

CAREER TRANSITION PROGRAM FOR SPECIAL NEED STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyse the needs of the Special Needs Career Transition Program in school. The Special Needs Students Career Transition Program was implemented to prepare the Special Needs Students with basic and vocational skills as well as individual employment aspects. The objective of the study was to (1) identify the level of readiness among Special Education Teachers in the implementation of the Career Transition Program for Special Needs students in the Special Education Integrated Program (SEIP) and (2) identify the Special Need Student readiness level in the Career Transition Program at SEIP. The research methodology used quantitative method and survey to answer the research questions. The sample were 107 Special Education teachers who implemented the Career Transition Program in schools. The findings show that the readiness level of special education teachers (mean=3.99) need to be enhanced with the implementation of the basic skills courses and the Malaysian Skills Certificate (MSC). Special Needs Students (SNS) [mean=3.88] need to be trained and equipped with 3 basic skills (Reading, Writing, Counting), Vocational Basic skills, Basic self-management skills, Social skills, Communication skills, Problem solving skills, Basic technology skills and deep interest in the field before participating in the Career Transition Program. Meanwhile, the aspects of compliance with the Career Transition Program Guidelines are well-respected and need to be further enhanced among school administrators. It is proposed in the future, all the Special Education teachers must have the Malaysian Skills Certificate and Vocational Skills courses in order to enhance their competence. SNS should be educated with a high degree of self-determination based on their abilities and passion. Systematic Career Transition Program modules and frameworks need to be developed to explain SNS direction upon completion of the Career Transition Program. It is hoped that this study will provide ideas and contributions in streamlining and implementing the Career Transition Program in the future.

Keywords: Career Transition Program, Special Needs Student, Special Education Integrated Program, Special Education Teacher.

1. Introduction

The Career Transition Program is a process of providing Special Needs Students (SNS) in training and skills in the real world of work. This program is essential to ensure SNS is ready to work after leaving school.

Hence, SNS need to be exposed to natural talent as a process of self-realization in real life (Shaffeei,2010; 2007). In early-stage, starting from form one, SNS need to be diagnose before they attending the training for Basic vocational skills or Malaysian Skills Certificate courses in the Special Education Integrated Program (SEIP) at their respective schools (Shaffeei, 2019).

SNS marketability is an important factor in developing human capital that contributes to national development (MOE, 2019). The post-secondary SNS market needs to have basic skills in the areas of basic skills, personal qualities, interpersonal skills and tendency to interest in selected fields of work (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2018).

1.1 Background

The career-training process began in 2003 in the Life Skills subject for students with learning disabilities in the Learning Disabilities Classroom Program (LDCP). Basic skills training introduced in the Life Skills subject consists of cooking, sewing, handicrafts, car wash, bicycle and motorcycle maintenance.

In 2006, the Special Vocational Curriculum was introduced by the MOE to assist the SNS in SEIP towards career preparation. There are six components of cooking, sewing, agriculture, handicraft, service and maintenance with the basic amenities available in the school.

In 2015, the Special Education Secondary Curriculum (SESC) was introduced by the MOE as an effort to uphold the education equality for the SNS. In 2018, the students were in form two and they will end their schooling session in 2021. This Education Opportunity opens up the opportunity for schools and SNS to choose the right skills to ensure SNS is skilled, self-reliant and successful.

In 2019, MOE introduced the Career Transition Program to assist SNS in SEIP from form one to five. The program implemented to SNS based on the skills and courses provided by schools, skill centers, industry and Non-profit Government Organizations (NGO). The objectives of the Career Transition program implemented over five years at the SEIP so that SNS would have sufficient skills in the field of employment to suit their level of ability.

2. Literature Research

The School to Career Program (Buntat, 2000) was introduced to provide students with training opportunities before they start working. It has been implemented for all upper secondary students from form four to five. The program focuses on moderate academic level students. So, they focused on the work skills during school and most of them have the job opportunities after graduation.

In this regard, SNS Learning Disabilities in particular need to be prepared with various skills for the future of their careers (Shaffeei, 2007; M. Nasir, 2016). SNS at SEIP need to be equipped with a wide range of vocational and personal skills so that they can compete with others in the job market. Therefore, the Skills Curriculum needs to be developed for the SNS at SEIP based on their ability (Mat Isa, 2008). As a result, the vocational skills base courses and the Malaysian Skills Certificate (MSC) courses at the SEIP (MOE, 2015) are expected to enhance the SNS readiness. However, the school needs to ensure that in terms of physical and infrastructure facilities, teachers' skills and SNS readiness contribute to the success of the SEIP curriculum and Career Transition Program. In addition, School-based Training needs to be applied to the SNS Learning Disabilities in SEIP (Shaffeei, 2010; Mat Isa, 2008). This training is carried out in conjunction with the teaching and facilitating process of teachers in schools. Teacher knowledge and understanding are essential for successful training and the Career Transition Program can be applied to SNS. Therefore, School-based Life Skills Training and Basic Skills Training should be practiced in learning at SEIP (Shaffeei, 2019).

According to M. Nasir, (2016), the Career Transition Program helps SNS to prepare for the real world of work. Schools need to play an important role by working collaboratively through industry and skills centres. These skills training indirectly helps SNS in getting a job later.

3. Problem Statement

Special Education teacher readiness factors play an important role in implementing the Career Transition Program in schools. According to Yaakub, Hamzah, (2019), the Special Education teacher knowledge, attitude and skills are at a moderate level. Lokey, Dali (2016) found that the level of commitment among Special Education teachers declines when it comes to administering leadership. This shows that the Special Education teachers' readiness in implementing the Career Transition Program needs to be strengthened to ensure the SNS has the skills and competencies expected in the future.

As such, SNS readiness factors in the Career Transition Program require the support of all parties. According to Kamela & Mohd Alib (2016), students' ability to work are very low. This is because the problem of mastering basic skills is at a low level and needs to be increased. Issues of low capacity and physical capacity of SNS, based on public opinion (Mat Daros et al., 2012) contributed to this study. Factors lack of SNS personal skills in line with employers, wishes (Abdullah et al., 2015) also influence this study.

The compliance factors and guidelines for the Career Transition Program introduced by MOE in 2019 were also the main focus of this study. In order to implement this program, school administrators need to give teachers the opportunity to make the best decision in Teaching and Learning (T & L), Mohd Yusoff & Saidin, (2016). Teachers need to be given the freedom that encompasses the achievement of the school's objectives and mission of the SNS. There is no specific guidance on implementing the Career Transition Program as schools are still unable to perform well (Kamela, & Mohd Alib, 2016). However, the existence of these guidelines can help schools realize their SNS. This indicates that the need for skills training for SNS in the Career Transition Program meets the requirements of employers in the industry.

Therefore, factors of teacher readiness, SNS readiness and adherence to SNS Career Transition Program Guidelines in this study should be considered and analysed to meet the needs of SNS, parents, schools and industry.

4. Research Objective

1. Identify the readiness level among Special Education teachers in the implementation of the Career Transition Program for special needs students at SEIP.
2. Identify the readiness level of Special Needs Students in the implementation of the Careers Transition Program at SEIP.

4.1 Study Framework

Figure 1: Study Framework Implementation of Career Transition Program at Special Education Integrated Program (SEIP)

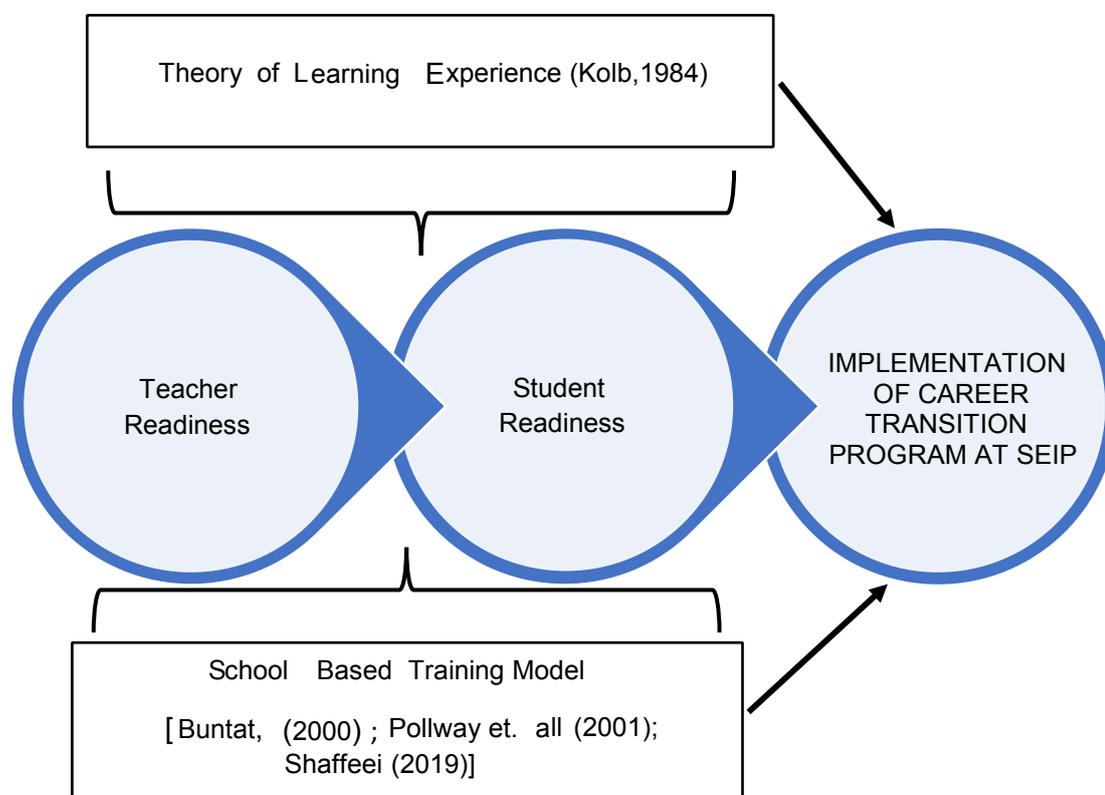


Figure 1 shows the variables in the implementation of the Career Transition Program toward Special Need Students in schools. The variables involved were teacher readiness and SNS readiness. The School-Based Training Model (Buntat, 2000; Polloway et al., 2001; Shaffeei, 2019) was used in this study. Meanwhile, Theory of Learning Experience (Kolb, 1984) was applied to review the implementation of the SNS Career Transition Program in schools.

School-based training was applied in schools to implement career transition programs for students with special needs. It also applied vocational skills training with collaborating from industry for career training. The program was supported by the Learning Experience Theory (Kolb, 1984) where students need to be given training and skills according to their abilities.

5. Research Methodology

The study was conducted through a quantitative method to identify teacher readiness and SNS readiness implemented in the transition program to the special needs student careers at SEIP. Konting, (2005) stated that quantitative are appropriate to get answers to any questions that students want to study. The research sample is intended to be survey studies conducted at the SEIP of a secondary school that implementing the Career Transition Program in the state of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Perak and involves 107 teachers in SEIP.

Purposive sampling method was implemented in this study. A questionnaire survey was given to 107 teachers who directly involved in the implementation of the Career Transition Program in the Special Education Integration Program (SEIP). Data analysis was done using SPSS software to answer the objectives of this study. A total of 88 students with special needs are also involved in the implementation of the Career Transition program according to their interests and abilities such as cooking, sewing, agriculture and others.

6. Findings

Table 1: Item Comparison

Section	Item	Mean average by section of the questionnaire
A	Preparation and training by teachers in the career transition program of students with special needs in schools	3.99
B	Readiness of students with special needs in career transition programs	3.88
C	Understanding of guidelines in the implementation of transition programs to the careers of students with special needs	3.79
D	Skills mastered by students with special needs after undergoing skills training in a career transition program	3.65
E	Skills mastered by students with special needs after undergoing skills training in a career transition program	3.46
	Average Min	3.75

(N=107)

Findings of Study 1: Preparation of special education teachers in implementing career transition programs in SEIP

The findings of the study indicate that the need for the implementation of the Career Transition Program for the marketability of students with special needs in the Special Education Integration Program. This study obtained the factors of preparation and training by teachers in the career transition program of students with special needs in schools with the highest mean value of 3.99 involving 107 teachers and 88 students as the study samples in the states of Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Perak.

Findings of study 2: Preparing students with special needs in implementing career transition programs in SEIP.

This study involved 88 students learning at SEIP in Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Perak. Students' readiness measured based on teachers' responses and 107 teachers involved as sample in this study. Teachers responded that students tend to involve in hands on activities such as cooking, sewing and agriculture.

This study obtained the readiness factor of students with Special Needs in the career transition program in the school has the second highest mean value of 3.88. These findings indicate that student readiness is important in the implementation of career transition.

7. Discussion

Discussion 1: The preparation of special education teachers in the implementation of the Career Transition Program at SEIP

The findings show that teachers need to have knowledge and skills in implementing the Career Transition Program. According to Blackmon (2008) teachers need to provide Individual Education Plan (IEP) services based on their strengths, interests and goals after completing their schooling. Rahmada, et al. (2019), on the other hand, states that the level of teacher's skills needs to be improved in ensuring that students with special needs master the skills.

Teachers are able to train their SNS in preparation for the work environment (Worrell & Taber, 2009). Teachers also need to prepare SNS for job opportunities, curricular and suitability of activities in preparation for change, technological diversification and lifelong learning (Elleven et al. 2006). According to Ismail, (2018), the responsibility of a Special Education teacher is to provide as much knowledge and skills as possible to the SNS.

Indirectly, teachers should equip themselves with the knowledge, understanding and vocational skills to guide SNS in mastering the basic vocational skills and essential skills of the Malaysian Skills Certificate.

Discussion 2: Preparing students with special needs in implementing Career Transition Program at SEIP

SNS should have the basics of 3 Skills (Reading, Writing and Counting) and Vocational Skills in preparing themselves for the Transition Skills Training and Career Program (Shaffeei, 2019). The findings show that SNS employability skills is low (Samian, Ali & Buntat, 2013). In addition, the employability skills acquired by SNS in vocational education do not necessarily meet the needs of their employers (Yusuf et. all, 2013). Therefore, SNS needs support in maintaining the skills acquired in schools in line with the demands of the job market. The study of Mohamed Nor, and Mohd Yasin, (2018) shows the level of SNS parents involvement is moderate and needs to be improved because their parents play the main role in helping and supporting SNS readiness for real career.

Generic skills need to be applied to SNS as it's important for them as a preparation to work (Nasri, et al., 2010). These skills should include self-management skills, personal or individual skills, basic information and computer technology skills as well as selected job scope skills. According to the study of Yusuf et al. (2013) stated that vocational education is one of the efforts to develop the SNS's ability to acquire skills that enable them to obtain employment. Vocational education in SNS Learning Disabilities helps to prepare them for the world of work after graduation (Shaffeei, 2019; M. Nasir, 2016; Mat Daros et al., 2012; Jones & Williams, 2011; Paul, 2011; Ofoegbu & Azarmsa, 2010; Worrell & Taber, 2009; Mohd Isa, et al., 2009; Dupoux, 2008).

The readiness of Special Education Teachers in this Career Transition Program is essential to ensure that it works as required by MOE. Teachers needs to know and master all aspects of Special Needs Career Transition Program. Teachers also need to be proficient in such skills to facilitate teaching and learning sessions at SEIP. The element of Multitasking skills needs to be implemented by the teachers in their teaching and learning.

SNS also need to be prepared in the self-career aspect of the Career Transition Program such as basic self-management skills, social skills, communication skills, problem

solving skills and basic technology skills. The ability of SNS to master such skills can guarantee the success of the Career Transition Program.

8. Conclusion

The Career Transition Program is a platform for all SNS in preparing for the real workforce in all schools around the world. SNS need to be given the space and opportunity to contribute their energy and skills to their potential (MOE, 2016). It is important to help SNS get into the field of work that interests them and to show their full potential. The need for a well-organized Career Transition Program helps schools, SNS, Parents and Communities in terms of implementation and future success implications.

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