

Attitude of Special Education Teachers in Implementing the Career Transition Program for Students with Visual Impairments

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Abstract

In 2004, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) had a major impact in the field of Special Education, particularly in the Career Transition Program (CTP). This is because CTP has been specifically designed to enhance the quality of life for individuals with special needs after completing their education. This indirectly supports various acts such as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), also known as the Disability Rights Convention, the Disability Policy, and the Disability Action Plan, which provide the basis for equal rights and employment opportunities in society.

However, most of the individuals with special needs live in poverty due to their failure to secure employment (Zainal et al., 2020), especially individuals with visual impairments. The fact that this situation happens because majority of CTP implementations in Malaysia is lacking thorough planning and uniformity (Abd Rahman, 2021). Therefore, teachers must have a positive attitude in implementing CTP for students with special needs, specifically those with visual impairments, in line with the established acts stated above. Hence, the role of teachers is not only to shape the future of students but also to serve as exemplary role models for them (Tajuddin & Shaffeei, 2023).

The CTP aims to expose students with special needs to the necessary skills to demonstrate excellent performance in the real working world (Alias, 2014). Thus, in implementing the CTP, teachers play a crucial role in considering the interests, choices, and needs that align with the capabilities of these students with special needs will increase the opportunities for visual impairment students to secure a job from employers. Thus, individuals with special needs still having difficulties in getting job although there are few policies and acts that requiring attention to address this kind of issues (Trezzini et al., 2020). In conclusion, the government must consistently take an action to enhance the spirit, motivation, and attitude of teachers to assist students with visual impairments in acquiring the necessary skills in the implementation of the Career Transition Program.

Problem Statement

Students with special needs often face difficulties in obtaining employment. This is due to various factors, including the lack of readiness of the students themselves during their schooling years (Alias, 2013). However, students readiness can be influenced by the teachers attitude that serve as an agent to deliver information and implement the Career Transition Program (CTP) in schools comprehensively and systematically. However, most studies find out that teachers were facing competency challenges, especially in terms of attitude (Wong & Rashid, 2022).

Mostly teachers are lack of motivation and interest in teaching subjects as they are not proficient in. Moreover, teachers in school tend to prioritize academic subjects over skills, and there are cases where teachers are assigned to a school without any specialized knowledge, particularly in vocational fields . However, it is important for teachers to apply sincerity in teaching. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to show a positive attitude and brought the significant impact on students (Mahalingam & Hamzah, 2016).

Besides, teachers usually lack of interest in teaching and portray the lack of readiness and displaying negative attitudes in implementing the Career Transition Program (CTP) in schools (Derapa & Mohamed, 2018). To overcome this issue, teachers' skills need to be enhanced and given attention to avoid ineffective learning (Derapa & Mohamed, 2018). Teachers should be provided and exposed to workshops and training to gain more knowledge and skills (Mohd Hashim, 2008) to shape the future direction of students with special needs after their schooling years.

Research Objective

The objectives of the study are to

- i. Identify the level of special needs teachers attitude in implementing Career Transition Program for visually impaired student.

Methodology

The method used in this research is survey study with quantitative approach. The purpose of using the survey is to gather the feedback of a sample about an issue or a problem (Chua, 2006). In this study, the sample are selected through purposive sampling to fulfilled the criteria required such as the respondent must be an Integrated Special Educations Teachers that teach visually impaired students. The total sample for this study is 100 teachers from whole Malaysia.

Table 1

This table 1 shows the distribution of frequency and percentage analysis of 100 respondent from special needs teachers by gender, race, age, education level, school type, school location, teaching specialization

Distribution of Respondents According to Demographics

| Item | Category | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------------------|---|-----------|----------------|
| Gender | Male | 20 | 20.0 |
| | Female | 80 | 80.0 |
| Age | 20 – 29 years old | 22 | 22.0 |
| | 30 to 39 years old | 25 | 25.0 |
| | 40 to 49 years old | 47 | 47.0 |
| | 50 years old or above | 6 | 6.0 |
| School Location | Urban | 79 | 79.0 |
| | Rural | 21 | 21.0 |
| Educational Level | Certificate | 0 | 0 |
| | Diploma | 0 | 0 |
| | Degree | 91 | 91.0 |
| | Masters | 9 | 9.0 |
| | PhD | 0 | 0 |
| Teaching Specialization | Learning Disabilities | 0 | 0 |
| | Visual Impairment | 70 | 70.0 |
| | Hearing Impairment | 0 | 0 |
| | Visual Impairment and Learning Disabilities | 28 | 28.0 |
| | Visual Impairment and Hearing Impairment | 2 | 2.0 |
| | Others | 0 | 0 |

Instrument

The instrument for this study is using a set of questionnaire that was adapted from Abd Rahman (2021) research using the Second Transition Evidence-Based Practices Organized by the Taxonomy and CEC Advanced Special Educators Preparations Standards as references. The questionnaire consists of 2 main sections: Section A involving respondents demographics, followed by sections B consists of questions regarding the teachers attitude in implementing the Career Transition Program for visual impairment students. This questionnaire is using the Likert Scale options to identify the level of attitude. Whereas, the mean score was interpreted based on the mean table stated in table 2.

Table 2

Mean value According to Five Likert Scale: Tschannen-Moran & Gareis (2004)

| Mean Score Value | Interpretation |
|------------------|----------------|
| 1.00 – 1.80 | Very low |
| 1.81 – 2.60 | Low |
| 2.61 – 3.40 | Moderate |
| 3.41 – 4.20 | High |
| 4.21 – 5.00 | Very high |

The validity of this instrument has been validated by three experts, including two lecturers from the university and a teacher with more than 10 years of teaching experience in special education. The importance of validity is to ensure that the questionnaire that has been created have a high value of validity and reliability. Therefore, a pilot study has been carried out towards the teachers in Selangor and the value of reliability for this instrument was excellent, as the Cronbach's Alpha value (> 0.85).

Data Collection and Analysis

Besides, the findings for this study were analyzed using the IBM Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 27.0 Windows Version software. The frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were identified in the descriptive analysis to examine the towards implementing the Career Transition Program for visually impaired students. according to Rul Sarmiento & Vera Costa (2017), descriptive analysis is an effective way to summarise and describe data. The classification of teacher's attitude is according to the mean range shown in Table 2.

Results

Special Needs Teachers Attitude of implementing the Career Transition Program for Visually Impaired Students

Table 3 shows the special educations teachers attitudes towards implementing the Career Transition Program for visually impaired students. This data consists of 8 items to assess teachers attitudes towards the implementation of the Career Transition Program.

Table 3

The Special Needs Teachers Attitude

SD= Strongly Disagree, D= Disagree, NS= Not Sure, A= Agree, SA= Strongly Agree

| Item | Attitude | Scale | | | | |
|------|---|-----------|-------------|---------------|---------------|-------------|
| | | SD | D | NS | A | SA |
| B1 | I am responsible for managing the special needs student with visual impairment to obtain career direction | (0%) 0 | (3.0%) 3 | (17.0%) 17 | (73.0%) 73 | (7.0%) 7 |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------------------|---|----------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|---------------|
| B2 | I am confident that the work experience-based Career Transition Program can help in the career development of special needs students with visually impaired | (0%) 0 | (3.0%) 3 | (75.0%) 75 | (22.0%) 22 | |
| B3 | I provide support and advice to special needs student with visual impairment to help them secure employment | (0%) 0 | (3.0%) 3 | (4.0%) 4 | (78.0%) 78 | (15.0%) 15 |
| B4 | I am confident with my skills and knowledge to design and implement Career Transition Programs for special needs student with visual impairment | (0%) 0 | (25.0%) 25 | (31.0%) 31 | (35.0%) 35 | (9.0%) 9 |
| B5 | I engage in discussions with colleagues about the planning and implementation of Career Transition Programs for visually impaired | (0%) 0 | (25.0%) 25 | (18.0%) 18 | (50.0%) 50 | (7.0%) 7 |
| B6 | I am willing to attend more courses related to the Career Transition Program | (0%) 0 | (0%) 0 | (2.0%) 2 | (70.0%) 70 | (28.0%) 28 |
| B7 | I am to learn specific skills to assist the implementation of Career Transition Programs for special needs students with visual | (0%) 0 | (0%) 0 | (3.0%) 3 | (62.0%) 62 | (35.0%) 35 |
| B8 | I have my own initiative to search for additional information about the Career Transition Program for special needs student with visual impairment | (1.0%) 1 | (1.0%) 1 | (11.0%) 11 | (73.0%) 73 | (14.0%) 14 |
| Overall Mean= 3.913 | | n = 100 | | Interpretation = High | | |

There is 8 items in section B that is used to identify the special education teachers attitude. Based on the table 3, majority indicates that teachers attitude towards the implementation of the Career Transition Program (CTP) for students with visual impairments is high. For the first item, B1, 80% of the respondent agree that teachers are responsible for managing the career direction of students with visual impairments. Furthermore, item B2 states that teachers believe that a work-based Career Transition Program can assist in the career

development of students with visual impairments, with a total of 93%. In item B3, teachers agree that they should provide support and guidance to students with visual impairments to obtain suitable employment.

However, 56% of teachers are less confident because lack of skills and knowledge to plan and implement the Career Transition Program for students with visual impairments. However, 57% of the teachers did have discussions with their colleagues about planning the suitable method and approaches on special needs student with visual impairment CTP. Furthermore, majority of the respondent with a total of 98% and 92% are willing to attend more courses related to the Career Transition Program and learn specific skills to succeed the implementation CTP. Therefore, it can be concluded that the attitudes of special education teachers towards implementing the Career Transition Program for students with visual impairments are high, with an overall mean score of 3.91.

Discussion

Teachers attitude refers to behaviors, actions, or views based on a particular opinion (Baharuddin & Badusah, 2016). Based on this study, the finding shows that the teachers have a positive attitude in implementing CTP similar to other finding including the study conducted by (Nasrudin & Shaffeei, 2023). This situation demonstrates that teachers are indeed fully prepared to implement the Career Transition Program, especially for students with visual impairments. However, it is not easy for teachers to find employers who are willing to accept students with disabilities for training at their premises. Nevertheless, with determination, teachers can convince and demonstrate the ability of students with visual impairment to the employers This shows that the sincerity of teachers are able to help the students with disabilities to secure a job after completing their high school education.

Based on this study, the overall mean score obtained from teacher's attitude is 3.91 and it shows that special education teachers level of attitude are high. This is because most of the teachers show their positive attitude by taking responsibility to manage students with disabilities and having the confidence that work-based experience are able to help students. Moreover, if teacher is showing a good role and attitude towards students with visual impairments it can boost up their confident in pursuing career goals in future. However, Hamdan & Ayop (2010) state that if teachers is lack of interest in teaching, it indirectly affects academic achievement, disrupts classroom management, and causes students to lose focus on the learning process. Therefore, teachers should demonstrate readiness in terms of teaching skills, subject mastery, planning, motivation, and positive personality in the class.

Besides, this study also found that 93% of teachers consistently provide support and guidance to students with disabilities to stay motivated. Moreover, this study also proves that the teachers do engage in extensive discussions with colleagues regarding planning the CTP for students. However, the teachers do not have the confident that cause poor of existing skills and knowledge to plan and implement the Career Transition Program for students with disabilities. This is because teachers are not trained to have a appropriate skills when dealing with totally blind students in teaching methods (Zakaria et al., 2010). Nevertheless, the teachers in this study shows the determination to take the initiatives and commitment to participate in workshops and training just to gain some knowledge and skills. This statement is agreed by Abd Rahman & Alias (2017) to increase the number of courses related to career transition for students with special needs because knowledge, skills, and attitudes are the key to the effectiveness of implementing transition programs. Overall, the finding indicates that the readiness of special education teachers based on attitudes is crucial to ensure the

implementation of Career Transition Program for students with visual impairments go smoothly.

Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that special needs teachers attitude have a high level of implementing the Career Transition Program for visual impairment students. It was the teachers responsibility to carry out and implement the CTP in secondary schools. Therefore, teachers attitude is significantly important for students with visual impairments to determine the extent to which this program can be successfully implemented. Moreover, the result shows that teachers are looking for their own initiatives to gain knowledge and skill so that they are ready to provide the student with early training before ending their schooling years and looking for job. This clearly proves that the special needs teachers are mentally and physically prepared to portray their readiness in attitude.

Besides, this study was also conducted to ensure the implementation of Career Transition Program in school was being managed professionally by teachers especially among visual impairment students. Therefore, it is important for teachers to encourage themselves to have a positive attitude even though there are lack of confident to implement and design the plan for Career Transition Program. However, teachers were not given any adequate specific training or skills but they are required to teach creatively (Rashid & Ghani, 2023). In this situation, teachers can cause students become less interested. Therefore, the ministry of education or any parties related are encourage to enhance the teachers confident by participating to any relevant workshops and courses. In the other hand, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia should take an action to modify the Career Transition Program module specifically according to the categories such as learning disabilities, hearing impairment dan visual impairment so that it can used as a standard guideline to all teachers.

Therefore, special education teachers should adapt the attitude of being open-minded and receptive to acquiring new knowledge and skills to see the effectiveness of this program. This is due to the level of occurrence in students life that reflects the special education teachers attitude in providing and delivering early education and training to them in Career Transition Program. An advanced proposal for this study is to focus on teachers knowledge and skills in implementing Career Transition Program for visually impaired students. Including this element, in future the other researcher could conduct a study based on students with visual impairment perceptions towards implementation of Career Transition Program.

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