

CONSULTATION ON JOB MARKETABILITY FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEED AND THEIR FAMILIES WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER TRAINEES OF HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTION

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Abstract: Consultation for job marketability or career strategy is delivery of information to students and parents (family) in planning career appropriately according to the students' capabilities and abilities. Knowledge requirements and career information and work among families of special education students are still lacking in terms of being considered for study in Malaysia. This study aimed to explore the marketability consultation process among the students which was carried out by students of special education for students and families of students with special educational needs. The qualitative study was conducted with 11 special education students and their families. The consultation process had 2 phases whereby for phase 1, consultations were conducted by special education students. For the second phase, consultation and collaborative process involved students and special education undergraduate students from education guidance and counseling. Analysis of data from verbatim of reflection and consultation with special education students was analyzed using N vivo. The results from the two-phase consultation process has shown that the family are lacking in terms of knowledge in work marketability and challenges in getting proper education and training for their children. The results also show the marketability of consultation work carried out has provide experience to coach special education teacher trainees to be more empathetic towards special education students and their families.

INTRODUCTION

Consultation is an activity offered in variety work setting which set as a professional supportive relationship process with individuals or group. Consultation is defined as problem solving process that is done collaboratively between 2 or more consultants and consultations in the effort to benefit to an individual or clients in carrying out responsibilities in a two way interaction (Hammack 1994). Currently consultation is expanding in schools that focus on the increasing students' achievement in academic, discipline, social, psychology and skills (Akin-Little A. K., Little G.S dan Nina Delligatti N.2004). According to Coyne (2006), consultation with children and their parents at schools is no longer a common issue but it is becoming a major point to be considered which has been actively acknowledged and promoted by NGO in the West. Perera-Diltz (2011) found out that 79% of consultations that were carried out by counsellors also involved the principal, parents and teachers. Her study also suggested that the consultation in schools can use the model consultation of interdisciplinary approach. It means that the consultations in schools do not only involved normal students, but also for disabled students or also known as students with special educational needs.

Consultation with students of special educational needs can help to tighten the bond between parents and the school system (Hoskins, 2007). Hoskins said that various model consultations should be practiced by the counsellors and teachers so that the consultations are beneficial for all the students in schools including the students with special educational needs. These special students should be given the power to act as agents of change in their own lives. They will decide what they want to be, actively involved in making decisions as whether they want to go to school or going to work and for their own lives within their community. Parents, educators and other professionals are being the support system for these students especially in developing skills for these students while they are at primary or secondary schools and even at higher learning institutions (Izzoa V.M & Lamb P, 2003).

Job marketability is known as work opportunities or individuals' capability to get a job. There are many studies on job marketability done in Malaysia but the focus is on the normal students and not the students of special educational needs. According to Lau Poh Li, Ahmad Samsuri Muhammad dan Chew Fong Peng (2011) job offers for these special students are very limited in the government or private sectors. Although there are policies of employment for these special students in the government sector, such opportunity is very limited if we compared the number of jobs with the actual figure of disabled people in Malaysia. Therefore these researchers suggested that close kins of these special students such as parents and family members to participate in the career counselling process. Thus the consultation of job marketability involving the special education teacher trainees as consultant, the parents or family members as consultee can help these special students (the clients) to function effectively in job marketability skills. They will realize the various alternatives offered in job marketability and increase their potential in job marketability for future plan.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Job opportunities among the disabled people are still low in Malaysia. A lot of studies and surveys were carried out in universities and related government agencies showed that many factors and obstacles faced by these disabled people in getting a job although they have similar academic qualification of the normal people (Lau Poh Li, Ahmad Samsuri Muhammad dan Chew Fong Peng 2011). A study done by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development highlighted 11 findings that show disabled people really need awareness in job marketability that covers training, skills, workshops and employers' acceptance. In the study, 90.8% of family members of disabled people thought that more trainings and services are needed in order to improve the lives of the disabled people in terms of training, job preparation, daily care and recreation. Even in the study showed that the family members also need support in terms of training, workshop, counselling and moral support.

Studies about the awareness towards issues related to the disabled people like issues of the adults with intellect deficiency were carried out by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. The study was conducted with the aim to observe 5 objectives: 1. To understand and assess the situation for disabled people with intellectual challenges. 2. To identify the services that they need. 3. To identify support that the families need. 4. To know the work situation for them. 5. To know the needs and attitude of the employers. The study showed that these disabled people need awareness of the working world that demands adaptation to the social surrounding. A study was done by Zainudin Mohd. Isa, Norani Salleh & Ramlee Mustapha (2009), suggested 2 skills for the students of special educational needs with learning disabilities.

They could learn internal vocational skills like craft, agriculture, entrepreneurship and cooking plus vocational skills like sewing, carpentry, fixing engines, food services and house keeping.

Government interest towards the disabled people has increased throughout the years. The government agencies are keen in offering job opportunities for the disabled people. A lot of effort has been done for them like offering more suitable jobs for them in government agencies, related organizations and corporate bodies. In addition there is more focus on oriented training for them in order to help them in getting skilled jobs. Financial support in the budget by the Malaysian government for the disabled people has increased year by year helps these people to get proper training.

Sarimah et al. (t.t) conducted a study on the obstacles of the disabled people (hearing impaired) in getting a job. In the study, the researcher suggested few ideas: 1. All employers must have basic facilities for the disabled people. 2. Counselling and guidance teachers give motivational exercises before they end their schooling so that they are more motivated. 3. The students with special educational needs must be independent and confident in deciding on their career, 4, give exposure to the families with these disabled children in having positive outlook in raising their children to have better future. Therefore, in this study the researchers will explore the process in consulting job marketability between special education teacher trainees at National University of Malaysia and the parents of students with special educational needs at secondary schools. Through this study the researchers can observe the present knowledge of the parents in job marketability which involves skills needed by their children when they will be working in the future.

PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of the study is to explore the process of consultation for job marketability conducted by the special education teacher trainees for the students with special educational needs and their families based on the learning outcomes in class. The objectives of the study are:

- i. explore knowledge of job marketability among parents of the students with special educational needs
- ii. explore the challenges faced by the parents of students with special educational needs in job marketability

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

The study was conducted using qualitative approach with case study design. The study was done in 2 phases whereby in the first phase the students were exposed with consultation strategies in class for 2 weeks. The students attended a career workshop in increasing their knowledge for suitable jobs at school. Exercises and discussions as part of the consultation are carried out for 3 hours in order for the students to understand the process of consultation which will be carried out for the students and their families at school. There were 33 special education teacher trainees of semester 5 and they were divided into 11 groups whereby each group will give consultation to a family of students with special educational needs. The consultation was carried out for 3 hours based on the manual consultation prepared by the researchers.

Meanwhile the second phase was done through 2 meetings. In the first meeting, the teacher trainees (3 in a group) provided consultation for the students and their parents. The sessions were recorded in audio form and video based on the readiness of the students and their families. The second consultation was conducted after 2 weeks of the first meeting. Undergraduate students of semester 2 under special education of guidance and counseling

participated in the second consultation as they have knowledge in career. The second consultation is a collaborative consultation with the purpose to increase the knowledge of the parents.

The consultation process was presented by the students in a workshop for 2 days. In the workshop all the students presented their reflections and feelings while in the consultation with their parents. Their reflections in the workshop were recorded and documented in written report so will be findings of the study. Recordings of the consultation in audio form and video were transferred into verbatim to be main research findings. Both data were analysed using N vivo in order to create themes related to the objectives of the study. The themes were created deductively and inductively.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings will answer two research questions: i. explore knowledge of job marketability among parents of the students with special educational needs. ii. explore the challenges faced by the parents of students with special educational needs in job marketability. For the first research question, both parents and the families admitted that they did not have the necessary knowledge on the skills needed by their children in order for them to work like normal children and only 4 families have such knowledge. As for the second question, 4 themes were identified:

i. Physical facilities and logistics, ii. Health problems, iii. Social economic status of the families iv.. School and community support

Exploring the knowledge on job marketability among parents of students with special educational needs

In the study, out of 11 families only 4 families admitted that they have the knowledge on job marketability suited with their children's abilities and skills. According to one of them, he chose Giat Mara as skill training centre for his child.

Actually both parents knew the fields offered by Giat Mara..towards skills..more on skills...

All these 4 families chose skill training for their children so that their children can enter job marketability. Parents with such awareness by giving the proper skill training can help their children in getting a job in the future. There are even parents who have close relationship with the special education teachers, up to the stage the special students are able to gain knowledge about the needed skills through training with the corporate side.

Father did say that he is looking for extra information to send Nisa to community centres like interesting school program that she told us...every Thursday the special students will go to Tesco to arrange items on the racks, which the skill can be related to the special students.....

In the study there are parents who always rely on the special education teachers to convey information that is related to the training and skills which can provide job opportunities for their children. Thus the teachers who are involved in special education with knowledge in

managing students for job marketability are important since such knowledge is able to lighten up the emotional burden of the parents.

His father likes to seek the teacher if he wants any information....

Meanwhile, the 7 families in the study admitted that they do not have any knowledge on job marketability. The parents only rely on the teachers and school because they do not have any clue on how to get the required information in planning their children's job marketability. They did not have a clear vision on what to do and put high hopes on the school and government to help them by giving information and guidance.

In the second meeting..the mother admitted..I don't have any information and we don't know how to get info.Any information that we get..is from school but the teachers did not give much info....

Low economic status among the parents has caused lack of knowledge on job marketability. Occupied with working in order to support the needs of the family, both parents particularly the father do not have time to look for information on job marketability in planning for their children.

Looking at the statement..actually his parents do not have much time with kids. The father works from morning till night, then the mother works from evening till morning..the father is a lorry driver..so time...time

Throughout the study, only 4 families have the knowledge on job marketability while the remaining 7 families do not have such knowledge. Those with such knowledge are able to guide and give motivation, support by going to school and training centre. Moreover they always cooperate with the teachers and school in skill based activities organized by the school.

Explore the challenges faced by the parents of the students with special educational needs in job marketability

Physical facilities and logistics

From the data analysis, the physical facilities and logistics proved to be a challenge for parents who are unable to motivate their children in getting skill training whether in school or training centre provided by the government. Physical facilities like wheelchair are needed for the special children to go to school or training centre. However there are those children who do not use such facilities like the wheelchair because their sick parents need the wheelchair more than them. In the study there are children who received free wheelchair from the government or NGO. On the other these children are unable to use the wheelchair because it is shared with other family members, causing them failure to attend school.

She has only one wheelchair but her father uses it, her father had a stroke. After that Emi does not go to school, just sitting at home

Besides that, transportation is a main problem for parents who have children with

special needs. The parents were feeling hopeless when it comes to solving the transportation problem for their children to go to school or training centre everyday with ease. According to the parents, they have reported this problem to the responsible parties but until now there is no feedback or action to help them in this matter.

about JKM and everything..he does not know..about transportation he really hopes a lot because he said that he tries to find transportation for his child to go to school

Physical problem of the students with special educational needs contributes to logistics challenge for school and training centre. Having big and heavy physique causes these children to seek help from their parents and others to move around their home and outside too.

He is a bit overweight, has to be carried by others

From capability side, his movement is quite limited. Emm.. as for transportation he has to find someone who can carry his child to the car

Transportation or logistics proves to be a challenge faced by many families of these special students. Transportation is the most needed facilities by these students in going to and from school or training centre.

Family health problems

In the study, there are 3 families out of 11 who have chronic health problems. Chronic illnesses of the parents are cancer, diabetes, stroke and heart problem.

We are very sympathetic with this family..the mother has cancer, the father has heart problem

Due to health problems of the parents, the special students are unable to get the skill training needed for job marketability according to their skills and capabilities. These health problems also caused financial issues that stop them from pursuing the needed skill training.

Social economic status

Social economic status of the families is the third challenge faced by the families in the study. Out of 11 families, only 2 families do not have any financial difficulties in managing the educational and training needs of their special children. Most of these families are categorized under poor families who are unable to pay for transportation cost for their special children to go to school everyday.

For us this family is very poor and needs help

Although they receive financial assistance from Zakat and social welfare, it is not enough to sustain the transportation cost to school or training centre. The financial support is not enough as the parents do not have fixed income every month. To make things worse, some families have more than 1 special child and this requires high cost of living. To add the burden,

some families are staying in rental houses which require them to pay house rental fees. Thus financial status has stunted the commitment of these special students in school.

he only gets help from JKM and Encik Abdul Rahim with the help from PERKESO and no monthly income, and he stays in rented house one family, including help from JKM, zakat. Emmm..the help from JKM, he said that in one family only one get the support. It means that if there are 3 people who are in need, only 1 will get

Financial problems faced by almost all families with children in the study of special education is something that should not be underestimated by the various parties associated with the child's special education. Families with children of special educational need financial assistance according to their actual needs, such as how many special education children in a family, the parents' income and the location of residence. Financial assistance should take into account the number of dependents of parents, the location of residence, status of their dwellings (lease or freehold) and management costs of special education children

School and Community Support

In the study, school and community support is the challenge as described by the parents who need emotional support through information by school, their neighbourhood and community of their surrounding. One of the families informed that their neighbours do not care about the problems faced by their special children.

Aa..very rural. So he said that the neighbours do not care about him

According to the parents in the study, any information about skill training by the school must be clear and accurate. This is because they want to know what has been done by their special children at the training centre so they will not be worried.

when his father send him to Tesco Kajang, his father did not know what he is doing there in kajang. After that he will get a briefing from the officer in charge

Therefore the parents were hoping that information on job marketability or any relevant information is conveyed to them either in primary or secondary school. In the study, there are parents who suggested that the teachers can spend some time visiting the special students at home to convey the information if they are unable to go to school.

his mother said to us that when he was in primary school the teacher never go to their home so it was difficult for his mother to get info and had to go to school often to get info about his child

The four challenges faced by the parents in job marketability for their children with special educational needs are not easy and to be taken lightly. Thus action from relevant parties especially the government needs to be done in helping the parents who faced these challenges. This is because the given help can provide equality in job marketability for these special students.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that knowledge on job marketability can help the parents in planning their special children's job marketability. According to Kalsen (2007) students with learning disability are able to plan and make decision in their career if continuous social skill and job trainings are given to them. In the study, consultations on job marketability that were carried out by the teacher trainees to parents managed to give some insights for the parents on job marketability. The information also helps them in playing active role choosing the right training centre for their special children. Therefore by having such knowledge the parents are able to plan and act accordingly in sending their special children for training at suitable institutions. With the knowledge and skills, the parents have better understanding of their children's values, attitude and emotions (Othman Mohamad, 2006).

Career information that suited well with the students' abilities and capabilities can be channelled properly through the teacher trainees for the students with special educational needs and their families when they are in school. At school special education teachers are the closest figures with their parents and families. The parents and families have high hopes towards the special education teachers in giving them the support so that their special children are able to join the job market after they finish schooling at secondary school level. Job information and skill can be delivered through workshop or to be learnt in courses at the universities. In the study special education teacher trainees are exposed with the job information and skills suitable for students with special educational needs. Zainudin Mohd. Isa, Norani Salleh & Ramlee Mustapha (2009) suggested 2 skills to be given to the students with special educational needs: internal vocational skills (art, agriculture, service, entrepreneurship and cooking) and vocational skills (sewing, carpentry, fixing engines, food services and house keeping)

Therefore research findings support the survey conducted by Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and Sarimah Ismail & Norshahril Abdul Hamid (t.tt) mentioned that basic facilities like transportation are vital in providing training for the special students so they can get the necessary skills. In the study, almost half of the families are living at flats and shop houses without any lift. Therefore they need physical facilities like wheelchair ramp so they can their wheelchair with ease. Without the ramp, their movement is quite limited and causes difficulties in going to school and training centre. Thus they became dependent on their parents and families to go up and down from their homes everyday. Piškurdan and friends (2014) defined transportation needs as needed criteria by the special students so they are able to go to school and training centre. According to Hewitt-Taylor (2009) family needs transportation for their special children not only for going to school, but also to buy family needs and go for recreational activities. He added by saying that transportation problem will cause negative side effects for the special children and their families, trigger the feeling of being unwanted, discomfort and unappreciated.

Parents' good health and wellbeing are important in giving support for the students with special educational needs. Parents with long term illness, chronic diseases and high medical expenses will cause their special children to be absent in school or training centre. DuPaul et. al(2013) suggested that health screening of the parents should be done because it will influence the well being of their special children. Many studies reported that parents with health issues caused disturbance in the development of their special education (Christiansen H., Anding J., Schrott B., & Röhrle B. 2015, Bogosian A., Hadwin J., Hankins M., Moss-Morris R, 2016).

Finance is a big challenge for the students with special educational needs especially for their parents who have no stable income or no income at all. More financial assistance is

needed when the family has more than one child with special educational needs. Ministries or relevant agencies should consider well in giving assistance so that financial matters will not hinder these special students from getting the information on job marketability when they fail to attend school and training centre. If the families have enough financial assistance, the school, corporate bodies and community are able to convey the relevant information on job marketability to these special students. Strong collaboration and commitment between families, school, corporate bodies and community can create special students who can fulfill the needs of job market and to be independent financially.

CONCLUSION

Collaborative consultation between the special education teachers and parents will help the students with special educational needs when they finish schooling at secondary school level or higher learning institution. Sharing of information, knowledge and skills of the special education teachers and the readiness and commitment of the parents who have the knowledge of their children's potential will be able to guide and help the students groomed with job marketability values in various fields. If consultation on job marketability between parents and special education teachers can be carried out continuously, the plan will be a reality for the special students to be individuals who can contribute to our nation.

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