

ACCEPTANCE AND REJECTION ON STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS (SSN) IN SECONDARY INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM

^aAbdul Rahim Razalli

^bMohamad Norhizar

^cAbdul Talib Hashim

^dNordin Mamat

^eNoreha Yusuf.

^aSultan Idris Education University of Malaysia, Malaysia

^arahim.r@fppm.upsi.edu.my

Abstract: *This study aims to identify the level of rejection and acceptance on Secondary Inclusive Classroom at Hulu Selangor District, Selangor, Malaysia. The study involves 10 schools with a sample comprises of 100 teachers from various educational backgrounds in the Inclusive Education Program. This study uses a set of instrument containing 40 questions to measure level of acceptance on secondary inclusive classroom. The findings showed that in terms of acceptance, there are 97% respondents who agree that SSN join the curriculum and co-curriculum together with mainstream students, 93% - 97% of the respondents accept the presence of SSN, 86% - 99% of special education teachers and mainstream teachers collaborate their teaching aids preparation, a total of 75% respondents increase cooperation between students and teachers and finally 84% are willing to accept the presence of SSN in the classroom. The findings also showed that only 2% up to 12% respondents reject the presence of SSN in the inclusive classroom for curriculum implementation and provision of teaching aids. Implication of the study indicates that the presence of SSN in the secondary inclusive classroom brings good impact for both teachers and SSN.*

Keywords: Acceptance, Rejection, Students with Special Needs, Inclusive classroom

INTRODUCTION

Special education in Malaysia is a program where students with special needs receive formal education as experienced by mainstream students. Education Act 1996 and Education Regulations 1997 (Special Education) Part 1, Article 2 (b) and (c) explain the meaning of inclusive education as a program "An inclusive education program for students with special needs and who are able to attend normal classes together with normal students" and is supported by the fact from UNESCO (2005) that "the process is inclusive, provide opportunities according to the needs of all students through learning, culture, community, and without exception with regard to education." This statement is supported by Friends and Shamberger (2009) who stated that "An aspiration or philosophy in building a culture of effective learning is through a variety of programs, services and support. All school members are entirely responsible in providing assistance and support. "Thus, the special education field has become more all-inclusive with the introduction of Inclusive Education Program (IEP) within the context of climate education in Malaysia. The placement of students with special needs who are

capable, getting the effective support services provided and the 3Rs (reading, writing, counting and speaking) and being able to keep up with the learning effectively will be given the opportunity to learn with mainstream students together as recommended by the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (1994), which stipulates that "the opportunity and space to learn and involvement with normal students in dealing with social problems such as discrimination, negative perception of society and cultivate an inclusive culture ..." The recommendation is also geared towards UNESCO IBE (2008b), which also outlines the fact that "indicators of inclusive education is the presence (access and equity), the involvement of students (quality and meaningful learning experience from the perspective of the students themselves) and achievement (effective learning and teaching process and meaningful learning outcome) for all students regardless of their disability and capability."

Such important matter certainly demands strong cooperation and commitment among special education and mainstream teachers. Nevertheless, there are many great challenges lie ahead in implementing the Inclusive Education Program. The

main goal of inclusive education is to 'integrate' both SSN and mainstream students. Not all SSN students can be simply integrated because each individual has different stages, abilities, capabilities and skills. Inclusive Education Program (IEP) today certainly get full support and attention from the Ministry of Education. Education Act 1961 in Section 1 (Interpretation) that stated "Special schools are schools that provide special treatment to children with disabilities" and the Cabinet Committee Report (1978) examined the lesson implementation policy through the Declaration 169, "... represents a turning point for an emphasis and a clear focus on time to time development of special education in Malaysia". Professional Circular No. 16/2007 has explained in more detail on period of learning time for students with special education and directly recognized the inclusive education that have been implemented in primary and secondary schools. The main role of the Ministry of Education (MOE) is to deal with and responsible for education of children who are visually impaired, hearing impaired and learning disabled or mild mentally disabled but are independent and manage to receive formal education. "Professional Circular No. 16/2007 has explained in more detail on period of learning time for students with special education and directly recognized the inclusive education that have been implemented in primary and secondary school. The main role of Ministry of Education (MOE) is to deal with and responsible for the education of children who are visually impaired, hearing impaired and learning disabled or mild mentally disabled but are independent and manage to receive formal education. On the part of Ministry of Health, their responsibility is to identify at early stage and further screen the children who are born in this risky situation. While the Ministry of Social Welfare are responsible in providing assistance and support to children with physical disabilities, moderate and severe mental retardation and spastic children. By looking at the Declaration of Universal Human Rights (1948), which includes the right of every individual to education that emphasizes the needs of learning, including people with disabilities are integrated in the education system of each country in the world. In 1959, the United Nations (UN) has declared the Rights of the Child stating that "They are entitled to receive care and special protection and guidance according to their disability as well as the chance to be a normal kid." With reference to acts, policies and declarations mentioned above it is clear that the Inclusive Education program as discussed in this study is indeed very important. Accordingly, the Inclusive Education Program should be given priority over time.

According to Sheehy et al. (2005) there are many challenges in the implementation of IEP including the attitudes of teachers involved due to their lack of skills in handling students with special needs in mainstream inclusive classrooms.

Preliminary Report on Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 in Chapter 4 of Student Learning, special education students are given the opportunity to be in the IEP at the rate of 30% of their current population by 2015 and it is in accordance with the National Key Result Areas (NKRA), the government of Malaysia has mandated the Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve educational achievement and ensure achievement of the best possible education for all groups of students, including special education students (Interim Strategic Plan, 2012). The existence and the presence of students in Special Education Integration Program with Learning Disabilities (SEIP LD), especially students of inclusive education are often not welcomed and not accepted by some people or some institutions, especially in our country that they do not get the learning opportunities as it should be. There are obstacles to achieve the target. Wood (2002) stated that history has presented a large number of students with special needs who have been deprived of their fundamental freedoms. As a result, these students miss the education opportunities that they deserve. What is worse, they even have to pay for special facilities or are not permitted to use or deprived from their rights to use the special facilities.

A study by Shifrer and Callahan (2012) stated that either teachers or parents frequently underestimate education achievement of students who are regarded as learning disabled students as compared to normal students. Whereas another study by Reschly (1996) stated that the terms are often used against students with special needs with negative connotations. Murugiah (1997) argued that factors like motivation, emotional stress, selection of appropriate subjects, self-confidence and attitude of teachers towards students with special needs also affect willingness of students to learn. This fact has proved that attitude, acceptance and treatment of teachers to students with special needs, including those who are following the IEP during their learning session in mainstream classrooms has become one of the factors that affect SSN readiness to learn and further affect their performance level. Sue (2012) stated that mainstream teachers are believed to have negative perceptions and often provide a number of reasons and do not want to accept the fact that students with special needs deserve to learn side by side with other normal students in the mainstream. According to Najib and Sanisah (2006), there are some principals and teachers who do not welcome the presence of students with special needs in their schools. While press reports *Georgiandaily.com* (2008) also pointed out that some school managements refused to implement this program in their public schools and the teachers did not want to conduct classes for students with special needs. Therefore this study is carried out to focus on acceptance and rejection on implementation of the Inclusive Education Program

(IEP) in terms of implementation, willingness and role for further improvement on IEP implementation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In Public Law 94-142, Part B as quoted from Voughn, Bos, and Schumm (2003) stated that the Law which was enacted in 1975 at the international level has provided education opportunity for students with special needs. The international law requires that all states to provide special facilities for this group to participate in public education entirely as early as 5 years old to 18 years in addition to promote and implement the concept of least restrictive environment where students with special needs are given the right to education in unrestricted environment. The legislation actually allows students with special needs to learn and receive same privileges and rights like any normal students. Education Regulations in Malaysia, 1997 (Education Act 1996) recognizes the right of students with special needs to be included in regular classrooms. Regulation (2) stated that Inclusive Education means ... an inclusive education program for students with special needs which can be attended in regular classroom along with normal students and was included in the Primary Work Target (PWT) from the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2000 as stated in phase 6.1 Integrating students with special needs in regular schools.

Many previous studies on acceptance of parents with special children found that not all parents could accept the presence of exceptional children, as found from studies carried out by Belgrave (1991), Heinmann & Shontz (1992), Linkowski & Dunn (1994) in Mohd. Sharani (2004). According to Li, Moore and Dennis (1998), social stigma and discrimination level against parents with special children are considered as constraints that prevented the parents to accept the presence of their children. Meanwhile, Nancy (1999) stated that the negative stigma by people around them has caused the parents dread to accept the fact that they are the mother or father of a child with special needs. Olshansky (1992) also stated that the parents who are having children with special needs often feel helpless when it comes to welfare of their children. The negative reaction shown by the parents of children with special needs are very much related to the level of losing their identity as accorded by Whaley & Wong (1991). According to Mohd. Sharani (2004), there are many other factors such as shocked, disbelief, sadness, anger, disappointment and denial substantially affect reaction of the parents concerned. There were also factors caused by fear of social rejection and fear of living alone, Prado (1991). According to Mohd. Sharani (2004), those factors are among the challenges faced in ensuring that children with special needs have the access to and enjoy the educational opportunities that are similar to any normal children.

While in another study carried out by Florian and Becirevic (2010), they felt that if teachers already have the background on inclusive education, there are still many things to consider with regard to planning and implementation of inclusive programs. Effective and innovative teachers are those who constantly enrich their learning teaching experiences and skills to enable children with special needs to gain 'input' and 'output' of their teaching. A study by UNICEF (2010) showed there are various aspects of pedagogy that requires attention such as readiness of children, parental involvement, individualized instruction and appropriate teaching materials. Even commitment of the teachers is also noteworthy because they have to accompany the children to learn in regular classroom. Bi Ying Hu (2010) stipulated that behavior management of the children who attend inclusive education also need to be addressed to ensure the success of IEP. Teachers should also be prepared to implement IEP and the appropriate teaching strategies such as co-operative learning. According to Hegarty et al. (1983) teaching students with special needs is one of the most challenging tasks faced by teachers in service. Therefore, teachers must endure all challenges and possess certain qualities required in the special environment. Turney and Jenkins (1985) argued that the school climate is among the main factors that determine the state of qualities faced by the students in school and it is also an important factor in determining school effectiveness.

RESERACH METHODOLOGY

This study uses descriptive survey method to determine the level of acceptance and rejection on SSN to secondary inclusive classroom. The questionnaire measures the acceptance and rejection level using the Likert scale of five scores namely strongly agree (5), agree (4), less agree (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1) is used. The data is to find the percentage for each item that represents the constructs of the study. A total of 17 schools represent 100 respondents. A questionnaire containing 40 items were distributed to obtain research data.

Data Analysis

Respondents Profile

Findings from Table 1 below show 31 male respondents and 69 female respondents. Qualification at Bachelor level with a total of 76 people followed by 15 Masters holder and nine diploma holders. Teaching experience from 6 to 10 years showed the highest number with 44 respondents, followed by 11 years and above with 30 respondents and 1 to 5 years with a total of 18 respondents.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

Case	Category	Study Findings	
		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	31	31
	Female	69	69
Education level	Diploma in Education	9	9
	Bachelors Degree	76	76
	Masters Degree	15	15
	Ph.D	0	0
Teaching Experience	Less than 1 year	8	8
	1-5 Years	18	18
	6-10 Years	44	44
	11 Years and above	30	30

Analysis of Findings

The analysis focuses on understanding the concept, implementation of the program, role of the teachers and the teachers' readiness in Inclusive Education. Table 2 below shows majority of the study respondents understand the concept of inclusive with a total of 98 respondents (98%) agreed that SSN should be allowed to learn in mainstream class with other normal students, a total of (99%) respondents agreed that SSN follow the same PdP and at the same time to be given opportunity through different methods, 97 respondents (97%) agreed that IEP should be implemented in PPKI secondary

schools, a total of 97 respondents (97%) agreed with answer in the items in order for SSN to participate entirely the same and equivalent curricular and co-curricular programs with other mainstream students. Finally 100 respondents (100%) agreed that the support services are provided as well as the classroom teachers are fully responsible to all students, including SSN. On the whole, special education teachers in PPKI secondary school accepted the concept of inclusive education teachers, while only 3 respondents (3%) did not understand the concept of inclusive education.

Table 2: Understanding the Concept of Inclusive Education

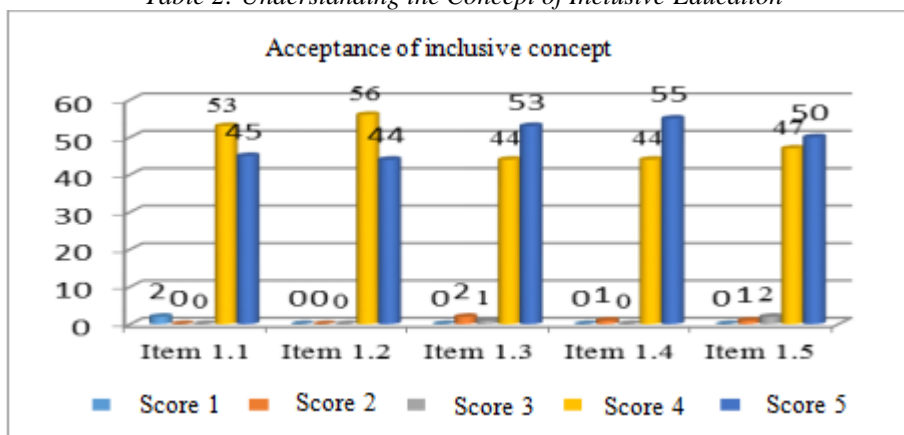


Table 3 below shows Acceptance and Rejection on the Implementation of Inclusive Education. The study finds that 95 respondents (95%) agreed that SSN has the ability to compete with other mainstream students, 97 respondents (97%) agreed that special education teachers are well trained and supervise SSN in inclusive classes, 93 respondents (93%) agreed with the statement that for every school infrastructure and other facilities

provided in inclusive classrooms should be user friendly to SSN, 96 respondents (96%) acknowledged and agreed that all school members can accept the involvement of SSN in various school activities conducted from time to time and 93 respondents (93%) agreed that all school staff should be well prepared to accept the SSN inclusively.

Table 3: Acceptance and Rejection on Implementation of Inclusive Education

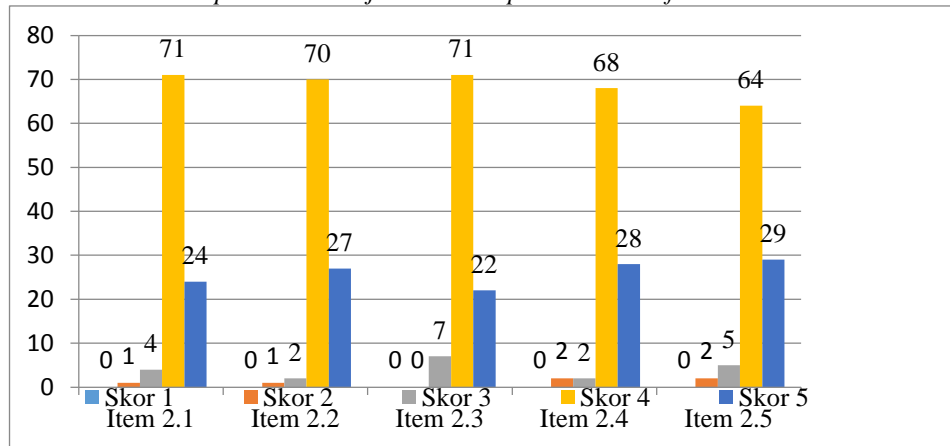


Table 4 shows the acceptance and rejection of teachers on teachers' role in IEP. A total of 98 respondents (98%) agreed that special education teachers (SET) are responsible for planning and helping GKI and GMP in preparing appropriate teaching aids and PDP method, a total of 98 respondents (98%) agreed that GKI / GMP provides the same PdP content for all students, including SSN, a total of 99 respondents (99%) agreed that

SET serves as a GP / GR to assist GKI / GMP and SSN in inclusive classes in the mainstream, 96 respondents (96%) agreed that GKI / GMP are always ready to improve their knowledge and skills to teach and handle SSN and a total of 86 respondents (86%) were of the opinion that the SET should also get together and cooperate with each other and be responsible to ensure the success of SSN in inclusive classes in the mainstream.

Table 4: Acceptance and Rejection on Role of Teachers in Inclusive Education

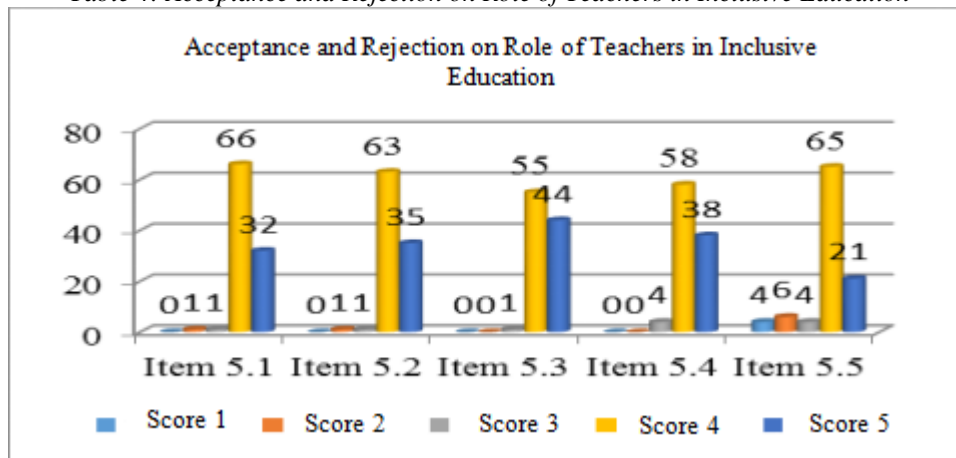
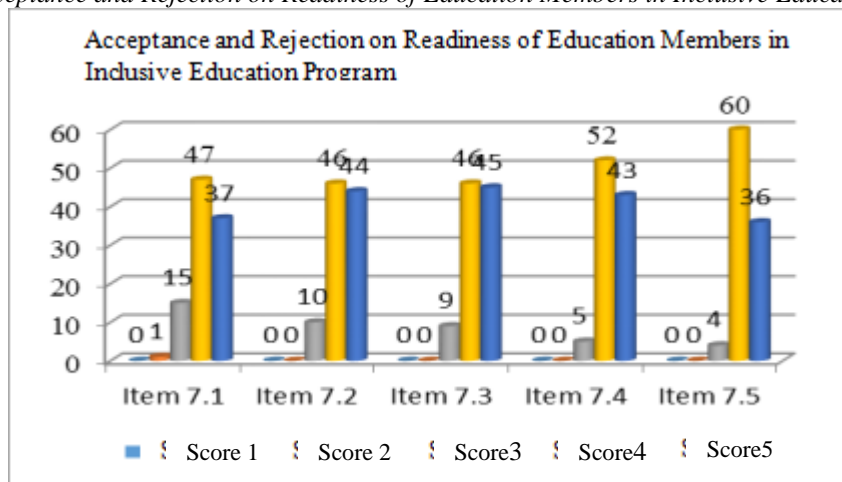


Table 5 shows the acceptance and rejection on willingness of education members for inclusive education. The findings show that 84 respondents (84%) agreed that having the knowledge and skills related to PPI, which allows the of teaching of SSN to be inclusive, 86 respondents (86%) agreed to accept the challenges in educating SSN in inclusive education program, a total of 91 respondents (91 %)

agreed that the abilities and skills of SSN to realize and apply the variety of knowledge acquired in everyday life, 95 respondents (95%) agreed that not all mainstream teachers can fully accept all SSN to be included and a total of 96 respondents (96%) agreed that SSN should be screened / diagnosed on their achievement / ability level before they can be accepted in the inclusive education program.

Table 5: Acceptance and Rejection on Readiness of Education Members in Inclusive Education Program



DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATION AND IMPLICATION

The study found that there are four elements in the inclusive education to be accepted; understand the concept of inclusive education, implementation of inclusive education program in PPKI, role of teachers in inclusive education program and willingness of teachers in inclusive education. Overall, the study found that 97% respondents accept and understand the concept of inclusive education that includes approval of learning together with mainstream students, support services and pedagogical adjustment. This finding is similar to the concept and philosophy in a study by Mohd Sharani (2004), which describes the approach of IEP must consider participation and develop self-confidence among special students so they could feel that they are at par with other students. The study also found high acceptance factor that exceeds 93% to 97% on capacity to compete and infrastructure facilities and involvement of education members in IEP. The findings are supported by a study conducted by Avramidis and Norwich (2002) which is availability of facilities in class will be a complement to teaching. While Cartwright (2011) explained that there is no exception for special children to develop actively in the same environment with mainstream students.

The study found that 97% of teachers agreed that the curriculum and co-curricular of SSN need to be together with mainstream students. This finding is consistent with Slee (2006) who viewed that social and cultural development fosters development of special students in the classroom where they could learn together. The findings show that 93% to 97% of teachers and students accepted the presence of special students and mainstream students together. The findings are supported by Winter and O'Raw (2010) who argued that learning environment creates respond to the needs of all students in order for them to achieve great impact on

their social, emotional, physical and cognitive development. Flexible curriculum and the use of individual and organized teaching in IEP help to boost self-confidence among special students (Osberg & Siesta, 2010). The study also found that 86% to 99% of special education teachers and mainstream teachers collaborate their preparation of teaching aids. These findings match the study conducted by Graham & Jahnukainen (2010) who explained that support and provision of teaching aids should be done jointly between special schools and mainstream schools. The study also found that 75% of inclusive education program could increase collaboration between students and teachers. The fact is supported by this study on involvement and cooperation of parents which is strongly encouraged. Parents should be active partners in their child's education in The Basic Education Act (2010) on individual education plan.

The findings also show that 84% of teachers are willing to accept the presence of special education students and SSN can attend learning session with mainstream students together. This finding is in line with the findings of UNESCO (2012), The school must be prepared to accept students with different needs and also to act in proactive manner to remove barriers in order so that full participation could take place. Schools must also adopt characteristics of admission to the inclusive program in a transparent manner and at the same time willing to remove mechanisms and practices that could lead to exclusion (Forlin, 2013). Nevertheless, the study also found that 2 to 12% of teachers rejected the presence of special students into mainstream classes. The findings of this study match with the study by Webster-Stratton and Reid (2004) who received less positive feedback and reject students who are experiencing social problems. While another study by Rubin, Hymel and Mills (1989) explained that teachers need to focus on the problem of acceptance due to social problems and to get training in areas related to management.

CONCLUSION

Rejection and acceptance on implementation of the program, role and willingness of teachers to inclusive education give a huge impact to children with special needs, teachers, administrators and parents. The high acceptance on the concept of inclusive education which includes pedagogical adjustment, acceptance on learning together with mainstream students and support services to facilitate access to inclusive education by school members. The study also found there is cooperation between mainstream teachers with special education teachers in their preparation of teaching materials, extra-curricular activities and extracurricular activities. Although there is rejection on presence of students with special needs into mainstream classes, the figure is still small in numbers.

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