordinators who were interviewed, special education -related qualifications such as academic and professional qualifications provide excellent added value to the school's leadership. Respondents also suggested that the appointment of headmasters in schools with PPKI be from among those with special education -related qualifications. This finding is in line with a study by Norazmi (2020) who stated that the qualification of head teachers related to special education is a key element in ensuring appropriate leadership in PPKI. This element of head teacher qualification was agreed upon by Zaid et al. (2020) as an important element in influencing the leadership of principals towards any decision -making policy in schools. The Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013) also emphasizes that qualifications are an important element in the leadership of headmasters. Thus, it can be stated that qualification is one of the important elements in the leadership of a head teacher.

## CONCLUSION

These findings show that the qualifications of head teachers related to special education have a strong relationship to the workload and job satisfaction of PPKI teachers. These findings are in line with studies by previous studies that state that the qualification of headmasters related to special education is a key element in ensuring good task management in PPKI. This element of qualification of head teachers related to special education can also form effective leadership in PPKI and in turn provide a good impact on the workload and job satisfaction of teachers. The findings of this study conclude that the qualifications of head teachers, whether academic or professional, can help control the issue of workload and job satisfaction of PPKI teachers.

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