

IMPROVING KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LEADERSHIP AMONG SPECIAL EDUCATION LEADERS IN SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Leadership and knowledge are two inseparable things. If you want to be a good leader, then you need to fill yourself with enough knowledge. Leaders who are less or ignorant, their leadership will be lame and imperfect. Just as everything requires knowledge, so does leadership. Relevant knowledge such as management, finance and welfare needs to be known by a leader. The situation in schools is also similar, where the headmaster or principal who leads the school, needs to have knowledge related to their leadership. If it is further dedicated to special education, then the leaders involved not only need to have knowledge in school management only, but also need to have knowledge in special education as well as the special needs students themselves. Therefore, this qualitative study was conducted to explore and detail the elements of knowledge on leadership in special education. This study involved an interview session with 11 special education program coordinators representing each district in the state of Johor. The findings of the study show that, knowledge provides a significant indicator of special education leadership. The researcher hopes that the findings of this study can be used as a basic reference for special education leadership to lead special education better.

Keywords: knowledge element, educational leadership, special education

INTRODUCTION

In a preliminary interview with five PPKI special education teachers in Johor, it was found that leaders in a school with PPKI need to have sufficient knowledge related to special education and show fairness in managing teachers and students in schools (Aminah et al., 2021; Azlisham et al., 2021; Saadiah et al., 2021; Firkhan et al., 2021; Ishak et al., 2021; Ashari et al., 2021). They stated that headmasters in schools did not pay attention to PPKI and focused more on the achievement of mainstream students. They also constantly burden the teachers in PPKI with a lot of outside assignments because their attitude towards such teachers is more to those teachers not much work in PPKI (Norazmi et al., 2019; Fauziyana et al., 2020; Norazmi, 2020; Zaid et al., 2020; Zaid et al., 2021). They stated that headmasters always hand over important tasks at the school level to teachers at PPKI because they lack knowledge about the excessive workload borne by teachers in managing MBK. They also stated that head teachers are autocratic in delivering assignments, where all instructions given are in the form of coercion, have no discretion and need to be provided in a short period of time (Mohd Norazmi et al., 2021; Rosnee et al., 2021; Roszi et al., 2021; Roszi et al., 2021; Nik Nurhalida et al., 2021; Een et al., 2021; Yusaini et al., 2021). Marquardt’s (2009) study also obtained the conclusion that there is a relationship between the awareness of school leaders and also the success of a special education program. He also suggested that school leaders should feel that they are also part of the special education program in the school.

Shawnee, Diane and Ahlgrim-Delzell (2006) in their study of school leaders’ knowledge related to special education and its influence on their implementation of special education programs in secondary schools in Carolina, USA found that there was a direct effect between such constructs. They noted that school leaders who do not have enough knowledge about special education will implement poor leadership on special education programs. Similarly, the opinion of Anderson (2017), who stated that the main problem to the issue of teacher job satisfaction is the lack of knowledge and experience of head teachers about special education. Their lack of concern will make special education programs in schools less successful (Shawnee et al., 2006). The special education teachers involved will also experience constraints in the performance of their duties due to lack of ongoing support and guidance from the school administration (Mohamad & Yaacob, 2013).

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 knowledge element is derived from six statements, namely the origin of special education stream, once taught PPKI and reference with third parties (open coding), which forms the basic knowledge of special education (axial coding), always ask, share information and do revision, study (open coding) forms the learning dimension (axial coding). Both statements on the axial coding, are summarized as knowledge elements in the selective coding process as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis Process For Knowledge Elements

<i>Open Coding</i>	<i>Axial Coding</i>	<i>Selective Coding</i>
Origins of special education streams	Basics of special education	Knowledge
Ever taught PPKI		
Referral with third parties		
Always ask	Study	
Sharing information		
Do revision, study		

Details of the thematic analysis of these elements are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Elements of Knowledge Agreed by Respondents

Element	Respondent	Interview Excerpts
Knowledge	RT1	After that, I didn't want to go through the books, we asked about PPKI. Maybe he asked the coordinator, I'm not sure. PPKI came because he wanted to deliver a task, a letter.
	RT2	He is not from a special education stream. Before this, he was a GPK in a school that did not have a PPKI. He never handled PPKI.
	RT4	Talk hard, don't talk hard. I think, once upon a time, JPN came to PPD, he said they need to take care of PPKI, special teachers cannot be for big positions in schools. But it's like that too.
	RT5	Wanting to complain doesn't match. Got it too. Even if we talk, the headmaster will not understand. We teach, educate and nurture. These typical boys are like little boys. Kind of baby.
	RT6	For headmasters who are knowledgeable about special education, I think there is no problem. But those who lack knowledge will misunderstand what is happening in PPKI.
	RT8	The headmaster of this school is pure from the prime. Decades in the mainstream. Do not fully know how PPKI operates. No experience and knowledge.
	RT10	So, if the headmaster knows, has knowledge about PPKI, has experience, he will probably channel the task to whoever he should be.
	RT11	They also, apart from qualifications, do not have sufficient knowledge related to special education and the operation of PPKI.

DISCUSSION

The details of the results of the analysis also show that, eight out of 11 respondents gave the statement that the knowledge element is an important aspect in the leadership construct of head teachers. This element of knowledge affects the workload and job satisfaction of PPKI teachers. The respondents involved gave the same view, namely that the knowledge of headmasters related to special education and PPKI is very important in school management. However, it is more important if a head teacher who has no knowledge in special education to seek information related to special education. Respondents RT1 and RT5 stated that, headmasters who do not have knowledge, should at least try to get the correct information related to special education either through their own search on the internet, refer to authorities such as PPD, JPN or BPKhas in KPM and share information with teachers. -Guru PPKI.

While respondents RT2, RT4, RT6, RT8, RT10 and RT11 stated that basic knowledge is very important for a headmaster in carrying out responsibilities in schools with PPKI. Knowledge related to special education is able to expose headmasters to the situation of PPKI in reality. The available knowledge enables the headmaster to understand the needs and problems that occur in PPKI. Through knowledge, the headmaster can examine any assignment that needs to be given to PPKI teachers so that the assignment is appropriate and does not put a burden on them. The suitability of the task as well as the need to carry out the task that should be able to help PPKI teachers achieve satisfaction in performing their duties.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are in line with the results of previous studies that gave the opinion that head teachers will dump many tasks outside of special education to special education teachers because they are less exposed to special education. They also agreed that knowledge is an important element in head teacher leadership to ensure good task management. Headmasters who lack knowledge are basically unprepared as well as lack confidence about the field. This will cause them to overlook special education and burden teachers with various service assignments. The knowledge of the head teacher is very important in shaping the leadership of the head teacher in managing the school organization. Head teacher knowledge is an important element in examining the influence of head teacher leadership on school management. Thus, it can be stated that the knowledge element is an element that is agreed upon as an element in head teacher leadership.

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