

# TEACHER'S ATTITUDES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE: AN OVERVIEW OF FACTORS OF SERVICES, CONFIDENCE, CHALLENGES, AND EDUCATION POLICY

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## **Abstract**

This study discusses teacher's attitudes towards inclusive program in the mainstream setting. Service, confidence, challenges, and education policy were among the four factors measured in the overview of teachers who taught special education students in inclusive classes. This quantitative study involved 97 respondents. They answered randomly using an online application available in a few groups in Facebook. The results of the analysis found the tendency of mainstream teachers of giving good feedback with high percentages in service, confidence, challenges, and education policy. It is hoped that this study will benefit our education policy and also for the special education implementation, especially in inclusive settings. It will also benefit mainstream teachers by enhancing their teaching, as well as provide opportunities for special education students to receive better education.

**Keywords:** inclusive, services, confidence, challenges, education policy

## **Introduction**

Special education is a program in which students with special needs receive formal education, more specifically, whether academic or non-academic. In addition, according to the provisions of the Education Act 1996 and Regulations of Education (Special Education) Act 1997 Part 1, item 2 (b) and (c), special education is becoming more comprehensive, in which inclusive program was introduced. Students with special needs can participate in mainstream education, where they will be given the opportunity to study with other students. It requires the cooperation and commitment among special education teachers and mainstream teachers.

In the implementation of inclusive, many factors affect its real implementation, such as service issues, teacher's confidence, challenges, and education policy. These factors need to be revised and given special attention in implementing inclusive program. According to Sheehy et al. (2005), there are many factors involved in implementing inclusive program. The factors affected the attitudes of teachers involved in handling students with special needs in inclusive classes. Mainstream teachers faced problems to give more focus and control learners, as well as to meet the expectation of students with special needs.

Respondents in this study were mainstream teachers throughout the country. This is in line with the launch of the government's mandate by the Ministry of Education (MOE) to improve the educational attainment and ensure the achievement of the best possible education for all students, including special education students (Interim Strategic Plan, 2012). Furthermore, the report of Early Education Development Plan 2013-2025 has been prepared. In the report, in Chapter 4 of Student's Learning, special education students are given the opportunity to participate in an inclusive program at a rate of 30% of their current populations by 2015. Through this study the aspects of understanding co-teaching teachers, teaching strategies, and issues will be emphasized on the implementation of joint teaching as one of the all-inclusive approaches.

### **Methodology Participants**

This study involved 97 teachers as the respondents in 4 targeted groups. Mainstream teachers in all states (n=14) were involved in this study and consisted of both men (n=61) and women (n=36). There are three levels of experience, and the levels are categorized based on 'themebased' practiced, which is the level of automatic grade promotion implemented in Malaysia (Level 1 (n=47), Level 2 (n=26), and Level 3 (n=24)). Races in Malaysia were also recorded in this study (Malay (n=43), Chinese (n=28), Indian (n=25), and Others (n=1)). Respondents have also been categorized by the level of 'in-service training attended', meaning that they have attended special courses of special education (Level of attendees (n=10) and Level of non-attendees (n=87)).

### **Instruments**

This study was conducted using quantitative technique, in which all parts of the instrument used consisted of a check list with questionnaires, and participants answered the questionnaires using a scale of five levels; SD (Strongly disagree), D (Disagree), N (Neither agree nor disagree), A (Agree), and SA (Strongly agree). The construct of every item was critically analyzed in the literature and tested among UTM postgraduate students. The instrument has been developed specifically for this study by the authors and tested in several pilot studies. For reliable evidence of these measures, the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients were reported, and these coefficients varied between  $\alpha = 0.805$  for the whole instrument. The instruments established for the entire instrument has five sections. These are Section A (Ethnography information), Section B (Services), Section C (Confidence), Section D (Challenges), and Section E (Policy). The validity of construct has been checked by two specialists of curriculum and a committee of the Special Education in Special Education Department of Malaysia.

## **Procedure**

In this study, the authors were permitted to conduct the research in schools with the formal permission from the Ministry of Education, State Department of Education, and District Office of Education. All participants were returned the questionnaire instrument after a week through an online application (Facebook).

## **Data Analysis**

The scores of the instrument were analyzed using SPSS Version 20.0. This study was successful in obtaining information on a number of factors that affected the implementation of inclusive, such as services, confidence, challenges, and policy. For this study, the percentage has been used to represent the data.

## **Result and Discussion**

Based on the results of the study, there is some information that indicates low scores and high scores. This means that there are a number of teachers involved who provide necessary feedback. 97 respondents responded to this survey. Respondent's information is divided into three sections, namely sex, race, and experience. A total of 61 men (62.9%) participated in the study, compared to 36 women (37.1%). There are four groups of people who responded to the questionnaires; the Malay with 43 people (44.3%), the Chinese with 28 (28.9%), the Indian with 25 (25.9%), while the remaining was only 1.0%. In this study, experience is considered in three parts, namely at the level of 1-5 years with a total of 47 (48.5%) responded to the survey questions. Meanwhile, the group with 6-10 years of experience consisted of 26 respondents (26.8%), and the group for 11 years of experience and above consisted of 24 persons (24.7%).

The information has been processed in a descriptive form. 24 questions have been prepared, and 97 respondents gave their feedback. For the first question, there was a high frequency with respect to teachers' belief that special education students can learn, in which 30.9% strongly agreed. This shows that although there is a lack of training among teachers, in which 38 respondents (49.5%) had never attended a course for teaching special education students, but they believe that special education students are able to learn even when they are placed in mainstream classes. High disappointment was recorded for Question 3, in which 38.1% of the teachers were frustrated with mainstream special education students' achievement. This is because the teachers have not been exposed to effective delivery techniques to teach special education students.

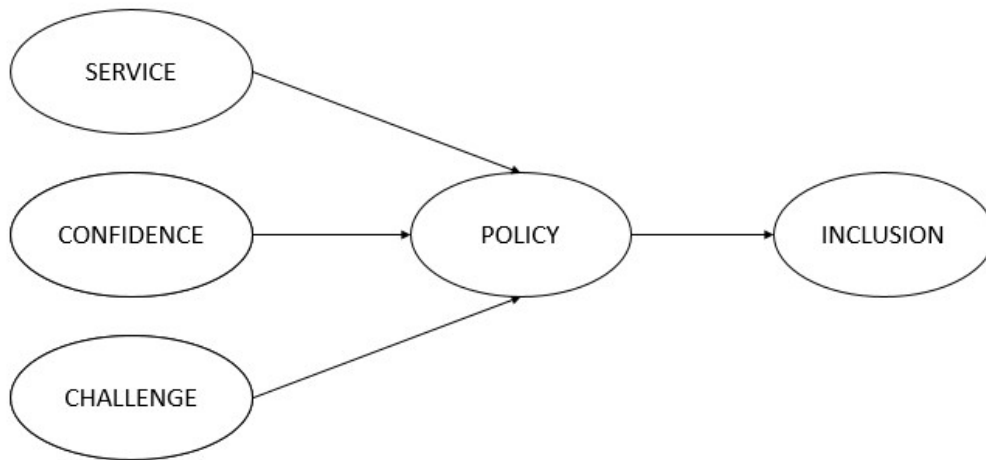
In terms of trust in the ability of special education students to compete in mainstream classes, there was high percentage, with 37.1% strongly agreed with the statement. This can be noted in Question 4, in which 36 teachers felt excited by the presence of special education students in mainstream classes. The information provided in Question 5 shows that there were teachers who said that they believed in the special education students' academic abilities even if they do not have the same academic level compared to their peers without any disability, with 40 people (41.2%). Teachers also believed that by following an inclusive program, the special education students' academic achievement will increase the confidence of 26 teachers

(26.8%). Questions 7 and 8 involve the level of physical disability and cognitive students (learning disabilities). The score of those who less agreed was given by 24.7% for students who have physical disabilities and 44% for students with learning difficulties. However, for students who show simple behavior, the score of teachers showed a high percentage of 49.5%, in which teachers strongly agreed to teach this student group. It is also supported by the finding in Question 11, as 37.1% of the teachers indicated that students will achieve good academic standards if attention is given to the social environment, and 43 teachers (44.3%) stated that if special education students will benefit from a better social environment, whereas 1% of the teachers disagreed with the statement.

If a special education student is said to be difficult to compete, there is a very positive score of respondents who rejected this assumption (29.9%). They stated that the self-esteem of students would be better if they are in a group together with mainstream students. 27 teachers strongly agreed and 21 teachers agreed with this. The trend of special education students disrupting the normal flow of students in the class did not show a good score, with 21.6% teachers strongly disagreed, whereas 28.9% teachers strongly agreed. This statement clearly rejects the assumption that special education students do not interfere with mainstream students who are studying with them.

Questions 16-20 revolve around the strategy of teachers receiving special education students who attend inclusive. A high percentage of teachers in the mainstream (53%) said they did not need special training to teach special education students. A large percentage of teachers (48.5%) strongly agreed to perform physical change if special education students in their classes require changes. This clearly demonstrates the commitment of mainstream teachers even if they are not trained to teach the students in this group. For the availability of teachers in preparing teaching aids, 42 (43.3%) teachers strongly agreed and 30 (30.9%) teachers agreed to provide teaching aids if a special education student needs it. Teachers also noted that mainstream inclusive learning always showed improvement, and 47 (48.5%) teachers strongly agreed. This fact clearly shows that if the students are included in the mainstreams, they will have increased academic performance and social life.

In public examinations such as Examination of Secondary Lower (*Peperiksaan Menengah Rendah*, PMR) and Certificate of Examination Malaysia (*Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia*, SPM), there are some issues regarding the achievement of special education students who said to disrupt the school session. Respondents involved in this study showed more positive attitudes, as they provided good feedback with 34 (35.1%) strongly agreed and 33 (34.0%) of agreed with the statement that they are aware of the responsibility to teach special education students. The following inclusive mainstream classes rely upon the ability of each student. This is because they know and understand about the rights of all students to sit for public examination, with 38.1% and 27.8% of them strongly agreed and agreed, respectively. 41 teachers (42.3%) strongly agreed with the concerns that students' examination performance would not affect school performance. They also understand the diversity of students who need educational opportunities to continue and follow an inclusive program, with the support of 34 (35.1%) teachers who agreed with the need. Diagram 1.0 below shows the relationship of the four factors in this study.



*Figure 1 - Relationship of service, confidence, challenge and policy to successful of inclusion*

According to data from the survey, it shows the highest percentage for three factors; service, confidence, and challenge. From the analysis, it can be concluded that these three factors strongly supported the fourth factor; policy. The factor of policy really needs to be supported to achieve the implementation of inclusion in this study. Hence, from Diagram 1.0, the authors can conclude that service, confidence, and challenge are really good backups to our education policy in order to achieve a good program implementation.

From the data obtained, it can be noted that teacher's view on special education students changes from time to time. This matter has been discussed by Lindsay (2007) that the change in special education through inclusive program will be evident when teachers started receiving students' presence in mainstream classes. According to a study conducted by Ainscow (2008), this requires strong collaboration among teachers of special education and mainstream teachers in describing the needs and objectives of inclusive implemented. The data obtained in this study also showed that a large group of teachers involved in the inclusive are willing to teach and have the confidence in the ability of special education students.

As discussed by Hicks & Thomas (2009), the statement regarding the readiness of teachers has something in common and is proven by the findings in this study. It refers to the factors that support the students who sat for examination were not given difficult question. Although the public education system conducts examination, but students have the right to study and sit for the examination. The discussion by Lipsky & Gardner (2008) on the rights of special education students also supports these findings. Studies by Kezar (2006) and Smith et al. (2008) have shown that teachers need special education students in mainstream classes, and they represent an adjustment to pedagogical method, which can help mainstream teachers to adjust and diversify their teaching techniques, as well as the cooperation of special education teachers. Indirectly, all these efforts will allow the proper authorities to know that there are

previous studies that support the findings of this study regarding the need for teachers to acquire skills through courses in order to improve cooperation in implementing inclusive.

The results of this study also indicated that there should be an updated relationship to facilitate communication between teachers, student, and mainstream teachers. Glatthorn et al. (2006) and Glickman et al. (1998) linked the implementation of inclusive relationship between special education and mainstream by specifying how this concept can be transformed, and it is supported by Klingner & Vaughn, 2002. However, it was found that it was somewhat tenuous because according to them, the concept in special education should be brought into the mainstream because the processes of absorption and assimilation will occur only if special education is defined in terms of responsibility, professional, and organizational development.

According to Kezar (2006) and Kerlinger (2006), they found that the majority of teachers agreed with the concept of inclusive. This suggests that inclusive education is practical. In the study, they found that teachers' interests on the implementation of inclusive will have an impact on the support needed, and this will enable teachers to successfully carry out inclusive. The support needed by teachers is something as simple as the time spent to produce learning materials, as well as the need for effective management of inventories in order to make preparations for students with diverse needs.

There is also the implementation of inclusive that discusses the findings of a study on teacher's perception and its impact on the inclusive, especially for students with learning difficulties (Treffinger et al. (2008). In a study conducted, 13 out of 30 students were placed in classes inclusive of students with learning disabilities. The approach implemented is coHaugh, in which mainstream teachers and special education teachers teach together in the same class. All students in this class are given exposure to the curriculum to suit their age.

The results of the study found that almost all special education students in the class showed changes in terms of academic achievement and personality. In terms of academic achievement, there is a very positive increase in self-confidence, which is also higher than students not included in the study (Friend, 2007; Kudlacek et al., 2009). For mainstream students, they showed high motivation to compete than character formation, which is more sensitive to special education students, and it is expected to be sustained to form a caring society in the future. Parents of both groups of students are very satisfied with the implementation of inclusive and support these efforts.

Inclusive education approach involves teaching children with disabilities in special schools and mainstream classes are conducted by teachers (Golder et al. 2005). According to them, this approach will provide the opportunity for students to interact and engage in learning activities, and they will give all students the opportunity to experience the spirit of the school, which will become more effective and meaningful.

## **Conclusion**

From this study, it can be concluded that an approach to teaching and learning that should be implemented to meet the needs of special education students is to undertake inclusive.

Teacher's knowledge, readiness, and teaching techniques should be emphasized so that the implementation of this inclusive can be carried out systematically and can achieve an inclusive, especially in terms of the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers who are responsible for ensuring practicable inclusive. Students should be given special attention, as well as the needs of teachers that should be given priority in order to ensure that both sides of teachers and students will receive the benefit from the program. This approach will provide many benefits to students and to the general public. The sensitivity of the society is needed in order to ensure that people with disabilities also have a place in the society, and this opportunity should be given directly to them to ensure compliance with the requirements for the future life of the students. Based on the implementation of inclusive schools and the way certain parties carry out their responsibilities, it can reduce the dependence of special education students to get access to their teachers and friends. Hopefully, with this inclusive, it will provide opportunities and self-reliance for the students and simultaneously reduce the label of stigmatism towards special education students over the years.

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