

## **INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN MALAYSIA: TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Education is the basic right of all human beings and in terms of philosophy, all individuals in the world have the right to equality to get access to education. Children with special needs consist of children who have learning difficulties. Therefore, individuals like this need modifications to the curriculum and teaching methods so that they can optimally realize their potential. In line with the concept of education for all, the Inclusive Education Program (PPI) was introduced as a noble effort to provide equal educational opportunities to all students with special needs, regardless of their disabilities. Appropriate assistance will be given to students with special needs to enable them to engage in inclusive teaching and learning with their peers in the mainstream. The purpose of writing this concept paper is to discuss the challenges faced, namely the knowledge, readiness, and level of use of inclusive teaching techniques among mainstream teachers who teach special education students. This qualitative study has used data collection methods through library research as well as content analysis of ten articles that describe research related to the Inclusive Education Program (PPI). The findings of this study are based on thematic aspects of knowledge, readiness, and the level of use of inclusive teaching techniques measured based on the experience of the teachers involved. It is hoped that the findings of this study will benefit mainstream teachers in their teaching in addition to giving MBK the opportunity to get an equal education without discrimination. Next, the findings in this study can be used as a starting point and as recommendations to the MoE to improve the implementation of PPI in helping to deal with the challenges faced by teachers.

**Keywords:** Special Education, Inclusive Education, Pupils with Special Needs, MBK, Teacher Challenges

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Special education in Malaysia is a field that is gaining more and more attention from the community. The concept of a caring society preached by the government has placed this group of people with disabilities along with other normal human groups. It requires the touch of professionals to handle the special needs of this group from all its special aspects in improving the quality of life in general through the channel of educational institutions. According to the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Special Education) Regulations 1997, Part 1, items 2(b) and (c), which mention the need to establish an inclusion program in regular schools for pupils with visual impairments, hearing impairments, or learning difficulties, and an inclusive education

program for students with special needs who can attend regular classes together with regular students.

It is clear that Malaysia also provides special provisions in terms of legislation so that the rights to obtain education are given to the disabled in order to improve their quality of life through educational institutions. An inclusive program is a place where every student is accepted and has support from peers and the school community to meet their educational needs (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). According to the Salamanca Statement in Article 2, 1994, inclusive is about normal schools with an orientation toward inclusiveness; it is the most effective way to fight discrimination, create a friendly society, build an inclusive society, and achieve education for all while providing education that is effective for the majority of children and increases the efficiency and ultimately the financial effectiveness of the education system as a whole.

Inclusion is the provision of services to students with disabilities, including those with severe disabilities. In the school environment, students with disabilities are provided with additional support and assistance so that they can succeed in academic achievement, behavioral changes, and social skills. It also aims to prepare disabled students to participate as full members and be able to contribute to society (Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). This study aims to see how the aspects of knowledge, readiness, and teaching techniques of mainstream teachers who carry out inclusion in integration programs are in line with the provisions of the law that has been approved for them as well as towards normalizing the lives of these special education students in the life of normal society.

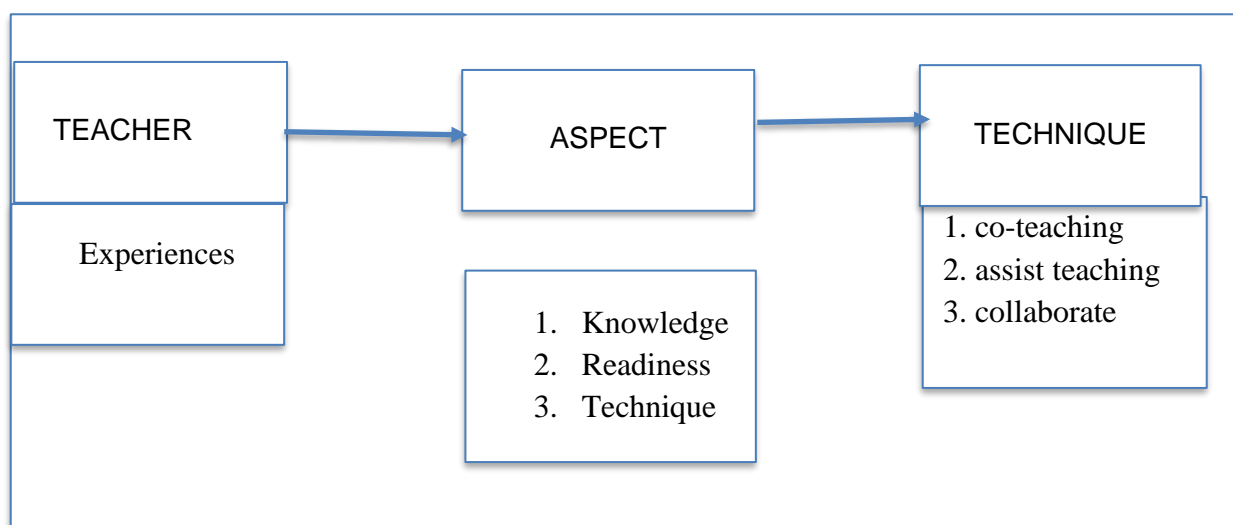
## **2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

In terms of teachers, there is a group of teachers who are involved in making this inclusive success, namely mainstream teachers. Mainstream teachers are subject teachers who will teach students in mainstream classes who are responsible by the school for teaching students in a school, including special education students who are included. In this study, the focus is on mainstream teachers who teach special education students. There is one emphasis given to the mainstream teacher group in this study, which is in terms of experience teaching special education students. In the framework of this concept, it is explained about the three main aspects for a teacher to carry out inclusiveness in the teaching of special education students, namely knowledge, readiness, and the techniques used. With the combination of these three aspects, a teacher, whether junior or senior, will definitely be able to carry out teaching well if it is accompanied by three inclusive components, and will subsequently produce effective teaching results as desired.

In understanding what the teaching needs are and how they are carried out, this teaching technique is also broken down into three components, which are the core of inclusiveness: co-teaching, assist teaching, and collaboration. These three components are interrelated with the level of knowledge, readiness, and techniques used by a teacher. At this level of knowledge, a teacher must understand and be skilled about the inclusive component, and they should be prepared to carry out teaching together with special education teachers. This is important because subject teachers are able to teach in a 'hands-on' way for visually impaired students, especially those who need individual help to learn and understand about a pop-up diagram (Moore et al. 1997).

As for the level of readiness, mainstream teachers who are selected to teach special education students who are included need to know about the form of help they can receive from resource teachers. They can get help regarding the subject content that needs to be emphasized and get services in terms of preparing teaching and learning materials. They can also get help from this resource teacher to carry out co-teaching, assist teaching, and collaborate. The readiness of resource teachers and mainstream teachers to understand their respective fields of work will be able to guarantee smoothness and effectiveness in running inclusive schools.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



In understanding the needs of special education and efforts to obtain interweaving and compatibility between special education teachers and mainstream teachers, the effectiveness of teaching techniques will be a catalyst for that purpose. This can be seen by understanding the purpose of this inclusive implementation. If the responsibilities between these two areas are understood, then group teaching, teaching aids, and collaboration will be able to be carried out successfully. Mainstream teachers can discuss the techniques that will be used to deliver lessons to students. From the group of teachers involved in this inclusive implementation, three components underlying inclusive as well as three approaches during inclusive implementation can produce effective teaching. This can be seen after each component in this conceptual framework is examined and understood. The effective teaching that results will guarantee the effectiveness of teaching, and this gives an opportunity to all parties to see the need for carrying out inclusiveness for special education students and also to guarantee the equality of division of duties between special education teachers who act as resource teachers and also mainstream teachers who carry out teaching with the help of a special education teacher.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive qualitative study using data collection methods through library research as well as content analysis of articles that explain research related to the Inclusive Education

Program (PPI). This reference resource search uses Google Scholar and Mycite using the keywords Special Education, Inclusive Education Program, Students with Special Needs, MBK, and Teacher Challenges. The researcher read and identified the appropriateness of the content of the journal to really coincide with the title of the study before choosing ten (10) reference materials for the literature review.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### **4.1. Level of Teacher Knowledge**

The level of knowledge, readiness, and positive attitude of mainstream teachers is an important aspect of ensuring that inclusive education programs can be implemented effectively. According to Mazarul Hasan Mohamad Hanapi et al. (2022), the level of knowledge of the mainstream teachers involved in the program is at a moderate level, and the level of knowledge of the teachers can be improved from time to time to ensure that the Inclusive Education Program can be implemented effectively. The four elements of the level of readiness, namely knowledge, teaching skills, attitude, and perception of teachers, have a significant and high relationship with the attitude of teachers in the implementation of inclusive education programs. Mainstream teachers need to improve their level of knowledge through workshops, courses, and other methods to meet the needs of students with special needs in the mainstream (Nirmala Palaniandy and Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin, 2021).

According to Norramlah Ali and Nurfaradilla Mohamad Nasri (2021), one of the hindering factors that have been identified is that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and appropriate training on special education and apply the same teaching methods and techniques between MBK and normal students. Based on the problems faced by mainstream teachers, the author suggests that joint workshops between mainstream teachers and special education teachers be held periodically to improve the knowledge and skills of mainstream teachers in handling MBK. It is hoped that with the cooperation and support between mainstream teachers and special education teachers, they will be able to improve the factors that become obstacles, increase the effectiveness of the inclusive education program, and be able to achieve the objectives targeted by the Malaysian Ministry of Education. This statement is supported by Edith Binti Indek and Aida Hanim A. Hamid (2022) regarding the level of practice and effectiveness of teaching with inclusive education as well as its impact on the job satisfaction of teachers who implement the policies of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM). From the training aspect, the implication is that limited knowledge and skills cause teachers who teach in inclusive classes to have difficulty practicing effective and efficient joint teaching practices.

Pau Swee Lin and Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin (2021), on the other hand, stated that teachers show a positive attitude about PPI, but they need more in-depth knowledge about PPI. Mainstream teachers' knowledge and attitudes related to the Inclusive Education Program (PPI) are important to the academic excellence of special education students (MPK). While the implementation of inclusive education is at a moderate level, mainstream teachers who implement inclusive education can be categorized as teachers who have knowledge about inclusive education and who also

implement inclusive pedagogy in the classroom (Noor Syahira Jalaluddin and Mohd Mokhtar Tahar, 2021).

#### **4.2. Level of Teacher Readiness**

Nirmala Palaniandy and Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin (2021) focus on four elements of the level of readiness, namely knowledge, teaching skills, attitude, and teacher perception. The teacher's teaching skills also have a significant and strong relationship with the teacher's attitude. The level of knowledge of mainstream teachers about the implementation of inclusive education programs is still at a moderate level. Mainstream teachers need to improve their level of knowledge through workshops, courses, and other methods to meet the needs of students with special needs in the mainstream. While the high level of readiness of mainstream teachers ensures the effectiveness of the Inclusive Education Program is implemented (Guan Jing Ling and Intan Marfarrina Omar 2022). The statement is supported by Pau Swee Lin and Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin (2021), who state that teachers show a positive attitude about PPI, but they need more in-depth knowledge about PPI. Mainstream teachers' knowledge and attitudes related to the Inclusive Education Program (PPI) are important to the academic excellence of special education students (MPK).

#### **4.3. Level of Use of Inclusive Teaching Techniques**

One of the problem factors of teachers' teaching is the aspect of teachers' pedagogical knowledge in implementing PPI that needs to be overcome with the existence of resource teachers collaborating with subject teachers in PPI classes for MBK (Siti Fatimah Salleh and Mustafa Che Omar 2018). According to Norramlah Ali and Nurfaradilla Mohamad Nasri (2021), one of the hindering factors that have been identified is that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge and appropriate training on special education and apply the same teaching methods and techniques between MBK and normal students. Based on the problems faced by mainstream teachers, the author suggests that joint workshops between mainstream teachers and special education teachers be held periodically to improve the knowledge and skills of mainstream teachers in handling MBK. It is hoped that with the cooperation and support between mainstream teachers and special education teachers, they will be able to improve the factors that become obstacles, increase the effectiveness of the inclusive education program, and be able to achieve the objectives targeted by the Malaysian Ministry of Education.

According to Edith Binti Indek and Aida Hanim A. Hamid (2022), they provide information on the level of practice and effectiveness of teaching with inclusive education as well as its impact on the job satisfaction of teachers who implement the policies of the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM). From the training aspect, the implication is that limited knowledge and skills cause teachers who teach in inclusive classes to have difficulty practicing effective and efficient joint teaching practices. However, Hazlin Binti Haris and Khairul Farhah Khairuddin (2021) state that there are a variety of methods used, namely cooperative learning, active learning, learning *non-directive teaching model*, storytelling method, and joint teaching method (*co-teaching*), which is an inclusive pedagogy implemented involving the participation of all students without discriminating based on socioeconomic background, cognitive level, gender, culture, and different learning styles. Among the advantages of inclusive pedagogy is the improvement of students'

social skills in the aspects of self-confidence, cooperation, joint participation, sharing of ideas, and independence. Mohd. Mokhtar Tahar and Farhana Najib (2019) focus on one main element in the implementation of inclusive education, which is the aspect of teacher teaching practice. There is no significant relationship between the level of teacher knowledge, the perception of mainstream teachers, and the willingness of mainstream teachers to implement inclusive education. But Noor Syahira Jalaluddin and Mohd Mokhtar Tahar (2021) found that the implementation of inclusive education is at a moderate level, where mainstream teachers who implement inclusive education can be categorized as teachers who have knowledge about inclusive education and who also implement inclusive pedagogy in the classroom.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

From the analysis of 10 articles about the implementation of the Inclusive Education Program (PPI), several recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of the PPI and meet 75 percent of students with special needs by the year 2025 have come true as desired in the Education Development Plan 2013-2025.

- i. The information from this study can be used as a source of reference and guidance for all parties who are interested in learning more about what is meant by an inclusive approach, and it can also be carried out to provide benefits, especially to special education students. However, there is no denying that there are still weaknesses in this study, which hopefully will be improved by the next researcher, who wants to see an inclusive perspective from the point of view of mainstream teachers who have sacrificed a lot to ensure its survival. The researcher feels that the emphasis on teaching techniques needs to be done more deeply so that it can be explained better in future studies.
- ii. Inclusive is an approach that allows special education students with potential to be given appropriate guidance so that their potential can be highlighted. Mainstream teachers who carry out teaching need training in the form of direct exposure, such as in-service courses, so that they can strengthen their existing skills. This requires the Ministry of Education to look seriously at the needs of mainstream teachers, who are the backbone of a student's success.
- iii. The importance of special education teachers or resource teachers to obtain the latest information regarding inclusive implementation is also expected to be considered because most special education teachers are mainstream teachers who follow a short in-service course. Therefore, they only have the basics regarding inclusiveness and their role in achieving inclusive goals. The Ministry of Higher Education should also work with the Ministry of Education to be able to create subjects or sub-subjects to compulsory university subjects where prospective teachers from the mainstream get exposure to the needs and information of special education.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

The effectiveness of a program that wants to be implemented requires the cooperation of all parties. One of the teaching and learning approaches that should be implemented to meet the needs of special education students is to conduct inclusive education in regular day schools. The purpose



of the program has been planned with a pure goal: to give MBK students the same opportunity as normal students to get an education in an unlimited environment. But all this will not be successfully achieved if there is no cooperation from all parties. The level of teacher knowledge, readiness, and teaching techniques need to be emphasized so that this inclusive implementation can be carried out systematically and can achieve inclusive goals, especially in terms of the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers who are responsible for ensuring inclusiveness can be implemented to guarantee the effective implementation of PPI and then reach 75 percent of MBPK in the PPI by the year 2025 as targeted in the Education Development Plan 2013-2025.

Success in achieving the aspirations in the Education Development Plan 2013-2025 requires support and encouragement from all parties. The training and skills possessed by special education teachers as well as mainstream teachers should be increased along with the passage of time and educational needs. This approach will provide many benefits to students in particular and to the general public in general. The sensitivity of the community is very necessary to ensure that people with disabilities also get a place in society, and this opportunity should be given directly to them to guarantee their needs to fulfill the lives of these students later. Based on the way inclusiveness is implemented in schools and how certain parties carry out their responsibilities, it can reduce the dependence of special education students on easy access, such as teachers and friends. It is hoped that with this inclusiveness, it will provide independent opportunities in addition to reducing astigmatism and labeling, which have been given to special education students for a long time.

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