

Vocational Skill Training and Generic Skill of Students with Special Needs in Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas Vokasional Indahpura, Johor

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Abstract: This study was conducted to identify the perceptions of students with special needs on Vocational Skills Training, identify generic skills according to the most applied priorities in Vocational Skills Training by Indahpura Vocational Special Education Secondary School, Johor (SMPKVI) and see the perceptions of students with special needs on the mastery of this group in generic skills. The design in this study is to use a quantitative study with a survey method that collects quantitative data through a questionnaire instrument. This questionnaire was adapted from previous studies and modified according to the suitability of this study. The data obtained were analyzed using Statistical Package for The Social Science Version 23 (SPSS) software. The data obtained were also analyzed using descriptive analysis to see the mean score values, percentages, and standard deviations. Overall, the findings in this study show that the perception of students with special needs on Vocational Skills Training is at a high level. Meanwhile, generic skills according to the priorities applied in Vocational Skills Training showed that communication skills got the highest, followed by ethical and moral skills as well as teamwork. For students with special needs perceptions of mastery in generic skills, communication skills, ethics and morals and teamwork showed in a good level. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used as a guide for TVET lecturers to see the generic skills that are less able to be mastered by students with special needs to be improved. At the same time, a guide for employers to see the abilities of students with special needs in mastering generic skills, to be more confident in providing employment opportunities to students with special needs.

Keywords: Perception, Vocational Education, Generic Skill, Special Needs Student

1. Introduction

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Special education is specifically mentioned in the Ninth Malaysia Plan launched in the EPU (2006). The Special Education Integration Programme was developed to integrate children with special needs into the normal school environment. In the last century, this vocational education has been characterized as the acquisition of skills and preparation for students to compete in the future job market. Even so, students with disabilities have limited opportunities to study in public schools. Indeed, it is unfair for students with disabilities to be deprived of education because they also have the right to be educated in a mainstream environment like typical students and based on the increase in the demand for human resources to make the sectors work set specific criteria in the selection of employees. Therefore, workers in the era of globalization need to learn the values of work ethic, leadership, competence in information technology, and interpersonal relationships (Omar, 2012), better known as generic skills. Accordingly, the generic skills among vocational students with special needs is crucial to ensure their ability when they enter a real job someday. Due to this situation, Vocational Education is being opened to students with special needs because Vocational Education is one of the platforms for the development of the employment sector in terms of providing skilled manpower in Malaysia as well as helping the country's economic development (Aripin et. al., 2011).

In Malaysia, the field of TVET began to be built and developed through various research and development processes implemented in the Vocational Education (Hasmori, Akhmal, Hamzah & Amimudin, 2011). Malaysia began to pay attention to the field of TVET after developing countries that have been involved, such as Germany and Finland, that practice TVET education system demonstrated a positive impact on economic development in those countries (Hassan and Karim, 2020). As a result of this situation, TVET has become one of Malaysia's most important fields.

Despite the emphasis on the development and expansion of the field of TVET, also known as technical skills, there are still skills that should be emphasized to achieve an individual's overall development. The skills mentioned here are generic skills because before entering the workforce, everyone's generic skills must be honed and developed to ensure their quality (Hamid, 2012). It can be seen those skills in the field of TVET must be aligned with generic skills based on generic skills being skills that exist naturally in the individual but must be improved and developed (Hazwan & Puad, 2018). According to Hamid (2012), students who only master TVET skills are insufficient; on the other hand, TVET students and other institutions of higher learning must also master these generic skills. This situation corresponds to the government's efforts to provide a diverse workforce.

1.1 Research Background

The lack of people with special needs in the employment sector is a concern when these groups will face difficulties due to lack of resources in generating income. The existence of vocational education is to help these groups develop skills so that they can build their own livelihood resources. Therefore, in this study, vocational training skills that focus on students with special needs want to be studied because this group is the generation that will practice all the skills learned in life.

In Malaysia, vocational education aims to make the curriculum more flexible, focused, and appropriate to the ability of students with special needs in mastering a skill area (Department of Special Education, 2005). Therefore, this study is indirectly produced to help those who venture into vocational fields to be able to see from the perspective of students with special needs. In fact, this study also examines the generic skills that are applied throughout the students with special needs learning vocational skills training. This is because generic skills are also among the most important skills and are a guide for employers before hiring. This study aimed to answer the following research objectives.

- (i) To identify the perceptions of students with special needs on vocational skills training applied

(ii) To identify generic skills according to the priorities applied during vocational skills training among students with special needs

(iii) To identify the perceptions of students with special needs on their mastery in elements of generic skills

2. Methodology

The methodology section is systematic procedure which combines adaptive approach to the study and analysis of performance data to ensure that research studies can be achieved with good and meet the target in the objective study Othman Mohamed (2001). Considering that respect, this chapter will discuss the detailed and comprehensive study of the design, location, research instruments and methodology applied in this study.

2.1 Research Design

Research design is a strategic approach used in conducting research or scientific studies (Reza, 2019). Even the design of the study is also one of the overall strategies chosen by the researchers to integrate every component in the study in a coherent and logical way to ensure that the objectives set in the study can be achieved effectively. Research design is the framework of a researcher's selected research methodologies and procedures. This study is a descriptive quantitative method to explore the perception of students with special needs towards vocational skill training and to identify the most implementation of generic skills. This study's aim is to identify the special need's students about their mastery in an element of generic skills.

2.2 Research Procedure

The research procedure began with both primary and secondary data were collected and the data are used to answer the hypotheses and research questions. Primary data is new data that will be collected and used for specific research purposes. Primary data were obtained from a questionnaire used method to explore the perception of students with special needs towards vocational skill training and at the same time to collect the data about what is the most domain element of generic skill applied. Besides that, want to explore their perception about their mastery in the element of generic skills.

The population of respondents is from the SMPKVIP schools under the Ministry of Education have been listed under the government special education with total of 183 total students. The sampling size will be determined based on the equation suggested to a confidence level of 95 percent, which computes to be at least 80 participants. These are commonly used to collect quantitative data by asking respondents to report attitudes, experiences, and demographics. The quantitative approach is especially useful for addressing specific questions about relatively well-defined phenomena, and it answers the hypothesis, which tends to be very specific.

2.3 Research Instrument

This questionnaire instrument was adapted from the study of Hassan (2003) to achieve the objectives of the study. Therefore, in this study, a questionnaire was used to see the perceptions of students with special needs on vocational skills training and even to obtain information on generic skills applied as well as the perceptions of students with special needs on their mastery of the elements of generic skills. The instrument also uses a scale or Likert Scale rates. According to Johanson and Brooks (2010) items in the instrument scale will be a question and answer to each of these items is through the Likert most positive to negative. Use of Likert scale will facilitate the respondents to respond to items.

3. Results and Discussion

The findings of the study are discussed according to the sections found in the questionnaire where section A is the demographics of the respondents, Section B discusses the perception of students with special needs towards vocational skill training. Besides that, on Part C is discuss the most domain element of generic skill applied to the vocational skill training. The D part is discussed about the perceptions of students with special needs on their mastery in elements of generic skills which is in communication on the E part discussed in term of teamwork skills and the last part is F which is discussed in term of the mastery in ethics and Moral.

3.1 Perceptions of students with special needs on the applied Vocational Skills Training

From the findings “Vocational Skills Training is important for my future” ($M = 4.75$, $SP = 0.43$) shows the highest mean value among all items followed by the item “Vocational skills training gives me greater job opportunities” ($M = 4.72$, $SP = 0.53$). Next, the third item is “I can develop my skills with the skills training given”. ($M = 4.69$, $SP = 0.52$). Next, followed by the item “I enjoy learning the vocational skills training provided” ($M = 4.59$, $SP = 0.71$), the last item is “Courses offered in Vocational Education are appropriate to my abilities” ($M = 4.53$, $SP = 0.58$) got the lowest mean value among all items. However, the level of mean scores for all items on students with special needs perceptions of Vocational Skills Training is at a high level. This indicates that respondents' perceptions of vocational skills training received in school are important to them and help them in self -development.

3.2 The most domain generic skills applied in Vocational Skills Training

The element generic skills (communication) got the highest mean score value of ($M = 4.22$). Followed by the mean score value for ethical and moral elements with a mean score value ($M = 3.90$). The lowest score value is teamwork skills with a mean score value ($M = 3.88$). These communication skills get the highest mean score value on the factor that it is the mainstay of social interaction (Isha Awang, 2014). Even the exchange and development of ideas also often takes place in communication. This is what makes generic skills (communication) an element that is highly emphasized by schools.

In this analysis, generic skills (teamwork) obtained a relatively low mean score value. This situation may be due to the unwillingness of members to cooperate with each other as well as other members are not confident in the direction of the team causing the formation of groups during teaching and learning sessions is quite limited. According to Partridge (2007), it states that with the existence of teamwork, a group or organization will have a sense of belonging, have a clear purpose, and know what they need to do. The generic skills (teamwork) is the element that obtains the lowest mean value that is the element that is less applied in vocational skills training. This may be due to student environmental factors where students with special needs are not comfortable in doing work on their own. Finally, although the elements of generic skills (communication) are the most applied elements in vocational skills training but the elements of generic skills (teamwork) as well as (ethics and morals) are still at high mean score.

On the other hand, ethics and moral are items of generic skills elements from the aspect of teamwork. Findings show that the item “Teacher often asks me to discuss with group members to solve a given problem” ($M = 4.09$, $SP = 0.81$) showed the highest mean value followed by the item “Teacher often asks me to work with group members during group work” ($M = 4.06$, $SP = 0.90$). Next, the third item that got the highest mean value was “My teacher often trained me to work hard to complete assignments in groups” ($M = 3.78$, $SP = 0.93$). Next, the item “I had fun when the teacher asked me to complete the assignment in groups” got a mean value ($M = 3.75$, $SP = 0.89$). The last item is “I become more confident if I do tasks in groups” ($M = 3.73$, $SP = 0.91$). The findings can be seen those only items 7 and 8 got a high mean level score, the remaining 3 items got a moderate mean score level. However, the mean score level for all items in the generic skills element of the teamwork aspect was high.

3.3 Result of student perception in mastery of generic skills (communication, teamwork, ethic and moral)

3.3.1 Communication

Vocational special needs for generic skills elements (communication) are high ($M = 4.38$). Items that achieved the highest score is the item "I can speak Malay very well" and "I can write in Malay well". These two items obtained almost identical mean score values only differing in value by 0.01. Possession is high on both items is due to the use of language that is easily understood. This situation is because Malay is the everyday language of the students for which the respondent agreed to capture the elements communicated well.

This is evidenced in the study Munusamy (2013), Malay is the national language which is the medium of knowledge that continues to grow. This situation means the use of the Malay language is broad and comprehensive. In fact, the findings of this analysis we can see that students with special needs also agreed to the use of the Malay language used by them is easily understood by classmates when shown the mean score is also high. Not only that but, students with special needs in receiving instructions from others also showed high mean score values. This shows that students with special needs can accept instructions given well. However, from the aspect of clear idea presentation, the mean score value is relatively low and is at a moderate level. Sometimes, the presentation of clear ideas is not fully able to be done by students with special needs at SMPKV, Indahpura Johor due to their disability as we have known some students with special needs at SMPKV, Indahpura Johor are those with learning difficulties.

3.3.2 Teamwork

The generic skills element in the aspect of teamwork obtained a high overall mean. However, there were some items that obtained a moderate mean score level with a value ($M = 3.90$). The item "I can build good relationships with group members" in which respondents think they have moderate mastery in the aspect of building relationships with group members. This is likely due to the diversity within a group. Diversity can occur in several aspects such as different backgrounds, temperaments, and even different religious beliefs. This inherent diversity sometimes limits the construction of relationships between respondents. This situation is supported in the study of Ilgen (2005), that the diversity that exists can invite negative as well as positive effects on the group and it is a challenge to a group or organization to deal with diversity in the group. Even the mastery of students with special needs generic skills in the teamwork element showed that there were three items that obtained a moderate mean score value and was a relatively low element compared to the other two generic skills elements. Although there are three items that have a moderate mean score value in this element but on average overall, this generic skill (teamwork) still shows a high mean score value.

3.3.3 Ethics and moral

The elements of generic skills in ethical and moral aspects obtained a high overall mean of ($M = 4.37$). In fact, in this element all items have achieved a high mean score value compared to the other two elements. This is possible because the main goal of education and the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) is not only focused on academics alone but also aims to create ethical behavior and not deviate from good behavior. This situation is certainly applied in every learning and teaching session in special education vocational skills schools. This is also supported by foreign researcher Lind (2002), that individual moral development needs to be nurtured as early as school level and it is difficult to educate adult individuals about ethical and moral values, norms, and principles. The goal of the Malaysian government is not only to cultivate the spirit of mastering knowledge, skills, and competencies but also to inculcate values, morals and positive attitudes among students making this ethical and moral element one of the elements that must be applied during learning and teaching

sessions (Umar, 2009). In fact, Felton (2006) argues that ethics, morality, and integrity education can increase understanding and awareness and its importance.

4. Conclusion

Overall, it can be concluded that the perception of students with special needs on vocational skills training is good. The respondent believe that vocational skills training is beneficial to them. This can be seen through the results of the mean score value where the majority of the overall mean score for the item is at a high level. From the aspect of the application of the most dominant generic skills. It can be concluded that the generic skills element (communication) is the most frequently applied element in vocational skills training. This is because, the element of communication is central to social interaction. From the aspect of how the mastery of students with special needs in the element of generic skills (communication) shows that students agree to master those skills well. This situation is evidenced by a high mean score value. Even the mastery of the element (teamwork) is also at a high level.

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