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The Role of Special Education Teachers in Improving Learning Motivation for Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

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Abstract

In realizing the aspirations of the National Education Philosophy and the Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025), various transformational initiatives have been designed and implemented by the Malaysian Ministry of Education to provide quality and relevant educational opportunities for all students including students with special needs. This article outlines the concept of learning, challenges and the role of teachers in increasing learning motivation as well as suggestions for increasing the interest of students with special educational needs (SEN) to learn. The teachers' ability to increase the student's learning motivation will allow the students to well follow teaching and learning process and achieve good achievements in academics and manage daily activities perfectly. Therefore, Special Education teachers need to prepare themselves with various skills, knowledge and expertise in improving students with special needs so that they can help them in increasing their motivation of learning.

Keywords: Special Education Teachers, Learning Motivation, Students with Special Education Needs

Introduction

The education system in Malaysia has gone through various forms of change in an effort to develop an effective education for producing knowledgeable people. Various different educational initiatives and programs have been outlined by the Malaysian Ministry of Education (KPM) to make this noble wish a reality. Efforts including the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM), 2013-2025 compiled and outlined 11 aspirations to change the country's education system. The fifth factor that is required in every school is high-performance leadership as the quality of leadership is the second most important school principle factor in choosing teachers to determine student success. There is also a trend that shows that instructional leadership can improve students who lead solely in administration. Teacher quality and teacher authority through instructional leadership can help increase and

develop student motivation to learn at school. Teachers are the main pillars that determine the effectiveness of schools and become agents of change in students. Teachers are a group of individuals with different styles and are influenced by the activities made and carried out in the schools.

Motivation plays a very important role in life. It is closely related to behaviour, attitude and norms of an individual. There are various opinions from previous studies on the definition of motivation. Motivation can be defined as the behaviour of individuals in carrying out their desires and goals. Based on the statement, motivation is considered as the ways of an individual in doing a job and task. Each individual has his or her own way of doing a job (Othman et al., 2020).

Motivation requires stimulation to be realised. It is something that encourages and helps a person to do something either consciously or unconsciously. In addition, motivation can be linked to a person's interest in doing something whether continuously or not. In the context of teachers and students, the teacher is the party responsible to provide stimulation to students for increasing their motivation and inclination to learn. This statement is supported by Arianti (2018) stating that motivation has an important role in teaching and learning process for both teachers and students. For teachers, knowing the motivation of students to learn is essential to maintain and increase students' enthusiasm to learn. Meanwhile, for students, learning motivation can foster their spirit of learning. Students carry out learning activities with enjoyment as they are driven by motivation. Motivation between students and teachers can be in the form of gifts, appreciation and concern for students. Therefore, teachers must be wise to motivate students with various methods and techniques that suit their way of thinking.

Learning motivation can be understood as the driving force to carry out certain learning activities, which come from within and outside the individuals to foster their spirit of learning. Learning motivation is an absolute necessity for learning as it plays an important role in providing enthusiasm for learning (Monika et al. 2017; Antin et al. 2018).

Literature Review

Learning Motivation

Previous studies have shown that students have a positive attitude and high motivation when learning. The role of teachers is also important to motivate students to learn (Nasir et al., 2014). According to Bidin et al (2019) revealed the importance of attitude and motivation in helping students to learn more effectively. Student motivation is closely related to students' needs and the ways they use to meet those needs (Fajri et al., 2021). Zulkifli et al (2020) discovered that students with high creative potential will have high motivation, which explains that motivation can encourage students to be more diligent in work or assignments despite various obstacles and challenges. Highly motivated students will push themselves and have the determination to continue learning without fail. Students who are highly motivated will usually have a strong and steady drive to continue to be interested in what they learn, as a result of stimulation through incentives and learning motives (Nasir et al. 2014; Bakhri et al. 2020). However, the strength to develop a professional level is not forced and needs to arise within each individual. Therefore, teachers with a positive desire and professional attitude will try to improve their teaching practice by following professional development. Motivation and collaboration are the main keys to the success of personal professional development (Chao et al., 2017; Durksen et al., 2017).

Teacher's Role

Teachers are members of the school who are directly involved in implementing the curriculum and educational programs in the school. The role played by teachers in schools is no less important, especially in terms of achieving the school's aspirations and goals. According to (Nor et al., 2020), students with hearing problems need appropriate education according to their ability. Therefore, Special Education teachers need to prepare themselves with various knowledge, expertise and skills to achieve national aspirations. In addition, the cooperation, collaboration and support of parents, school administrators, medical experts and the community are essential. According to Nasir et al (2017), the goal can be achieved by teachers applying a pedagogical approach that is focused on the development and improvement of student skills. Self-directed learning is a traditional learning strategy that is still appropriate to be implemented in the classroom as the skills acquired through self-learning are still relevant to the needs of the 21st century. Self-directed learning serves as a skill acquisition strategy where students are able and confident to use the skills learned for engaging themselves and further exploring new learning skills in the future. According to Alwayi et al (2021), teachers act as instructors, caregivers and managers, as well as facilitators, mentors and counsellors throughout the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

Discussion and Suggestions for Improvement

Special education teachers can increase the learning motivation of their students with special educational needs (SEN) in the form of rewards or praise. Ghani et al (2020) mentioned that the rewards given to students will make them more interested and enthusiastic to continue learning. The reward given should also be equal to the student's achievement. If a student is given a gift, other students will also feel inspired to have the same reward. Thus, they will be more diligent and enthusiastic to continue learning and compete in a healthy way to achieve better grades. Meanwhile, the praise technique is used to change negative behaviour to positive (Katman et al., 2016). This method can motivate students to behave in the desired way by reducing or stopping negative behaviour directly. Praise improves student control in the classroom while also improving the quality of student academic performance.

Hence, the method of praise and reward as a form of stimulation is able to provide motivation and strengthen a child's behaviour. This statement is supported by psychologists such as Thorndike and Skinner who have highlighted learning theories related to the use of praise, reward or reinforcement as the main reference used in education in Malaysia today (Abd Hamid et al., 2021).

Teaching materials play an important role in restoring SEN's motivation in the learning process. Teaching media can help students learn with high interest and enthusiasm if used by emphasising the characteristics of students, teaching objectives, the types of teaching materials and the form of teaching testing to be conducted. According to Hanapi et al (2019), multimedia materials can have a great impact on education. A multimedia-based teaching approach can transfer information from a static textbook to an interesting learning pattern. Here, the animation plays an important role to brighten up the presentation of information. This is essential to ensure that students can concentrate and not feel tired during the teaching and learning process. According to Stapa et al (2017), multimedia materials including gamification can become a positive and effective medium of communication since audio, video, text and animation with various patterns and colours can be displayed on a

screen at the same time. Baharuddin et al (2016) also stated that technological materials can increase SEN's interest in certain knowledge and further encourage learning motivation.

In addition, the teacher's attitude or behaviour is modelled by SEN. A good teacher must be concerned about the needs or problems faced by his or her students. According to Bidin et al (2019), all students have their own problems and are usually shy and reluctant to tell their problems to the teacher for fear of being reprimanded. If this happens, the teacher could play a role in approaching students with problems through different interventions. This way, students will not feel embarrassed and can express the problems they face with relief. Special Education teachers are not only teachers in the classroom, but also counsellors, caregivers and facilitators. According to Noor et al (2016), Special Education teachers need to be patient, caring, honest and responsible. This is in line with (Rashed et al., 2017) stating that forming the student's personality and ensuring that the process of 'becoming a student' becomes a reality depends on the teachers' ability to perform their duties as 'true' teachers in school.

In addition, self-learning increases the learning motivation of SEN. Nasir et al (2017) posited that self-learning is a skill acquisition strategy that allows students to be confident in using the skills learned to engage and further explore learning skills available for them in the future. With self-learning, their competence will increase besides having the opportunity to overcome a challenge using their skills that match their abilities (Gopalan et al., 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on independent research, it has been found that special education teachers are indeed challenged to increase the learning motivation of students with SEN throughout the teaching and youth process. In the future, reviewers may suggest that special education teachers need to creatively generate learning motivation to build self-awareness in the learning of students with special educational needs and in adolescents. The teacher's role as educator, leader and facilitator is a very laudable thing to inspire in teaching and speaking. The role of the special education teacher is sorely needed to provide the best motivation for students with special needs.

Therefore, the teacher should set a good example for the students. Every student has different personalities and abilities. Teachers in the classroom also need to be firm in dealing with the idiosyncrasies of each student. Teachers, as students' guides, enable them to discover the various potentials of students and guide students to realize and implement student development tasks. With learning motivation, special education teachers can develop students with special educational needs into independent individuals who can contribute to society and the country.

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