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Leadership practice among technical and vocational teacher in facing current educational issues: a qualitative research

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand and explain the leadership practice among technical and vocational teacher of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat, Johor in facing current educational issues. A qualitative case study conducted among 4 teachers who teach the subjects of invention, life skills, trade and home economics in order to get their perception. The findings in this study demonstrates an understanding among teachers of technical and vocational fields regarding of leadership style and how a practice of leadership style facing the current educational issues. In conclusion, every teacher should diversify their leadership style in teaching so that, the students can increase their proficiency in specific areas.

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Introduction

Leadership in education requires extensive knowledge because it involves different human capital management and emotional background. Leadership considered as the backbone of an organization, management and educational administration around the world. Leadership also a factor that differentiates success and failure of an organization (Traversi, 2007). Various organizations such as Toyota, Intel, Walt Disney, Apple and Sony look organizational performance is very important (Kettie, 2010). In this case, an organizational leader or leaders must effectively manage risk, examine the changes and adapt clever changes to the organizational environment in order to maintain success (Paunescu, 2009).

Every success usually has to go through various challenges and this also happens in education leadership. Malaysia built from various races living in the plural society, a variety of education issues have arisen in Malaysian education system. In terms of issues in education, some of the issues that arise in schools such as student discipline and responsibility as a student (Abdullah et. al, 2006; Sipon, 2006). Hence, if the issues cannot be overcome by good, it will fail the mission and vision within the organization in line with the National Education Philosophy of Malaysia to be achieved.

Various studies have been conducted in order to observe the practice of educational leadership at various institutions such as schools, colleges or higher educational institutions. Previous researchers have also suggested several approaches of leadership style that can be adapted to resolve issues that arise. Among the leadership style approaches that has been highlighted as domination, collaboration, avoidance, accommodation, compromise and communication. There is a strong relationship between the leadership style and work discipline in an organization effective (Nasyaroeka, 2010). Among the leadership styles, he found that the domination leadership style is less effective. Thus, the researchers inclined to carry out the study regarding the leadership practices among technical and vocational teachers of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat in addressing issues of student discipline and responsibility in subjects such as invention, life skills, trade and

home economics. These subjects are selected by the researcher on the basis of these subjects have a coursework assignments to be solved by students in a time frame.

Purpose of the Study

To understand and explain the leadership practices of teachers of technical and vocational fields of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat, Johor in facing current educational issues.

Research Questions

1. What are the educational issues that arise among students to complete their coursework assignment?
2. What are the leadership practices adopted by teachers of technical and vocational fields of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat, Johor?

Importance of the Study

The researcher hope that the findings of this study can provide feedback to the Malaysian Ministry of Education, Teacher Education Division, State Education Department, District Education Office and especially teachers who teach in the technical and vocational fields about leadership practices can be used in teaching thus helping to form more effective strategies in improving excellence and personality through the field.

Study Limitations

This study focused on teachers of technical and vocational fields of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat, Johor who teaches invention, life skills, trade and home economics. The participants were interviewed by the researchers which consist of teachers with more than 8 years of teaching experience.

Methodology

This research is a qualitative research. This method was chosen by the researcher because the data can be obtained in depth to describe a phenomenon. The qualitative research approach allows researcher to learn more about the leadership practices of teachers of technical and vocational fields of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat in facing current educational issues. This study involves semi-structure interviews which developed by researcher. A total of

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four teachers interviewed after obtaining consent from research participants. The interview data were transcribed and analyzed according to the purpose of the study which is the leadership practices among teachers of technical and vocational of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat in facing current educational issues to answer the research questions.

In this case, the researcher is the instrument in conducting survey interviews. Selection of participants is based on information obtained from the school administration and colleagues. The researcher has established a prior good relationship with the school administrator and participants. Therefore, the data collection process runs smoothly and perfectly. The data obtained from the participants used to answer research questions. Data which unrelated were removed. In addition, to ease the analysis of interview data, Respondent 1 will be coded as R1, Respondent 2 will be coded as R2 while Respondent 3 and Respondent 4 will be coded each one as R3 and R4.

Findings

This chapter discussed in detail and comprehensive about data which obtained from the research questions related to the practices of teachers of technical and vocational fields in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat in facing current educational issues. The data obtained through interviews were transcribed manually and the findings were described based on the educational issues that arise among students to complete coursework assignments and teacher leadership style to address these issues.

Educational issues that arise among students to complete coursework assignments

To answer the research question 1, based on transcription data which were analyzed manually found that some of the key issues that arise among students to complete their coursework assignments are as follows:

Discipline

All respondents agreed that students with discipline problems also have problems to complete their assignments. Students who do not have discipline problems at school will show a better result assignment than students with discipline problems. Discipline problems that are often associated with these students are school truancy, loitering and motorcycle racing. Respondents indicated:

"Huh.. How are they going to complete their assignments? When today we ask about the progress, tomorrow they will not be coming to school. Confirm! Always like that. When we ask other friends of them where they go, the answer would be motorcycle racing! I have also bumped into my own students which loitering in the supermarket when I got outside school matters of work. It is schooling time." (R1)

"Chasing students to get their assignments, I have gone through it each year. The problem when time to hands in the coursework assignment comes, the students will not be coming to school. I called the guardians of the students involved. The guardians said that the students were already at school. Went out from house but did not reach the school, it was so called school truancy." (R2)

Responsibilities as a student

Students who have problems in completing their coursework assignments are also associated with irresponsible attitude. Times given for students to complete their assignments are long. Students also will be guided by teachers to ensure that the assignments can be delivered on a specified date given by Malaysian Ministry of Education. However, the attitude of students who are responsible for administering and managing

their time to complete the task is one of the issues that arise due to the failure of students to complete the assignments at the appointed time.

"We gave assignments at the beginning of the year. We are not so easily let them go. We guide them. But.. They like to delay work. As a result, when the submit date is just around the corner, at that time they will busy to complete the task." (R3)

"This matter has always been occur to students. Not only in the medium range, but sometimes even brilliant students also cannot manage their time well. Responsibilities as a student was not a big concern. They only busy on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat and many more social network. They should put their coursework assignments as the priority." (R4)

Leadership practices adopted by teachers of technical and vocational education in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan

To answer the research question 2, based on transcription data which were analyzed manually found that leadership practices adopted by teachers of technical and vocational education in Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Seri Medan, Batu Pahat are as follows:

Domination

Domination in leadership practices were applied in presenting the task of the coursework assignments which should be done by students. This practice is important for students to understand the requirements of a given task in the coursework assignments. All students were asked to listen in order to get a better understanding so that confusion will not be emerged.

"The coursework assignments come from the Ministry of Education. If we do not properly convey to students, they will be misinterpreted. So, to avoid confusion I will ask all my students to quiet and focused on the instructions I gave. If students are already confused, the difficulties will be on us as well because we will assess and evaluate their work." (R3)

Collaboration

Collaboration between teachers and students also occurred. This leadership style practiced by teachers in the production of the coursework done by students, especially for students who exhibit the earnest attitude in completing the assignment.

"For my assignment which is Invention, some of my students have showed keen interest to complete the coursework assignments. His project was to produce a user-friendly coconut palm hook. Due to his interest, I have been collaborating with him. I provide a list of suppliers, so that he can get the materials needed at reasonable price. After all he comes from a poor family." (R1)

Avoidance

Selection of space, place and time for students by their own to complete the coursework assignments could yield more creative ideas and innovative among students. They can perform their task either at home or in their spare time during school sessions held. Teachers just remotely monitor their students' progress result assignment from time to time. Results of their work will be better and more creative than those who are always be guided by the teacher.

"There are times the teacher should stay away from the students so that they are free to use whatever they deem necessary for their work. Sometimes my students have more ideas in the selection of materials for production of stitching articles assignments. By that, I will make sure my students get a little liberty with the way I distanced myself." (R4)

Accommodation

Students with discipline problems will be facing with the difficulties in obtaining materials needed to carry out the

coursework assignment. This is due to their lack of reference from their teacher because of disciplinary problems in school. Therefore, the teachers will accommodate some task they have to do with the supply of materials required by them to ensure that their work could be completed in a given period.

“For Commerce coursework assignment, I need to help these students. For example, I will list down the government agencies that help entrepreneurs. I also provide letter of authorization to carry out the study. Students only need to select one of the agencies for them to go for studies that related to Sales Account and Shop Account. Supposed to be all task, students need to prepare.” (R3)

Compromise

In dealing with students who are late sending of their coursework assignments, a teacher would sometimes compromise the students to ensure that assignments should be able to be corrected by them. If teachers insist the students who submit their assignments late, fearing the assignments given will not to be submitted by them at all.

“Production of woodworking projects for Living Skills subject, I will make sure my students can submit their assignments not later than two weeks before the deadline for submission. For those who are late in sending my assignment on the date set, I'll compromise them thus giving a week's period of time for them to complete it. If we insist, they will not send their work at all. That is a big problem for us!” (R2)

Communication

Appropriate communication would attract problematic students to complete their assignments. Communication as a friend makes the students feel closer to their teacher. Compliment and rewards given as the result made them friendlier with their teachers. This allows the teacher to understand the problems faced by students as well as students can complete the assignments on time.

“Students nowadays if this was for little reward, they wanted to do their assignments. All actions that can bridge the gap between teachers and students, I will try to do it. For instance, I spend time with them during lunch. Chat using their language style. They'll listen to me. As a result, they will come to school. From there, we will persuade them to complete their coursework assignments.” (R3)

Conclusion

The study conducted by researchers on educational issues that often arise in school are discipline issues and responsibility as a student in school. These issues are not new that occur in schools. In fact, these issues have existed in years of time. The

leadership style approach as Domination, Collaboration, Avoidance, Accommodation, Compromise and Communication can be implemented in addressing the issues raised (Ramli and Abdul Hamid, 2006).

Leadership practices with the domination approach is important, so that all students could understand the requirements of a given work assignments from the beginning. Collaborative practice is able to infuse the earnest attitude of students in completing assigned tasks. Selection of space, place and time of the student to complete the coursework assignments could yield more creative ideas and innovative among the students and teachers just have to monitor from a distance. Teachers need to be smart enough to deal with their students. In certain situations, the teacher should give the supply of materials needed by troubled students to ensure they are able to complete their tasks. Tolerant attitude of teachers towards students who submit their assignments late needed on the basis worried if the teachers too insist, the students do not submit their work at all. Communication like friends allows teachers to understand the problems faced by students while students are able to complete the assignments on time.

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