

# Implementation of Inclusive Education Programme for Special Education Need Students with Learning Disabilities in Malaysia

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## Abstrak

A Special Education is an educational system provided by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to Special Education Needs (SEN). In Malaysia, students with SEN comprise of three groups; there are student with visual impairment, hearing impairment and learning disabilities (LD). Education democratization in the world today demands the education system to set up a new program, the Inclusive Education Program (IEP). In the IEP, a student with SEN learns with primary school pupils in the same class and follows the same curriculum with normal students. Students with SEN learn full-time in the mainstream classes that match the academic potential of an equivalent to normal students. The objective of setting up IEP is to enable students with SEN to interact with normal students. Normal students will also earn profits through the collaboration in the classroom. This IEP will enhance the collaboration of administrators and teachers in managing students with SEN to learn in a conducive manner. Even more importantly, students with SEN are provided opportunities for to be more independent and to manage emotionally better. However, the implementation of this IEP raises many issues and challenges that many researchers claim that the program is facing hiccups. Many factors affect IEP failures, especially the support and collaboration factor of all parties. Critical factors are teachers, parents, infrastructure and equipment that are the main obstacle to the success of the IEP.

## Key Words

Inclusive Education Program, Special Education Need, Malaysia

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## Introduction

People with disabilities are part of the community. History in Western countries tells us that the fate of the deaf in the year 355 was still undefined and ignored. They are excluded from society and criticized (Farah 2011). For example, Greek philosopher Aristotle despised the deaf because he considered the ear as the main organ to receive instruction and he believed that hearing made the most contribution to ingenuity. The opposite happens in Islam. The incident

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occurred between the Messenger of Allah and Ibn Umami Maktum, a visually impaired companion who invited the warning of Allah as described in surah 'Abasa'. This clearly illustrates the attitude and principles of Islam towards the disabled given a privileged position even though they have physical inadequacy.

According to the Act on the Disabled Persons of 2008, persons less able to carry out the meaning of 'barriers or lack of effort to perform an activity in a way that is considered normal for ordinary people. The less able person is comprised of individuals with physical disabilities such as loss of members, blind, deaf, mute and paralysis or mental disorders such as Cerebral Palsy, Down Syndrome and Autism. Disabled people have the same rights as normal people. In dealing with the human rights, a Muslim scholar, Zuhaily, W. M. (2005) explained that:

“Human rights are the set of some rights that are owned by a person who is closely related to the existence of his *tabi'i*; which is naturally endorsed even though it has not been recognized or infringed by any power. It encompasses basic rights such as the right to life, equality, freedom in all its forms, political and civil rights, the right of the nations to determine their destiny, their right to freedom, the right to have a national identity, the right of opinion, the right to express, the right to religion, rights of education and access to education, economic and social rights, special property rights, work rights and public office, rights to health and social care, rights of national security and protection, parenting rights, children's rights, youth rights and youth to obtain care, family rights, residence rights and so on.

Verse 13 from surah al-Hujurat discusses that the main focus of the verse refers to the establishment of a righteous society by respecting the rights of fellow human beings. One of the concepts or preconditions for producing quality society based on the *al-Qudwah* method of *Qabla al-Dakwah* (to be an example before preaching) is to recognize the existence of every individual of society irrespective of race, appearance and level of physical and mental ability (Azman et al. 2014). Education is one of the basic rights that should be enjoyed by the disabled.

## Special Education in Malaysia

Article 28 of the 2008 People with Disabilities Act states that “Persons with disabilities shall not be exempted from the general education system on the basis of disability, and disabled children shall not be exempt from preschool, primary, secondary and tertiary education, on the basis of equality with persons or children's efforts, including vocational training and lifelong learning”.

The Malaysian education system gives equal rights to all students to study. The democratization of the education system creates a new impetus for the student with SEN (Special Education Need) to join the opportunity to succeed. Malaysia's education recognizes students who own a disabilities people identity card as Special Needs Children. The history of special education in Malaysia, is believed to have grown informally in line with the spread of Islam in the Malay Peninsula and the Malay Archipelago since the 14th century (Yusoff, A. (2014).

In Malaysia special formal formations began in 1948 with the establishment of Princess Elizabeth Special Education School in Johor Bharu for blind children. In 1954, the first Deaf Children's Federation of Schools in Malaysia was established in Penang for deaf children. The rehabilitation program for “inferior” students (weak in mastering reading, writing and counting skills) began in 1978. While the program for “Learning Difficulties” started quite later in 1988 when the Ministry of Education (MOE) first started a pioneer class at Sekolah Kebangsaan Jalan Batu, Kuala Lumpur. It is evident that the development of special education in Malaysia is focused on blind, deaf and problematic learning groups.

The MOE plays a very important role in bringing about changes in education in Malaysia. It has held the mission to develop a quality and world-class education system for such a long time. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 (PPPM) 2013-2025 is a very good government policy for providing equal education to all students in Malaysia. Chapter 4 PPPM 2013-2025 on student learning outlines three access to special needs students following education in the school system in Malaysia:

1. Special Education Schools: Special Schools with all students classified as disabled (such as schools for the vision and hearing impaired).
2. Special Education Integration Program (SEIP): A mainstream school with special classes for students with special needs learning problems.
3. Inclusive Education Program (IEP): The mainstream school that integrates one to five students with special needs in every mainstream class.

In Malaysia, Special Education can be divided into three categories; Learning Disabilities (LD), Hearing Impaired and Visually Impaired (Ministry of Education 2015). The MOE (2017) explains that students with Learning Disabilities has the highest student ratio compared to the other two groups of students with SEN in Malaysia. According to Supiah (2005) and Najib (2013), the number of students with Learning Disabilities is increasing every year and is the largest special education category in our country. Special Education Rules 2016 defines Special Education as:

Education for Special Needs Students in a school that implements the Special Education Integration Program (SEIP) at the pre-school education level, primary education, secondary education or secondary education. In the Special Education system in Malaysia, SEIP is a major contributor to Student with SEN enrolment and implemented nationwide.

## **Special Education with Learning Disabilities**

Learning Disabilities (LD) according to the Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1997) is a problem in one or more of the fundamental psychological processes involving understanding or using the language of speech or writing. Among the problems faced is the ability to listen, to think, to speak and to read the imperfect. While the National Joint Committee on Learning Disabilities (NJCLD) (1990) defines learning problems as a diverse array of problems that result in significant difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, writing, decision-making or solving mathematical problems. This problem is due to the malfunction of the central

nervous system. Among the categories of students learning disabilities such as Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), Slow Learner, Autism, Down's Syndrome and Mental Retarded (Minimum).

Children with learning disabilities as those who have neurological problems affecting understanding, language use, speech, writing, thinking, reading, writing, spelling and counting (Zalizan 2014). Specific learning problems with children are referred to as psychological or neurological barriers to language responses, whether oral, written, cognitive perceptions or psychomotor activities. While according to Farah (2011), children with learning disabilities are not able to take classes as usual. This is because they have an unknown personal or external problem. However, these problem-critical children do not face any physical, emotional, visual, mental or mental disability problems. Among the features faced by students with learning disabilities such as unsatisfactory academic achievement, weak in mathematical and language subjects, did not show interest in the classroom. They are only able to pay attention or focus in a short period of time on teaching and learning activities, often drowsy, easy to forget and embarrassed to ask questions (Endang 2017).

According to Zalizan J. M. (2010), among other characteristics of problem-solving learners is difficult to learn skills, difficult to follow instructions and weak in focus. The disadvantages that the students face is in concentration are that their attention is easily shifted from one stimulus to another stimulus (Mok Soon 2008). Students with learning disabilities are also among students who are at risk of understanding, and information retention due to their concentration is weak (Manisah& Norizza 2016). In addition, this problem also affects learning skills including teaching and learning processes and often mistakes in schoolwork and homework (Alijah 2016).

## **Special Education Students with Hearing Impairment**

Special Education Needs students with hearing impairment is a student with hearing disabilities. They have certain characteristics of having less attention in the classroom, not understanding instruction, less engaging in speech-related activities, often asking questions regarding assigned tasks repetitively, frequent day-dreaming, weak in academic achievement, especially relating to language and communication, awkward way of having conversations and always facing the speakers to lip read. This view is supported by Nik Hasan, S. (2016) which says Deaf or Hearing Problem students often have to be instructed repeatedly for failure to understand the language spoken by the teacher. Definition of Hearing Problems can be divided into two aspects, namely physiological aspects and aspects of education. From the physiological aspect of the hearing problem means a deaf person suffers from hearing loss of 90dB or more while the deaf is hearing less than 90dB (Yusoff 2014).

From the aspect of education, a deaf person is considered to have learning difficulties as he is unable to process linguistic information with or without hearing aid. On the other hand, half-deaf student still have sufficient hearing loss to process linguistic information with or without hearing aid. The statement provides some general definitions to distinguish between hearing impaired and deaf terminology. Communication modes used by teachers and pupils are diverse including speech, sign language, acting and visual language. It depends on the needs

and capabilities of a student. Popular communication methods used are the Malay Language Code. In addition, body language, lip reading, facial expression and hand code are also used.

## **Special Education Students with Visual Impairment**

Students facing visual problems are categorized as students with visual impairment. In the context of education, it refers to children who need special education because of visual problems. Methods and delivery of teaching methods need to be adapted to the child in order to optimize academic achievement and daily learning (Razhiyah 2005). According to The World Council for the Welfare of The Blind, a student is considered a visually impaired if he cannot see it directly, the ability to see no more than 6/60 or 20/200 with Snellen Test or have limited vision of being able to see only 20% lighting.

## **Inclusive Education Programme (IEP)**

IEP stands for Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) which is a class attended by students with SEN along with other regular students and follow the mainstream curriculum. Students with SEN participating in IEP are seen as human capital that can be polished and sharpened even with certain disability problems. According to Zaharah (2014) IEP has long been implemented in Malaysia but its term is only new and it often mislead the public. Florian, L. (2008) sees an inclusive education program as providing opportunities for people who are unable to fully engage in all educational, career, recreational, community and domestic activities conducted by community members. IEP is allows students with SEN to study together in a room with other regular without any hindrance.

Students with SEN is generally regarded as a challenge to teacher management and pedagogical skills after the advent of the 20th century (Rose, R., & Howley, M. 2006). Inclusive education also refers to education provided to student by involving special needs students who are studying in regular classes with other normal students. In other words, this education involves special needs students who are studying with normal students in the mainstream class. Here the appropriate assistance is given to enable them to follow the process of teaching and learning with peers. The inclusion of the inclusive program greatly benefited students with SEN and they were able to compete with other normal peers (Zaharah 2014).

Claims on the needs of inclusive education in the world are increasingly evident when the international conventional special education convention deals with such issues as Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994), Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO 2006) and BIWAKO Millenium Framemwork Oshi Japan (Escap, U. 2002).

The latest support was the Incheon Strategy, a conference held in South Korea. Among the objectives of the Incheon Strategy is to improve the inclusive education and quality of life of the disabled (Incheon Research Plan Analysis of the Family and Community Development Ministry Strategy 2018). In Malaysia the policies supporting the implementation of the IEP are the People's Disabled Act 2008, the Special Education Regulation 2013, the Malaysian

Education Development Plan (2013-2025). According to the guidelines of the Special Education Division IEP (CPC 2013):

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 has noted that based on international best practices and existing policies, the Ministry of Education Malaysia is committed to increasing the number of students with special needs in the Inclusive Education Program. In this regard, a charter under the equity aspirations, “Enhanced Enrollment of Special Needs Students Enrollment in Inclusive Education Program” has been set up as one of the 25 key initiatives in the 1Agenda Bersepadu Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia in 2013 (Blueprint 2013-2025. (2013). *Ministry of Education, Malaysia*).

The goal of IEP is to increase the participation and opportunities for students with SEN to attend teaching and learning programs with students in the mainstream. IEP also prompts the public not to deny the potentials of students with SEN and accept that their inability can be minimized if given the same opportunity (*Buku Panduan Program Pendidikan Inklusif* 2013).

The objective of IEP is to ensure that student with SEN is equally entitled to study in an environment in a conducive environment without any hindrance and help build student self-confidence to achieve optimal potential. Lee Kok Cheong (2018) stated through the IEP, students are able to adapt to the mainstream students to improve their daily life skills. It can also ensure the self-adaptation process with mainstream students and improve communication skills by discussions in their daily life affairs. In addition, IEP opens the opportunity to engage local communities such as parental involvement with the school, volunteer roles and medical teams that provide moral support to special children. According to Amin (2017), the role of corporate members is also something that is always awaited by student with SEN for the necessary support services.

## **Inclusive Education Programme Implementation**

IEP can be implemented at all schools in Malaysia and is implemented in both fully or partial inclusive. To enable Student with SEN to join the IEP class they have to pass the instrument evaluation test set by MOE. The age of students with SEN is according to the student age cohort in the main stream or more than two years only from students in the mainstream (IEP Guidelines, MOE 2013). In each IEP class, the total student with SEN must not exceed five people. Student with SEN placement in the IEP class must obtain written consent or permission from parents (Siti Fatimah 2018). Student with SEN who join the full IEP need to go through assessment. Assessment like other classmates based on Professional Circulars no. 23 /1998:

“Eligible students, according to the existing conditions are entitled to take public examinations. Pupils placed in an inclusive class or merger class (Special Education Integration Program) in elementary and regular schools should also be allowed to take Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah (UPSR), Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR), Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) or other public exams together with other students. Student with SEN should be registered as a Special Needs Candidate in public examinations

to get the privileges, facilities and services provided by the Malaysian Examination Board” (*Pekeliling Ikhtisas No. 23/1998 Kebenaran Menduduki peperiksaan Awam*).

## Issues and Challenges of Implementation of IEP

The success of IEP depends largely on the commitment of all parties involved. School administrators and teachers should be prepared to receive students with SEN in the classes of regular students without any conditions. Teachers are catalysts of the education system of a country. Teacher factor can be a major barrier to the implementation of an educational program (Lee Keok Cheong 2018). He also said that teacher-related issues were a critical challenge to IEP success. According to Abdullah (2008), the core of education philosophy is “humanizing humanity”. It is something very subjective. Teacher practice in implementing education missions has a huge impact on students. Therefore, in the education system the teacher must have high self-esteem and can perform the best responsibility. The willingness of the mainstream teachers to adapt teaching sessions to meet student with SEN requirements is one of the key challenges (Siti Fatimah 2018).

This situation is also closely related to other issues such as teacher training that does not provide IEP teachers, the number of students who are too crowded reach 40 classmates. Other issues that is the main topic of IEP failure in our country is the lesser level of support from parents (Hasnah T. et.al; 2016) and lack of administrative support for teachers teaching IEP (Najib 2013; Murnie 2013; Amin 2017; Lee Keok Cheong 2018).

The lack of guidelines or a vague IEP system is also a barrier for teachers to carry out the teaching processes effectively (Udoba 2014). Other challenges related to the implementation of IEP are the burden of teachers’ tasks, teachers’ and collaborative awareness among IEP teachers and Special Education teachers (Lee Keok Cheong 2018). It is also a belief that students with SEN in their class will slow the teacher to refine the syllabus. More than that, there are teachers who think the presence of students with SEN will burden the teacher as it needs to double the effort and energy to ensure that the standard achieved by student with SEN does not affect the percentage of schools’ achievements (Husna 2016).

Teachers who teach student with SEN in IEP should be given training in managing student with SEN. Schools with no Special Education Program can get help from nearby schools or Special Education Services Center officers, Pejabat Pelajaran Daerah or Departments in the Ministry. Schools with special education teachers need to play an important role in IEP by acting as a companion teacher (*Buku Panduan Program Pendidikan Inklusif, KPM 2013*).

Implementation of IEP in our country is described by some researchers as unsuccessful. According to Amina (2016), only 6% per cent of student with SEN had problems with learning to be involved in IEP until 2015.

According to the study, the failure of student with SEN involvement in IEP was due to not being implemented and planned properly, and not achieving its real objective. Many challenges faced by teachers cause teachers not transfer potential student with SEN into an inclusive class in the mainstream. According to Supiah (2005), in her study, the success of an intervention depends largely on the efforts of teachers and parents. Becoming a true teacher is based on love and sincerity, unconditional acceptance, motivation and knowledge in accordance with the needs of Special Needs children.

According to Husna (2016) there is a communication problem between teachers and students with SEN especially autistic students. The communication problem is that instructions given by the teacher is not understood and cannot be followed by the students. Students are not able to do the assignment given by the teacher and they were continued to be ignored in the class. Teacher education has not taught how to manage autistic pupils. Nearby teachers or special education teachers are also absent to assist during the teaching process in the classroom. This inherent problem will indirectly impact the implementation of IEP. The mainstream teacher is also said to have a negative perception of inclusive students like the belief that students are lazy to learn and talk to disrupt lessons (Aina. NZ., Tahar, M. (2017). A case that involves bully was also reported in the Wah, et.al (2016) study, as a challenge in the implementation of inclusive education. A student with SEN aggressive behavioral problem occurred because of the failure of the teacher to control the class during the teaching and learning process (Murnie 2014). All the problems that occur will affect the students' self-concept to adapt to the new environment.

According to Najib Ghafar (2006), in his study there are “bias” and “labeling” of students with SEN. Teaching and learning sessions in the classroom do not apply equally. The presence of special education children in the first class is also seen as disturbing school academic performance. According to Raynham, C.L (2016), the incidence of inclusive program failure is because teachers do not get the necessary support. The intended support is support of school administrators. Teachers are not authorized autonomy or voluntary electors to teach student with SEN or not. Teachers are forced to teach student in the absence of special education related knowledge and no teaching readiness. Teachers are almost never exposed to attending organization courses. This fact is supported by Amin Mustofa (2017), that reports class teachers do not understand the needs of student diversity, thus, affecting the teaching and evaluation process of a student. The presence of student with SEN in the first class is just considered as an opportunity to make friends and socialize with classmates.

Amin Mustofa (2017), in his study, has also emphasized the need for teachers involved with IEP teaching to be given the motivation and the true understanding of student with SEN. According to Amina et. al. (2016) study out of 170 respondents, only 40% of the mainstream teachers know the meaning of the inclusive education program (IEP) and 60% of other teachers interviewed fail to explain the meaning of inclusive education and say that they do not know. This illustrates that teachers do not get the proper exposure. Based on past research, many problems arise in the implementation of IEP against students with SEN. However, Lee Keok Cheong (2018) says only two critical factors that contribute to IEP success; they are support and collaboration services. Among the support services are students with SEN's equipment that require special equipment such as Braille, augmentation, infrastructure such as bail ramps, toilet and physical facilities of the school environment conducive to student with SEN.

## **Finding and Implication to The Discipline**

There are state in Malaysia, student with Specific LD or Dyslexia from the largest group of students with LD who learn in IEP classes (Special Education Data KPM 2017). Among the obstacles in implementing IEP are these four aspects namely teachers, government, parents and students (Lee Keok Cheong 2018, Hanafi, Y; et.al; 2014, Supiah; 2013). Recent studies showed

teacher factor is ineffective teacher and negative attitudes towards to students with SEN (Supiah 2013), government factor as having the inability to provide adequate resources to maintain IEP (Nurul 2017; Hanafi, M.Y. 2013). In Malaysia, faces challenges similar to other developing countries. The parents' factor in IEP implementation is a collaboration to support children in doing homework. As the following factor, students are the next on the list. Learning Disabilities (LD) as a Autisme, Hiperactive, Hipoactive and so on give to obstacles to studies better than other normal student (Mohamad, J. 2013, Amin Mustofa (2017).

Finally, all these factors have a great impact on the students with special needs to learn and to look for better opportunities. Discrimination in existing education will affect the objectives and targets of the Education Ministry of Malaysia to achieve the third wave in Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (*PPPM*).

## Conclusion

In Malaysia, education for the disabled is generally and IEP in particular, still has a long winding road to go. Many of the issues and challenges surrounding the implementation of IEP are not only specific in this country but the world also faces this problem. Among the factors that can be attributed are the ability of the student himself, the acceptance of fellow students to study and discuss together, teacher commitment and capabilities, unstructured collaboration strategies, parental attitudes, teachers and school administrators towards the implementation of IEP. To ensure that IEP has achieved its goals and objectives, all parties must demonstrate support and co-operation in order to achieve the effectiveness of the program. The real meaning of education democratization is still not able to be felt by students with SEN fairly and completely. The community needs to understand that IEP is not just putting student with SEN in the mainstream class but to achieve the same success opportunities as regular students in the mainstream. Success for students with SEN is to improve their academic achievement, self-esteem and self-reliance with other regular students while creating a more just and prosperous society.

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