

Determining Motivation Factors Among Special Education Teachers In Teaching Students With Special Needs

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Abstract

The training of Special education teachers have been given attention by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. According to Sufean (2004), since 1996 special education was given the same priority as other areas in the development of education in Malaysia. In order to implement effective teaching and learning in special education program as well as to motivate them in teaching special need students, teachers should be prepared and understand about the program itself. Therefore, this study is aimed to investigate factors that contribute to the motivation among special education teachers in teaching students with special needs. This study aims to investigate contributing factors of motivation levels among special education teachers toward the special needs children. Maslow Theory of Needs comprises of five (5) main predictors to determine the level of motivation among special education teachers which are physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, self-actualization is applied as the instrument in this study. Since this is a concept paper, the result used is from 31 teacher respondents of Integrated Learning Disability of Special Education Program at Sekolah Kebangsaan Laksamana, Kuching.

Keywords: special education teachers, motivation, special need students

Introduction

Teaching is a noble profession and honored by the community for the tremendous role in developing knowledge and behavior of the society. According to Sufean (2004), the effectiveness of teaching is closely related to the ability and motivation of teachers to accomplish their responsibilities towards students, schools and communities. The effectiveness of this profession should be enhanced in the aspect of knowledge in a particular field as well as teachers' motivation in teaching. Therefore, the role of special education teachers is essential to ensure students with special needs gain the opportunity to experience positive changes in education. This is in line with the concept of education for all by providing opportunities and services for all students with special needs such as those having visual impairment, hearing problems and learning disabilities.

Basically, there are three major programs under Ministry of Education which are Program for Visually Impaired Students, Program for Hearing Impaired Students, and Special Education Integrated Program in regular schools (Taib, 2014). Special education program's goal is to provide equal educational opportunities to all students regardless their disabilities. The objective of Ministry of Education through the Education Development Master Plan is to ensure that all schools and students have equal opportunities and capabilities to excel.

However, despite all the programs provided by government to ease the journey of special needs students in education, these accommodations will not be effective if the execution are not being well taken care of. This emphasizes on the effectiveness of teaching strategy among teachers who are going to teach students with special needs. The issue of teachers who are being ineffective in their teaching are being arises due to the lack of motivation among them to teach special needs students (Mohd Ali, Abdullah, & Abdul Majid, 2014). Their lack of motivation to teach will then lead to the inability to achieve the standard set by the government as well as

unable to meet the expectation towards the students.

Special education teachers need to realize that students with special needs are way different than normal students where they are most likely to have more complex personality and identity. That is why they need to be taught in a different way by using appropriate techniques where this require the teachers to have ample knowledge and experiences. They must also undergone specific courses during preparatory level so that they will get used to the environment before entering the special education school (Bari, Mohamad Yasin, & Hamzah, 2014).

This study has adapted Maslow's Theory of Motivation comprises of five (5) main predictors to determine the level of motivation among special education teachers which are physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, self-actualization.

Statement of Research Problem

Teachers in Malaysia are comprises of New Curriculum for Primary School (KBSR) and Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (KBSM) certificate holders who are responsible to determine the future of education system in our country (Ismail Hussein Amzat , 2017). They possess variety of responsibilities such as planning and preparing the teaching modules, acting as managers, counsellors, disciplinary advisor as well as possessing respected personality. All these are expected from the teachers in order to meet the level of professionalism in teaching profession (Thai & Yasin, 2016).

Therefore, there are few unhealthy psychological factors among teachers that need serious attention and have to be taken into account, such as work attitude, relationships between colleagues, relationships between the management and teachers, work commitment and satisfaction, engagement with students' parents and career development which in turn will give negative impacts towards their motivation to teach (Hamzah, et. al, 2008). These psychological factors have direct interactions with the mental wellness that is derived from the experiences and also have crucial influence on one's perceptions towards all work situations or related matters.

Another problem occurred when special education teachers tend to show some negative attitude while working, such as coming late to class, not completing students' report and assessment on time and tend to neglect their students' welfare, indicating they already feel demotivated to pursue their role as special need students educator (Ismail Hussein Amzat , 2017). Trainee teachers are unclear and lack of understanding in matters pertaining to their functions and responsibilities in school. This may be due to lack of exposure and training facilities before entering the school (Mohd Ali, Abdullah, & Abdul Majid, 2014). They might be equipped with theoretical training pertaining to standard conduct and culture, but not being exposed to the real environment to feel the real challenges of teaching special needs students (Golder, Norwich, & Bayliss, 2005).

Leadership is deemed to be considered as another problem. This factor contributed significantly towards the quality of teaching special education teachers. The problem occurs when they do not receive proper supervisions from either colleagues or school authority, assuming that they have already done their best to teach the students even if the results are not favorable (Golder, Norwich, & Bayliss, 2005). Another matter is teachers in special education school are less conscientious in providing encouragement and moral support to their students as that is not regarded as part of their duty and it has not been mentioned in their job description (Ori Eyal & Guy Roth, 2010).

Objectives

The study conducted is based on the following objectives :

1. To determine relationship between predictors (physiological, safety, love and belongingness, esteem, self-actualization) towards motivating special education teachers in teaching special needs students.
2. To determine the influence of gender on the motivation among special education teachers in teaching special needs students.
3. To determine the most dominant factor which can motivate special education teachers in teaching special needs students.

Methodology

The design of this study is descriptive in which questionnaires were used. A descriptive study will provide ideas and information about a situation at a particular time, as well as to describe the future plans (Wiersma, 2000). It is also the most popular method among researchers. This is because questionnaires are easy to be administered after they have been constructed. Besides, the data is can also be easily processed for analysis. The questionnaire method is the most appropriate technique to collect data in a research that uses survey. The data collected will then be processed and analyzed. All data from respondents' feedback will be compiled for analysis by using Likert method. According to Gay (1981), survey method in education involves gathering information from students, teachers or those involved in the educational process.

A questionnaire were developed based on research objectives and a pilot study has been conducted to 30 respondents which include the teachers of Integrated Learning Disabilities of Special Education Program in Sekolah Kebangsaan Laksamana, Kuching before the real study is conducted. The main goal of conducting a pilot study is to test the level of reliability in every item constructed in the questionnaires. Maslow's Theory of Needs is used as the model to construct the questions due to its high validity and reliability from past researches dealing with work motivation.

The design of this study was descriptive by using Likert Scale which is tabulated in percentage, frequency and mean score.

Analysis

Reliability test is conducted to test the level of reliability in every items constructed in the questionnaire. One of the most commonly used test is Cronbach's Alpha, which is based on average correlation of items within a test if the items are standardized.

Table 1.1 - Independent Variables
Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.904	22

Table 1.2 - Dependent Variables

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.824	.819	5

The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for independent and dependent variables are 0.904 and 0.824 respectively, indicating all items are reliable as its value is more than 0.7

Table 2.0 provides an overview of the background of the respondents who participated in this study.

Demographic background	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	13	41.9
Female	18	58.1
Age		
18-21 years old	1	3.2
22-25 years old	4	12.9
26-29 years old	9	29.0
30 years old and above	17	54.8
Race		
Malay	17	54.8
Chinese	1	3.2
Ibanese	7	22.6
Melanau	6	19.4
Bidayuh	0	0
Personal Income		
RM1,000-RM1,499	1	3.2
RM1,500-RM2,499	5	16.1
RM2,500-RM3,999	15	48.4
>RM4,000	10	32.3
Years of experience		
< 1 Year	3	9.7
1-3 Years	3	9.7
4-7 Years	7	22.6
> 7 Years	18	58.1
Total	31	100

Table 3.0 shows Independent Samples Test (Gender) conducted to determine the influence of gender on the motivation among special education teachers in teaching special need students

Group Statistics

	GENDER	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I feel motivated in teaching special need students because it will fulfill my personal needs	Male	13	3.15	1.214	.337
	Female	18	4.06	.639	.151
I feel motivated as a special education teacher because this profession provides me with a better job security	Male	13	2.85	.899	.249
	Female	18	2.94	1.056	.249
I feel motivated due to the acceptance shown by my special need students with different disabilities	Male	13	3.54	1.391	.386
	Female	18	4.39	.502	.118
I feel motivated to teach special need students with different disabilities	Male	13	3.08	1.320	.366
	Female	18	4.33	.594	.140
The special need students' negative behaviours have never weakened my enthusiasm to teach but it motivate me more to teach them better	Male	13	3.31	1.109	.308
	Female	18	4.11	.583	.137

Table above reveals the relationship between gender and motivation of teachers in teaching special need students. From the table, it shows that mean of female teachers is higher compared to male teachers which indicates that female teachers are more motivated in teaching those students.

Table 4.0 shows Correlation Test to determine the relationship between physiological and motivation

		The profession is the most suitable career for me	I will have enough time to do good job in teaching special need students	The payment of becoming special education teacher is sufficient for my lifestyle	I prefer teaching students with special needs due to higher salary	I prefer teaching students with special needs due to better working hours
The profession is the most suitable career for me	Pearson Correlation	1	.629**	.576**	-.082	.027
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000	.000	.331	.442
	N	31	31	31	31	31
I will have enough time to do good job in teaching special need students	Pearson Correlation	.629**	1	.612**	.276	.247
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000		.000	.066	.090
	N	31	31	31	31	31
The payment of becoming special education teacher is sufficient for my lifestyle	Pearson Correlation	.576**	.612**	1	-.017	.013
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	.000		.464	.473
	N	31	31	31	31	31
I prefer teaching students with special needs due to higher salary	Pearson Correlation	-.082	.276	-.017	1	.862**
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.331	.066	.464		.000
	N	31	31	31	31	31
I prefer teaching students with special needs due to better working hours	Pearson Correlation	.027	.247	.013	.862**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.442	.090	.473	.000	
	N	31	31	31	31	31

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

The result on table above shows correlation coefficients between dependent variable which is motivation and the independent variable which is physiological. Based on the table, there is strong and significant positive relationship occurred between motivation and physiological ($r=0.629, p<0.05$). Therefore, motivation are associated with physiological factor.

Table 5.0 indicates Multiple Regression has been conducted to determine the most dominant factor which motivates special education teachers in teaching special need students

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.927 ^a	.860	.832	.430

a. Predictors: (Constant), In general, I really love teaching my special need students, The appreciation displayed by the school/principal made me work harder, I believe that teaching special need students is well respected by people, I believe that I will have a good rapport with my special need students, I have a strong interest in teaching special need students

b. Dependent Variable: I feel motivated due to the acceptance shown by my special need students with different disabilities

Table above disclosed that R Square of the model is 0.860. It illustrates that 86.0% of motivation among teachers in teaching students with special needs has been significantly explained by love and belongingness factor. Meanwhile, the remaining 14% cannot be explained. That means there were other factor that can determine motivation of teachers.

Conclusion and future research

Based on the data analysis, it is found that the percentage and the motivation of special education teachers are at a high level. However, there are some special education teachers who are not motivated to teach special need students especially those new teachers which may be due to lack of experiences. Apart from that, it can be seen that most of the teachers are passionate and highly determined to teach special need students not only due to incentives being offered by government but they can feel love and compassion towards their students. In future, it is advisable for researchers to expand their studies to areas not only in Kuching territory to obtain better distribution of data. Future researchers can also swift the focus of study to factors that can demotivate special education teachers in teaching students with special needs. Apart from that, level of support by parents of special need students toward school programs can become another focus of study in the future.

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