

Implementation of Specialized Vocational Subjects for Students with Learning Disabilities in Career Transition: A Case Study

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Abstract

Purpose - This study explores the implementation of Special Vocational Subjects (MPV Khas) for students with learning disabilities (MBP) as career transition from teachers' perspectives in the Special Education Integration Program (PPKI). The study employs Maslow's Theory and Behaviorism, using the Transition Programming Taxonomy Model, Transition to Adult Living Model, and the Generic Skills Model from The Conference Board of Canada. A qualitative approach with a multiple case study design was used, involving eight teachers selected through purposive sampling from four secondary schools. Data collection included interviews, observations, and document analysis, which were analyzed descriptively and presented narratively. The findings indicate that MPV Khas implementation in PPKI covers program structure, career experience preparation, generic skills application, parental involvement, and inter-agency collaboration. However, challenges exist in curriculum structure, lack of qualified teachers, financial constraints, student attitudes, and limited parental and agency involvement. A new framework is proposed to enhance the implementation of MPV Khas for career transition in PPKI.

Keywords: Special Vocational Subjects, Learning Disabilities, Career Transition, Special Education, Teachers' Perspectives

Introduction

Vocational education plays a crucial role in preparing students with learning disabilities (MBP) for career transitions. In Malaysia, the Special Education Integration Program (PPKI) has introduced MPV Khas to equip MBP with the necessary skills for employment. However, the implementation faces structural, pedagogical, and collaborative challenges. This study aims to explore teachers' perspectives on MPV Khas implementation and propose improvements. The education system in Malaysia has long recognized the need for inclusivity in vocational training, particularly for students with special needs. However, the existing framework requires refinement to ensure seamless transition from education to employment for MBP.

The primary goal of this research is to understand the extent to which MPV Khas is being implemented and identify areas requiring improvement. Through an in-depth analysis

of teacher experiences and stakeholder engagement, the study seeks to highlight best practices and obstacles that hinder effective vocational training for MBP. The findings from this research will contribute to policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the overall effectiveness of vocational education in special education settings.

To ensure that vocational education aligns with modern workforce demands, the Malaysian government has introduced various policies aimed at improving vocational training within special education. However, gaps remain in curriculum standardization, teacher training, and industry collaboration. This study will also examine the current policy landscape and its impact on vocational training effectiveness.

Moreover, vocational training programs for MBP must be designed with a comprehensive approach that considers both skill development and long-term employability. Effective vocational education requires a balance between theoretical knowledge and hands-on experience, ensuring students can adapt to the evolving job market. Many developed nations have successfully implemented vocational programs that integrate academic learning with practical skills training, a model that Malaysia could adopt to enhance MPV Khas.

Another critical aspect of vocational education is inclusivity. Many students with learning disabilities require additional support in the form of personalized learning plans, specialized teaching methods, and access to assistive technologies. Ensuring that MPV Khas addresses these needs is essential in preparing students for meaningful employment.

Stakeholder engagement also plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of vocational training. Collaboration between educators, policymakers, industry leaders, and parents is necessary to create a seamless transition from school to work. Employers must be encouraged to participate in vocational training programs by offering internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training. At the same time, teachers should receive ongoing professional development to enhance their ability to deliver high-quality vocational education tailored to MBP's unique needs.

A well-structured vocational education framework can significantly improve career outcomes for MBP by providing them with relevant skills, confidence, and industry exposure. As the job market continues to evolve with advancements in technology and automation, vocational education programs must be regularly updated to align with current workforce demands. Without proper interventions, MBP may face barriers to employment, limiting their career prospects and economic independence.

By integrating best practices from successful international models, strengthening industry collaborations, and continuously refining vocational curricula, Malaysia can create a more inclusive and effective vocational education system for students with disabilities. This study highlights the need for a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach in shaping policies and practices to ensure that MPV Khas fulfills its intended role in preparing MBP for sustainable and fulfilling careers.

Literature Review

Theoretical perspectives on vocational education for students with disabilities emphasize the importance of a multi-faceted approach to career preparation. One of the most relevant frameworks in understanding student engagement in vocational training is Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which highlights the progression of human motivation from basic survival to self-actualization. According to Maslow, individuals must first satisfy their physiological needs (such as food, shelter, and health) before they can focus on higher-level aspirations, including career development.

In the context of special education, this means that vocational programs must address not only academic and technical skills but also the fundamental needs of students with disabilities. A safe, inclusive, and supportive learning environment is essential for fostering engagement. When students feel physically and emotionally secure, they are more likely to participate actively in vocational training and set long-term career goals.

Additionally, the development of self-efficacy a student's belief in their own ability to succeed is crucial in vocational education. Programs that promote confidence, resilience, and independence help students overcome challenges and develop the necessary mindset for career success. Outcome expectations also play a key role; students must be able to see the potential benefits of vocational training in terms of employability, financial independence, and overall well-being.

By integrating these psychological and motivational factors into vocational education, institutions can enhance student engagement, improve long-term career outcomes, and contribute to a higher quality of life for students with disabilities (Chun et al., 2024). This holistic approach ensures that vocational training is not only skill-based but also empowering and transformative for the learners involved.

Behaviorism, as proposed by Pavlov and Skinner, suggests that learning occurs through reinforcement and repetition. This theory is particularly relevant to vocational training, where hands-on experience and structured practice are crucial for skill development. By integrating behaviorist principles into MPV Khas, educators can create structured learning environments that encourage positive reinforcement and skill mastery. Positive reinforcement encourages desired behaviors, leading to skill mastery. For instance, rewarding students for completing tasks can enhance motivation and engagement (Azima et al., 2024). Repetition of tasks in a controlled environment allows learners to develop proficiency. This is evident in vocational settings where hands-on experience is critical (Addaeroby & Febriani, 2024). The learning environment plays a crucial role in shaping behavior. A supportive atmosphere can enhance student interaction and motivation, as shown in studies conducted in boarding school settings (Muhja & Wijaya, 2024).

Structured vocational training programs play a crucial role in preparing students with disabilities for the workforce, as highlighted by various studies. These programs not only enhance employability but also align educational outcomes with industry needs, ensuring a smoother transition into the job market. Career-focused curricula are essential for aligning training with industry demands, as emphasized by Landmark et al. (2010) and supported by findings from Taryaningsih et al. (2023), which show that inclusive job training significantly

improves both technical and non-technical skills of individuals with disabilities(Taryaningsih et al., 2025). Programs that integrate industry collaboration help bridge the skills gap, enhancing work readiness and employment opportunities for students with disabilities(Taryaningsih et al., 2025).

The role of employer engagement in shaping vocational curricula is crucial for aligning educational outcomes with workforce expectations, particularly for students with disabilities. Research indicates that employers emphasize the importance of soft skills, such as punctuality, teamwork, and task persistence, alongside technical skills. This dual focus enhances the employability of these students in a competitive job market. Employers play a pivotal role in developing inclusive vocational programs that address the skills gap for individuals with disabilities(Taryaningsih et al., 2025). Engaging employers in the curriculum design process ensures that training aligns with actual workplace demands, fostering better job readiness(Berkel, 2021).

Furthermore, Griffin et al. (2016) explore the role of technology in vocational training for students with disabilities. The integration of assistive technologies, such as adaptive tools and virtual simulations, has been found to enhance learning outcomes. By incorporating digital learning methods, educators can provide more inclusive and personalized vocational training experiences.

Structured internships and job coaching play a crucial role in enhancing career readiness for students with disabilities. These programs provide practical experience, bridging the gap between academic knowledge and real-world application, which is essential for successful employment transitions. Internships allow students to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, significantly improving their job readiness(Gustiawan et al., 2025). Participation in internship programs has been shown to enhance both technical and non-technical skills, preparing students for competitive job markets(Taryaningsih et al., 2025). Internships foster positive career planning attitudes, which are vital for students with disabilities(Lee & Kim, 2024).

Inter-agency collaboration is a pivotal element in ensuring vocational success, particularly for students transitioning from education to employment. Effective career transition programs often involve coordinated efforts among schools, vocational training centers, employers, and government agencies. This collaboration ensures comprehensive support, ranging from skills development to job placement, which is crucial for students, especially those with disabilities. The following sections explore the various aspects of inter-agency collaboration as highlighted in the provided studies. Inter-agency collaboration is mandated by federal legislation and is recognized as a best practice in transition literature. It involves diverse partners across school systems, service systems, and communities to support the transition process(Bumble et al., 2024). Collaboration between Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies is essential for providing transition services to youth with disabilities. However, these collaborations are limited and vary significantly, indicating a need for more structured partnerships(Patnaik & Honeycutt, 2024).

Despite these insights, research also highlights persistent barriers in vocational education for students with disabilities. According to Test et al. (2009), many vocational

programs lack standardized curricula, leading to inconsistencies in training quality. Additionally, teacher preparedness remains a concern, as many educators report inadequate professional development opportunities in vocational instruction.

By reviewing these perspectives, it becomes clear that a successful vocational education model for students with disabilities must adopt a comprehensive approach. A well-rounded and integrated model includes several key elements that work together to improve career outcomes for students with learning disabilities. First, a structured curriculum tailored to the specific needs and abilities of these students ensures that they acquire relevant skills and knowledge. Second, forming partnerships with employers creates opportunities for real-world application of skills and helps bridge the gap between education and employment.

Incorporating technology into the learning process further supports students by offering assistive tools and resources that can make learning more accessible and engaging. Providing internships and hands-on work experience is also crucial, as it allows students to gain practical skills, build confidence, and improve their employability. Finally, fostering inter-agency collaboration between schools, vocational institutions, and community organizations ensures that students receive the necessary support and services to thrive. When these elements come together, they create a robust vocational education system that maximizes the potential of students with learning disabilities and prepares them for successful careers.

Methodology

A qualitative case study approach was adopted, involving interviews, observations, and document analysis. Eight teachers from four PPKI secondary schools participated. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, ensuring triangulation for reliability. The qualitative methodology allowed for a deep exploration of teacher perspectives, capturing nuanced insights into the challenges and successes of MPV Khas implementation.

The study employed a purposive sampling method to select participants who had direct experience teaching MPV Khas. Semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for participants to share detailed accounts of their experiences, while classroom observations allowed for an assessment of instructional strategies and student engagement. Document analysis included curriculum materials, lesson plans, and policy documents related to vocational education for MBP.

To ensure comprehensive data collection, interviews were conducted in multiple sessions, allowing participants to reflect on their teaching experiences and elaborate on challenges faced in the classroom. The questions focused on curriculum effectiveness, student engagement, teaching strategies, and resource availability. Observations were carried out over several weeks, capturing real-time interactions between teachers and students, as well as assessing the adequacy of facilities and materials used in MPV Khas instruction.

Triangulation was applied to validate the findings, combining data from interviews, observations, and document reviews. This approach helped cross-check the consistency of themes emerging from different sources. Thematic analysis was conducted systematically,

identifying key patterns related to pedagogical effectiveness, student skill development, and institutional challenges.

Ethical considerations were carefully observed throughout the study. Participants provided informed consent, ensuring their voluntary involvement. Confidentiality was maintained by anonymizing participant data in all reports and analyses. Additionally, the study adhered to institutional ethical guidelines for conducting research involving human subjects.

The selection of participants was based on specific inclusion criteria, ensuring that only experienced educators familiar with MPV Khas were included. The diversity of participating schools provided a broader perspective, capturing variations in implementation practices across different educational settings.

The findings from this methodological approach offer valuable insights into the effectiveness of MPV Khas, highlighting both strengths and areas requiring improvement. The data-driven approach ensures that the conclusions drawn from this study are grounded in real experiences and observable trends in special vocational education.

Findings and Discussion

The study identifies key aspects of MPV Khas implementation:

- **Program Structure:** Policies, evaluation, human resource development, and infrastructure. The findings reveal that while MPV Khas is integrated into PPKI, inconsistencies in curriculum delivery pose challenges for both teachers and students. Some schools have well-established vocational training facilities, whereas others lack the necessary infrastructure. The availability of facilities, such as workshops and industry-standard equipment, is essential for effective vocational training. However, disparities in resource allocation across different schools lead to uneven educational outcomes. Schools with adequate infrastructure provide students with hands-on experience that closely mirrors real-world work environments, while resource-limited schools struggle to offer the same level of exposure.
- **Career Experience Preparation:** Career awareness activities, practical exposure, and pedagogical approaches. Teachers reported that hands-on training and industry exposure significantly enhance student readiness for employment. However, limited partnerships with industry stakeholders hinder the effectiveness of practical training components. Many teachers noted that while internships and field visits are beneficial, their frequency is often insufficient to provide students with adequate real-world experience. Establishing stronger ties between educational institutions and businesses could help bridge this gap, ensuring students receive continuous, structured workplace exposure.
- **Generic Skills Application:** Teaching of fundamental, self-management, and teamwork skills. Teachers emphasized the need for structured soft skills training, as students often struggle with communication, time management, and teamwork. Employers increasingly seek candidates with strong interpersonal and problem-solving abilities, yet these aspects are sometimes overlooked in favor of technical skills. Incorporating soft skills training into MPV Khas could help students develop confidence and adaptability, both of which are

crucial for long-term career success. Role-playing exercises, group projects, and simulated workplace scenarios can further reinforce these skills.

- **Parental and Agency Involvement:** Collaboration with stakeholders, though limited in practice. Findings indicate that parental involvement is crucial to student success, yet many parents remain disengaged from their children's vocational education. Parents who actively participate in career planning tend to have children who are more motivated and prepared for the workforce. However, misconceptions about vocational education often prevent parents from fully engaging in the process. Schools should implement outreach programs to educate parents on the benefits of vocational training and encourage their active participation. Collaboration with external agencies, such as vocational training centers and employers, is inconsistent, leading to missed opportunities for student advancement. Strengthening these partnerships could help create more comprehensive career pathways for students.
- **Challenges:** Curriculum constraints, teacher qualifications, financial limitations, student engagement, and collaboration issues. The lack of a standardized curriculum results in varied teaching approaches, while insufficient professional development opportunities leave teachers underprepared to deliver effective vocational instruction. Additionally, financial constraints limit the ability of schools to invest in necessary resources, leading to gaps in program implementation. Students with learning disabilities often require differentiated instruction tailored to their needs, yet many educators struggle to provide individualized support due to large class sizes and workload constraints. Engaging students in vocational training can also be challenging, particularly when they face low self-confidence or uncertainty about their career prospects. Implementing mentorship programs, where students receive guidance from industry professionals, could help address these concerns.

Overall, the findings suggest that while MPV Khas provides valuable opportunities for students with learning disabilities, there is a pressing need for improvements in infrastructure, industry collaboration, curriculum standardization, and teacher training. Addressing these issues will help create a more inclusive and effective vocational education system that truly prepares students for career success.

The practical implications of the study's findings include several key aspects:

1. Career Skills Enhancement

- Practical training outside of school such as in nurseries and livestock farms allows students with learning disabilities (MBP) to gain real work experience.
- Activities such as exhibitions and entrepreneurship programs help them build self-confidence and communication skills.

2. Institutional Support Requirements

- Schools need to strengthen cooperation with employers and training institutions to ensure training and employment opportunities for MBPs.
- Lack of collaboration and external awareness of special education programs can affect job placement.

3. Curriculum and Teaching Improvements

- Teaching methods that emphasize practice, repetitive training (drills), and a hands-on approach will be more effective for MBP.

- There needs to be improvements in the Special MPV curriculum to ensure that it is more relevant to the needs of the job market.

4. Challenges in Implementation

- There are obstacles such as students' lack of confidence, negative perception of employers, and financial constraints that need to be overcome to ensure that the program is more effective.

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the need to strengthen practical training, increase collaboration between schools and industry, and improve teaching approaches to ensure that MBPs are better prepared for the workforce.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study proposes a new framework to improve MPV Khas implementation, emphasizing curriculum enhancement, teacher training, increased funding, and strengthened stakeholder engagement. A key recommendation is the development of a national vocational education framework tailored to MBP needs, incorporating input from educators, policymakers, and industry representatives. The proposed framework should address curriculum gaps by integrating industry-driven competencies, ensuring that students acquire relevant technical and soft skills aligned with current job market demands. Furthermore, professional development for teachers must be prioritized, equipping them with specialized pedagogical strategies to cater to the unique learning needs of MBP.

Additional funding is crucial to support infrastructure improvements, resource development, and student accessibility programs. Schools implementing MPV Khas should receive dedicated financial allocations to enhance training facilities, acquire modern vocational tools, and provide targeted student support services. Moreover, partnerships between the education sector and industries should be reinforced through structured apprenticeship programs, mentorship opportunities, and job placement initiatives. Engaging local businesses and multinational corporations in student training programs will help bridge the transition from school to employment, fostering greater workforce integration for MBP graduates.

Future research should focus on longitudinal studies assessing MPV Khas impact on employment outcomes. A multi-year assessment framework should be established to monitor student progression, skill acquisition, and job retention rates post-graduation. Comparative studies examining different implementation models in various educational institutions can offer valuable insights into best practices and scalability. Additionally, further exploration of employer perceptions regarding hiring individuals with learning disabilities could inform strategies for improving workforce integration. Understanding employer concerns, workplace accommodations, and policy incentives will be instrumental in promoting inclusive hiring practices and fostering a more diverse workforce.

Beyond employment outcomes, future research should also explore the socio-emotional impact of MPV Khas on students. Investigating factors such as self-confidence, motivation, and resilience in vocational training can provide a deeper understanding of how career education contributes to overall student well-being. Evaluating the role of parental engagement in student success is another critical area of study, as parental involvement has been shown to significantly impact career readiness and long-term employment stability.

By addressing these gaps, the education system can ensure that students with learning disabilities receive the support and training needed to achieve meaningful and sustainable careers. A holistic and inclusive vocational training model will not only empower students with disabilities but also contribute to a more diverse and skilled workforce, ultimately benefiting both individuals and society at large.

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