

Elements of Attitude In The Leadership Construct Of Special Education Head Teachers In Malaysia

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Abstract: Problems related to attitudes in the leadership of head teachers for special education programs occur both locally and abroad. Abroad, for example, most studies argue that the headmaster of a school with a special education program must have the knowledge, skills, strategies and attitudes that can help students with special needs (MBK) get the best services. Knowledge of the importance of programs such as special education integration program (PPKI) which emphasizes the aspect of balance in the right to education as well as caring attitude towards MBK in schools, must exist among headmasters because they are a reflection of a school to succeed as a whole. This qualitative study was conducted to survey the opinions of relevant parties on the attitude of headmasters towards special education. This study involved 11 PPKI program coordinators for each district in the state of Johor. The findings of this study are expected to provide insights to future researchers related to leadership attitudes in special education.

Keywords: leadership attitude, special education, educational leadership

INTRODUCTION

Responsible head teachers are those who have an attitude of taking into account the welfare and needs of the teachers under them including special education teachers (Aminah et al., 2021; Azlisham et al., 2021; Saadiyah et al., 2021; Firkhan et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2021; Ashari et al., 2021). Brian (2014) suggested to head teachers measures to reduce the workload of special education teachers by managing assignments properly. This situation is to prevent special education teachers from doing something outside of special education (Norazmi et al., 2019; Fauziyana et al., 2020; Norazmi, 2020; Zaid et al., 2020; Zaid et al., 2021). Headmasters often instruct special education teachers to perform a task outside of special education. In order to make changes to work effectiveness, work environment and even shift stress, head teachers need to believe in the abilities of special education teachers as well as give them adequate rights in carrying out their duties (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).

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 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 in the construction of the questionnaire set. As a result of the interviews, five elements were found for the headmaster leadership construct and teacher workload, while six elements were found for the teacher job satisfaction construct.

FINDINGS

Through the coding process, the attitude element resulted from the respondents' statements as follows, namely trying to understand, make visits and ask questions (open coding), which forms a caring attitude (axial coding), PPKI teachers work easily, students with special needs (MBK) troublesome and unnecessary focus (open coding) forms an attitude of misunderstanding (axial coding), as well as trying to find knowledge, monitoring and mentoring (open coding) that forms an attitude of responsibility (axial coding). The three statements on the axial coding, are summarized as attitude elements in the selective coding process as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis Process for Attitude Elements

<i>Open Coding</i>	<i>Axial Coding</i>	<i>Selective Coding</i>
Try to understand	Caring	Attitude
Make a tour		
Ask		
PPKI teachers are happy to work	Misunderstanding	
MBK is troublesome		
No need to focus		
Try to find knowledge	Responsibility	
Monitoring		

Mentoring	Responsibility	
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Details of the thematic analysis of the attitude elements are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Elements of Attitude Agreed by Respondents

Element	Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Attitude	RT1	Headmaster, I think it's necessary to understand. What is special education, what is it. Got to dig, find info.
	RT2	His assumption about PPKI. So the same kind of mainstream teacher. I didn't say everything. But the majority of depa pikiaq like that. Skeptical. The typical teacher doesn't work, the school is just a boy, he doesn't work, he doesn't target.
	RT3	Alhamdulillah ... both understand and are open to us PPKI teachers. They trust us to carry out programs and activities related to PPKI.
	RT4	I think that's the main thing. The top person. If you're the type who likes the job, that's a problem. I haven't finished my real assignment yet, come and ask me to do the work that the school level has.
	RT5	The headmaster looks at me like a regular teacher. I don't expect more. Just be careful in evaluating and assigning tasks. Why does everyone want to share with a special teacher? Work that has nothing to do with it. He doesn't even monitor. How do you know what we do with our students.
	RT6	Yes. It is not the mainstream teachers who are disputing the quantity and scope of PPKI teachers' duties, even the headmasters themselves are in the same world.
	RT7	The headmaster came here a little strict, a little workaholic, he was piled up, he also wanted to handle a basket.
	RT8	Get a headmaster who likes to show off like this. Another headache. I think he needs to gain knowledge and seek experience. Need to change perceptions and assumptions on PPKI. Look with the eyes of the heart.
	RT9	For me, what the headmaster is doing is good and there is a lack. In terms of giving me and the PPKI teachers experience and knowledge outside of special education, I think that is acceptable. But the firmness and authority in giving the task to the headmaster needs to be checked back. I myself feel heavy.
	RT10	Then what needs to be emphasized is the same attitude of headmasters as other mainstream teachers. The assumption that the PPKI teacher is happy that there are not many students, there is no need to pursue the PPKI, the public examination remains the same.
	RT11	But I can say that both mentalities towards special education are a bit lackluster.

DISCUSSION

Details of the results of the analysis also show that the respondents have stated that the attitude of the headmaster is an important element for the leadership of the headmaster that affects the workload and job satisfaction of PPKI teachers. Respondents RT1, RT4, RT5 and RT11 explained that the attitude of the headmaster greatly influenced the workload and job satisfaction of PPKI teachers. They stated that the headmaster took an indifferent attitude towards PPKI and MBK. For them, the headmaster only sees the existence of PPKI and MBK as a burden to the school as a whole. Headmasters are also skeptical by assuming that PPKI only serves as a complement to the school and does not contribute to the success of the school. The attitude of not caring and not understanding special education makes the headmaster give less support and due appreciation to the efforts made by PPKI teachers to raise the name of the school.

While respondents RT2, RT6, RT7, RT8, RT9 and RT10 explained that most of the mainstream teachers in the school consider that PPKI teachers are not burdened with teaching tasks. The teachers saw with a rough view that the PPKI teachers were only in the classroom with MBK in a relaxed and happy state. They also see that PPKI teachers do not need to think about the performance of students in internal examinations or public

examinations such as UPSR. In simple words, they see that PPKI teachers do not have much work to do, even receiving more allowances while doing easy jobs. The assumptions and attitudes of mainstream teachers reflect that they do not understand special education in general and the role of PPKI teachers in particular. This matter is even more worrying when the headmaster also has the same attitude and views regarding special education and PPKI. Such attitudes in turn influence headmasters to give additional assignments to PPKI teachers that do not involve MBK.

Next are the views from the more positive RT3 respondents. Respondents stated that the attitude of the headmaster who is diligent in understanding special education and PPKI reflects that the headmaster is a responsible person. Apart from giving confidence to PPKI teachers to carry out activities with MBK without interruption as well as assignments in the mainstream, headmasters are also open and supportive of teachers at PPKI. Such an attitude of headmasters can prevent PPKI teachers from being burdened with inappropriate tasks. The support and openness of headmasters is also important in providing space for PPKI teachers to achieve satisfaction in carrying out their duties.

CONCLUSION

All 11 respondents also agreed that the attitude of the headmaster is also an important element in overcoming the issue of teacher workload in PPKI. These findings support the findings by Nelson et al. (2014) who found that the attitude of headmasters who pay less attention to special education and the assumption that special education is just a passenger in school, makes the issue of teacher workload and job dissatisfaction of special education teachers in PPKI never ending. Mohamad and Yaacob (2013) also stated that the attitude of the headmaster is an important element in leadership to ensure job satisfaction of PPKI teachers. The findings of the study are also in line with the results of Aziz, Zamri and Ghazali (2018) who made attitude as an element in determining the leadership of headmasters in schools. This element of attitude is also agreed upon by Anderson (2017) who makes it an element in examining the leadership of head teachers in schools. Findings by Abu Bakar et al. (2015) also provide the impression that attitudes are a key element in assessing the leadership of principals in schools influencing the direction of school management. Similarly, Yusri (2016) who explained that the element of attitude needs to be examined in looking at the changes that occur in leadership in schools. Attitude is also an element that needs to be given attention in determining the leadership tendencies of head teachers in schools. Therefore, it can be stated that the attitude element in this study is in line with previous studies that have been conducted.

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