

LEVEL OF KNOWLEDGE OF PRIMARY MAINSTREAM AND SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATORS IN SUPPORTING INCLUSIVE TRANSITIONS

Joanna Mah Tjun Lyn, Loh Sau Cheong, Noor Aishah Rosli

Department of Educational Psychology and Counseling,
Faculty of Education, University of Malaya, Malaysia
joannamah90@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37134/bitara.vol13.2.1.2020>

Received: 01 July 2019; **Accepted:** 30 August 2020; **Published:** 17 September 2020

Cite this paper (APA): Lyn, J. M. T., Loh, S. C., & Rosli, N. A. (2020). Level of knowledge of primary mainstream and special needs educators in supporting inclusive transitions. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bitara UPSI*, 13(2), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.37134/bitara.vol13.2.1.2020>

ABSTRACT

This study examines the level of knowledge of mainstream educators and special needs educators towards supporting inclusive transitions into Malaysian primary schools. The study identifies three stages important towards inclusive transitions, namely Pre-Transition Stage, During Transition Stage, and Post-Transition Stage. The study was conducted on both mainstream and special needs educators in primary schools (n = 608) across West and East Malaysia and a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was constructed as well as disseminated to the educators. Findings were aggregated, scored, grouped and analysed in percentages according to low, moderate and high levels of knowledge. The results of the analysis demonstrated that there is a general lack of knowledge in both mainstream and special needs educators, and this is indicative that both groups of educators are clearly not proficient, skilled or experienced enough to support transitions into mainstream classrooms. In addition, the analysis demonstrated, in all three levels of transition, that the special needs educators were marginally more knowledgeable in their roles and responsibilities in supporting students with special needs than the mainstream educators, as the special needs educators demonstrated moderate levels of knowledge respectively in the Post-transition stage (47.85), During transition stage (56.44) and Post-transition stage (74.23) while mainstream educators reportedly considered themselves as having low levels of knowledge throughout the entire inclusive transition in all 3 stages (55.32, 70.21, 50.35). The findings provide us with evidence needed to support previous claims by professionals for the need of more trained professionals and shed some light on possible relations between the limited readiness of the Malaysian education system in resources towards embracing inclusion, and how the lack of training coupled with underwhelming sense of proficient knowledge may possibly correlate to the attitudes of the educators in inclusion.

Keywords: Inclusion, Transitional Support, Roles, Responsibilities, Mainstream Educators, Special Needs Educators

INTRODUCTION

Inclusive education enables all students including students with special needs to obtain equal access to learning alongside their typical peers without being segregated based on their disabilities; and one of the ways to provide equal access to education is to enable learning alongside their typical peers in a mainstream classroom (UNICEF, 2014). In Malaysia, an inclusive classroom, refers to any classroom that acquires an accommodating infrastructure, an effective support unit, and successful collaborative partnerships between various agencies (MoE, 2013). The implementation of inclusive classrooms in Malaysia is described as one that is still more 'functional integration rather than full inclusion' (MoE, 2015). Students who are being transitioned into inclusive classrooms are being assigned in two types of inclusion which are (1) partial inclusion – a student is moved from a segregated and self-contained classroom to an inclusive classroom for certain subjects only, and (2) full inclusion – a student is fully placed in an inclusive classroom (MoE, 2013). However, this practice has been the subject of special

education debates in Malaysia due to the inconsistencies in the implementation of inclusive practices - which range from discourses in the legal definitions of the term “inclusion”, to more practical issues such as educators’ competency of professional skills, access to trainings, resources, logistics, and placements (eg.: Zalizan Mohd. Jelas, 2010; Mohd Kamel Idris, 2011; Lee & Low, 2014; Mohd Zuri Ghani, Aznan Che Ahmad & Suzana Ibrahim, 2014; Sukumaran, Loveridge & Green, 2014).

In assuring effective inclusive practices, the educators and their roles are one of the most important elements in the equation of inclusive support. Researchers have said that the proficiency and knowledge level of the educators on their roles and responsibilities towards inclusion are often one of the key indicators to how effective inclusive support services can be in the country (Bailey, Nomanbhoy & Tubpun, 2015; Sukumaran, Loveridge & Green, 2014; Khairul Farhah Khairuddin, Dally & Foggett, 2016). Yet, there are still numerous gaps towards ensuring that our educators are skilled, trained and competent in inclusive education. The role of the educator proves essential towards enhancing the well-being of students with special needs and is paramount to producing educators who are proficient with their teaching and learning, as well as developing positive attitudes towards their tasks and job responsibilities (Lignugaris/ Kraft, Sindelar, McCray & Kimerling, 2014; Dukes, Darling & Gallagher, 2016). Thus, this means that the measures taken in preparing the educators for their inclusive roles and responsibilities are of utmost importance towards fostering effective and supportive transitions into mainstream classrooms. This in turn leads to the question of “what is the current level of knowledge of the educators are on their responsibilities towards supporting inclusive transitions?”

Statistics published by the Malaysian Ministry of Education estimates that approximately 52.86% of students with special needs are currently enrolled in the inclusive program in Malaysian primary schools (MoE, 2020). This percentage of students being enrolled into inclusive classrooms has steadily been arising from a mere 9.60% in year 2013 and is projected to reach up to 75% by the year 2025 (MoE, 2018). This means that there are at least 24, 985 students at present who have or are currently experiencing some form of transitions into inclusive classrooms in their typical schooling day across Malaysia primary schools (MoE, 2020). These statistics clearly show that the group of inclusive students in need of transitional support are growing rapidly, and it is impossible to ignore the need for skilled professionals to support the increasingly apparent transitional needs of these students in mainstream education.

However, there is proven to be little formal guidelines in special education available to supplement the educators’ roles and responsibilities in supporting the growing transitional needs of these students. To date, there is little legislations and stipulated policies that addresses the transition planning and inclusive services for students with special needs (Melissa Ng Lee Yen Abdullah, See, Tan, Rosly Othman & Ahmad Fairuz Omar, 2012), mistranslation of inclusive policies, as well as the rhetoric on their roles within transition and inclusion (Muhamad Nadhir Abdul Nasir & Alfa Nur Aini Erman Efendi, 2016). Despite the advent of the preliminary inclusive guideline (*Garis Panduan Program Pendidikan Inklusif Murid Berkeperluan Khas 2013*), the guideline does little to provide sufficient explanations on their roles and responsibilities towards supporting inclusion and the inclusive transition (Aliza Alias, 2014). The guideline gives brief planning philosophies, practices and programs in place at the moment (Aliza Alias, 2014) and only provides scanty statements on the roles and responsibilities of educators in teaching and learning for students with special needs during the inclusive transition process. There is little offered to equip, train, guide, and inform educators both per-service and in-service to address the skills and knowledge needed to support inclusive transitions (Sukumaran, Loveridge & Green, 2014).

For educational professionals in the field of inclusion, inclusion would mean that they are required to increase their knowledge, and be more knowledgeable or well informed with a variety of skills to understand the diversity of special needs and must be professionally capable to support multiple range of disabilities (Sukumaran, Loveridge & Green, 2014) which range from visual impairments, hearing impairments, speech disorder, physical impairments, to learning disabilities in Malaysia (MoE, 2015). Despite a drastic increase in enrolment over the years, reports are showing a significant need for more specifically trained educators in the area of inclusive education, specifically in mainstream classrooms, to address the growing needs of this group of students – which may possibly be indicators or potential low levels of knowledge among the educators. There have also been little reports of standardised trainings to inform educators on identifying students with special needs, individualising

instructions, and basic behavioural management skills (Khairul Farhah Khairuddin, Dally & Foggett, 2016).

In Malaysia, literature showed that major shifts to the role of the educators are also evident with the introduction of new instructional methods, curriculums, and assessments (Rouse, 2008). High quality inclusion practices operate within a structure where mainstream and special needs educators have positive attitudes towards their role and are clear regarding their distinctive job responsibilities (Borrill, Carletta, Carla, Dawson, Garrod, Rees, Richards, Shapiro & West, 2001). The lack of proper understandings of inclusion has made inclusive transitions complex and demanding, surrounded by multifaceted roles and responsibilities (Bailey, Nomanbhoy & Tubpun, 2015; Sukumaran, Loveridge & Green, 2014; Farhah Khairuddin, Dally & Foggett, 2016) and educators are expected to perform roles and responsibilities that are beyond their competencies and capability.

Educators' knowledge of inclusive support is an important feature of how successful transition practices in inclusion can be implemented. Their attitudes about transitions and inclusion, according to Manisah Mohd. Ali, Ramlee Mustapha & Zalizan Mohd. Jelas (2006), can be important indicators and give measure to how proficient and knowledgeable the educators are on their inclusive roles. Local studies in the recent years have yielded both positive and negative attitudes. Previous studies demonstrated that despite the apparent benefits of inclusive practices and the important consequences of teaching attitudes towards inclusive transitions, a review of literature has shown that Malaysian educators are filled with feelings of doubt, vulnerability, uncertainty and apprehension to their instructional skills in special education (Manisah Mohd. Ali, Ramlee Mustapha & Zalizan Mohd. Jelas (2006), less conclusive in the years that followed as studies started to demonstrate mediocre and less positive attitudes in studies by Mohd Zuri Ghani, Aznan Che Ahmad & Suzana Ibrahim (2014) while others showed positive attitudes towards the benefits of inclusion and the implementation of transition services (Khairul Farhah Khairuddin, Dally & Foggett, 2016). If what the researchers correlate are substantial, then the mixed attitudes of the educators demonstrated in previous research could indicate a mixed, varied, and messy array of knowledge levels among the educators.

This study holds that comprehending the current level of knowledge of the educators is critical to determine the effectiveness of inclusive transition support services in Malaysia. This is important to identify gaps in this knowledge base and literature. According to Scottish Executive (2003), identifying current levels of knowledge will provide insight into the needs and developing further supports. There is ill-informed knowledge on how much the educators known about their roles and responsibilities for inclusive transitions (Zalizan Mohd. Jelas, 2010; Lee & Low, 2014; Sukumaran, Loveridge & Green, 2014; Bailey, Nomanbhoy & Tubpun, 2015; Khairul Farhah Khairuddin, Dally & Foggett, 2016). Thus, the interval between the educators' current levels of knowledge on their roles and responsibilities and what is desired or expected of them in supporting inclusive transitions may differ. With that, the comparison and gaps in knowledge between mainstream educators and special needs educators are still questionable.

OBJECTIVE

This study aims to explore and examine the level of knowledge of Malaysian primary school educators and the comparison of knowledge between mainstream and special needs educators towards supporting transitions of students with special needs into inclusive classrooms in three different stages: 1) Prior to transition, 2) During transitions, and 3) post-transitions.

METHODOLOGY

The data was collected through the quantitative survey research design. Structured questionnaires were utilised to gather findings on the level of knowledge of mainstream and special needs educators' roles and responsibilities towards supporting inclusive transitions. Respondents were selected using the multistage cluster sampling method. Samples were first divided according to locality zones (Northern, Central, Southern, Eastern Zones, East Malaysia). Within each zone, 1 state was selected through simple

random sampling to represent the targeted population from each zone. All mainstream and special needs educators within the schools with inclusive programs were invited to participate in this study. The demographic backgrounds of the educators are illustrated in table 1 below.

Table 1
Demographics of educators (N=608)

| Demographic Factor | N | % |
|--|-----|-------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 96 | 15.79 |
| Female | 512 | 84.21 |
| Age | | |
| 21 – 30 years | 224 | 36.84 |
| 31 – 40 years | 288 | 47.37 |
| 41 – 50 years | 96 | 15.79 |
| 50 years and above | - | - |
| Race | | |
| Malay | 358 | 58.88 |
| Chinese | 112 | 18.42 |
| Indian | 128 | 21.05 |
| Non-Malay Bumiputera | 10 | 1.64 |
| Religion | | |
| Islam | 244 | 40.13 |
| Christian | 62 | 10.20 |
| Buddhist | 116 | 19.08 |
| Hindu | 186 | 30.59 |
| Others | - | - |
| Location | | |
| Johor | 184 | 30.26 |
| Pahang | 46 | 7.57 |
| Penang | 124 | 20.39 |
| Sarawak | 24 | 3.95 |
| WP Kuala Lumpur | 230 | 37.83 |
| Highest Education Level | | |
| Diploma | 24 | 3.95 |
| Degree | 560 | 92.11 |
| Masters | 24 | 3.95 |
| Teaching Specialisation | | |
| Mainstream Educator | 282 | 46.38 |
| Special Needs Educator | 326 | 53.62 |
| Year of Experience in Inclusion | | |
| 0 – 5 years | 390 | 64.14 |
| 6 – 10 years | 194 | 31.91 |
| 11 – 15 years | 24 | 3.95 |
| Specialised Training in Inclusion | | |
| Yes | 250 | 41.12 |
| No | 358 | 58.88 |

608 educators participated in the survey questionnaire. The participants of the survey were mainstream educators (n=282) and special needs educators (n=326). The majority of the respondents were female (512 out of 608), between the ages of 20 to 40 years old (512 out of 608) and had between 1 to 5 years of experience dealing with inclusion (390 out of 608). 30.26% of the educators were from Johor, 7.57% from Pahang, 20.39% from Penang, 3.95% from Sarawak and 37.83% of the educators were from WP

Kuala Lumpur. The demographic variables were not collected to as predictors of differences, but necessary information as a representative sample of the target population for generalisation purposes.

During the data collection session, the respondents were required to fill in a structured 5-point Likert scale questionnaire that was disseminated via the chosen state schools to answer two research questions: 1) what are the level of knowledge of mainstream educators in their roles and responsibilities towards supporting the pre-transition, during transition, and post-transition process in Malaysian primary inclusive classrooms? and 2) what are the level of knowledge of special needs educators in their roles and responsibilities towards supporting the pre-transition, during transition, and post-transition process in Malaysian primary inclusive classrooms? With reference to a Danielson's Framework for Teaching (2013), a questionnaire was constructed, which comprised of a 5 point Likert-scale questionnaire on the level of knowledge of the educators towards the three stages of transitions. To ensure the appropriateness, validity, and reliability of the items constructed, the questionnaire underwent a pilot test using an exploratory factor analysis (EFA), Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis, and content validity using a panel of "experts" in inclusion, special education, and disability education. Cronbach's alpha was analysed using SPSS. All four domains as shown in table 3.6 demonstrated high levels of Cronbach's alpha value above .88. Table 2 illustrated the computed Cronbach's alpha from the pilot study.

Table 2
Summary of Cronbach's alpha results according to domains (N = 33)

| Domains | Pre-transition | During transition | Post-transition |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Planning and Preparation | .93 | .89 | .91 |
| Classroom Environment | .93 | .91 | .92 |
| Instructions | .95 | .88 | .88 |
| Professional Duties | .91 | .89 | .90 |

Findings from the data collection was then sorted and analysed using Excel. Utilising descriptive statistics, responses from Likert scale were aggregated, scored and grouped in percentages according to low, moderate and high levels of knowledge. Levels of low, medium and high knowledge were based on Thavanah, Harun-or-Rashid, Kasuya and Sakamoto (2013) in which "Low" levels of knowledge from the respondents were scored as $\leq 50\%$, while "medium" levels of knowledge were those that scored between 51% to 74%, and "high" levels of knowledge were those who were scored as $\geq 75\%$.

FINDINGS

Through the Likert scale questionnaire, responses on 73 items were gathered, resulting in "low", "moderate" and "high" levels of knowledge on the Pre-transition Stage, During Transition Stage, and Post-transition Stage, as shown in Table 3. More educators rated low levels of knowledge (n=226; 37.17%) in the Pre-transition Stage and During Transition Stage (n=298; 49.01%) while a majority of educators rated moderate levels of knowledge on their roles and responsibilities in the Post-Transition Stage (n=370; 60.86%). In detailed, a great percentage of mainstream educators reported low levels of knowledge in supporting the Pre-transition Stage (55.32%), During Transition Stage (70.21%), and Post-Transition Stage (50.35%). Comparatively, the special needs educators demonstrated greater levels of knowledge characterised by moderate knowledge levels in the Pre-transition phase (47.85%), During Transition phase (56.44%), and Post-Transition Stage (74.23%).

Table 3
Mainstream and special needs educator's level of knowledge in the pre-transition stage (N=608).

| | Low Levels of Knowledge N (%) | Moderate Levels of Knowledge N (%) | High Levels of Knowledge N (%) |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Pre-transition Stage | 226 (37.17) | 212 (34.87) | 170 (27.96) |
| Mainstream Educators | 156 (55.32) | 56 (19.86) | 70 (24.82) |
| Special Needs Educators | 70 (21.47) | 156 (47.85) | 100 (30.67) |

While there are moderate levels of knowledge on the roles and responsibilities of educators in supporting inclusive transitions reported, the above findings unquestionably indicate that both groups of educators are evidently not proficient, skilled or experienced enough in their roles towards supporting transitions into mainstream classrooms. With the absence of high levels of knowledge within the current study, these findings demonstrate that the educators are nowhere near experts in this field of inclusion.

In specific, in the Pre-transition stage, mainstream educators reported lower understandings of the necessary school readiness skills, expert knowledge on a student's abilities, disabilities, and special needs, and inferior understandings of classroom and behaviour management. On the contrary, a larger majority of the special needs educators disclosed being more familiar with developing transition support plans, individualising the physical classroom arrangements and clearer understanding of acceptable and unacceptable behaviours in the classroom.

Table 4
Mainstream and special needs educator's level of knowledge in the during transition stage (N=608).

| | Low Levels of Knowledge N (%) | Moderate Levels of Knowledge N (%) | High Levels of Knowledge N (%) |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| During transition Stage | 298 (49.01) | 254 (41.78) | 56 (9.21) |
| Mainstream Educators | 198 (70.21) | 70 (24.82) | 14 (4.96) |
| Special Needs Educators | 100 (30.67) | 184 (56.44) | 42 (12.88) |

Meanwhile, findings from the During transition stage in table 4 indicated that the mainstream educators struggled significantly in the area of individualisation and differentiating educational support for students with special needs. The mainstream educators indicated that they were less familiar with individualising assessments and examinations according to the specialised difficulties of the students as well as had difficulties with adjusting learning to meet the needs of students, and breaking down instructions into smaller, more manageable parts. On the contrary, the special needs educators were more well-informed about their roles and responsibilities in individualisation in classroom management and reported being more abled in providing clear predictability of work tasks in the classroom.

Table 5
Mainstream and special needs educator's level of knowledge in the post-transition stage (N=608).

| Post-transition Stage | 212 (34.87) | 370 (60.86) | 26 (4.28) |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Mainstream Educators | 142 (50.35) | 128 (45.39) | 12 (4.26) |
| Special Needs Educators | 70 (21.47) | 242 (74.23) | 14 (4.29) |

In the post-transition stage, findings similarly indicated that the mainstream educators once again showed significantly trivial level of understanding in other areas of planning and preparation and instructions to develop independent learning skills. On the other hand, the special needs educators were more knowledgeable with providing guidance upon task completion, and better fluency at collaborations with family members and other professionals.

DISCUSSION

Findings of this study demonstrated that special needs educators were marginally more knowledgeable in their roles and responsibilities in supporting students with special needs into inclusive classrooms as compared to their counterpart mainstream educators. In all three levels of transition, special needs educators demonstrated moderate levels of knowledge while mainstream educators reportedly considered themselves as having low levels of knowledge throughout the entire inclusive transition. As both mainstream educators and special needs educators portray different job roles and responsibilities, this may shed some light into the significant knowledge gaps between the mainstream educators and special needs educators as potentially a result of differences in their expected roles and responsibilities.

According to the Ministry of Education (2013), special needs educators are trained experts that have acquired specialised training in providing individualised and specialised instructions to meet the educational needs of students with special needs. This is vastly contrasting to the role of mainstream educators whose main tasks are to provide instructions in an inclusive classroom and are expected to plan and coordinate curriculum for all students (MoE, 2013). Educators, like other professionals, operate best within their given job roles and responsibilities. As the role of supporting students with special needs traditionally lie with special needs educators, it can be expected that mainstream educators report lower understandings on supporting students with special needs that may be beyond their expert specialisation (Tengku Sarina Aini Tengku Kasim, 2014). Conventionally, mainstream educators were never involved in special education in Malaysia until recently. The classic model of special education has largely confined the special needs educator's role to providing individualised instructions for students with special needs in their segregated classrooms; supporting and providing aid to their difficulties; providing instructions for special needs, working together collaboratively with other professionals, managing behaviours, coordinating support services and advocating for the needs of students with special needs (Lee & Low, 2014). Meanwhile, with inclusive education now pushing the boundaries of teaching and learning, it now challenges mainstream educators to depart from the traditional ways of teaching towards more diverse, rigorous, personalised, collaborative and flexible (Amin, 2016).

According to Maciver, Hunter, Adamson, Grayson, Forsyth & McLeod (2018), inclusive transitions require drastic changes in the roles and responsibilities of all educators but we have little to provide informational support on the mainstream and special needs educators' roles and responsibilities with regards to transitional support (Strogilos & Stefanidis, 2015). While the mainstream educator

needs to pay attention to the student undergoing transition, they must also be careful to balance the high demands of other students in their classroom. Adding to that, an average classroom size in Malaysian inclusive schools is large and can amount up to 35 students in one classroom. Mainstream educators are getting more than they bargain for as a managing a class of 35 'typical' students can already pose a great challenge amongst them (MoE, 2013). With the addition of students with special needs in their classrooms, classroom management and teaching become a relatively daunting and unnerving idea for educators, particularly when they are not trained and prepared for the task. Hence, it is no question that mainstream educators reported lower levels of knowledge in this study towards supporting the role of inclusive transitions which may be overwhelming to their current roles.

These lacks expert knowledge provide necessary evidence needed to support previous claims by professionals for the lack of it, need and availability of more specialist trained professionals to assist with the transition period (Loh & Sharifah Zainiyah Syed Yahya, 2013; Bailey, Nomanbhoy & Tubpun, 2015; Muhamad Nadhir Abdul Nasir & Alfa Nur Aini Erman Efendi; 2016). These gaps in expert knowledge also furnish necessary evidence to draw the missing gap in previous literature who drew correlations between poor performance outcomes and a lack of appropriate educator training (Muhamad Nadhir Abdul Nasir & Alfa Nur Aini Erman Efendi, 2016; Toran, Westover, Sazlina Kamaralzaman, Suziyani Mohamed & Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin, 2016).

The lack of specialist knowledge by educators who are considered "experts" in education evidentially portray significant information gaps between the educators' expected teaching role and their proficiency level in performing such roles in inclusion. According to Zalizan Mohd. Jelas (2010), Malaysian educators lacked, for many years, skills to address the diversity within students with special needs and lack an integrated knowledge between what they are expected to perform within. As evidenced in the findings of this study, educators are still not equipped to address such challenges with inclusive transitions.

According to Konza (2008), the idea of inclusion to provide equal educational access to everyone regardless of their disabilities often includes restructuring the educational system, curriculum, facilities and resources in order for all schools and students to have access to individualised facilities and teaching materials. However, to do that, restructuring of educational systems practically take a lot of time, effort, facilities, resources, and funding (Muhamad Nadhir Abdul Nasir & Alfa Nur Aini Erman Efendi, 2016). With little to minimal readiness to embrace inclusion by the Ministry of Education at this point, it is possible the lack of available trainings is causing educators to feel increasingly under-equipped with proficiency.

With a lack of sufficient training, studies such as Bailey, Nomanbhoy & Tubpun, 2015) also boldly conclude that the lack of training coupled with underwhelming sense of proficient knowledge may possibly correlate to the attitudes of the educators. Working together with students with special needs demands a lot of motivation and passion in challenging conditions and many educators struggle between accommodating to their skills, teaching demands of special needs and maintaining the continuous motivation for these students. Acquiring dedicated and committed educators are challenging; and training educators to do so takes a lot of time, effort, resources, as well as expenses (Toran, Westover, Sazlina Kamaralzaman, Suziyani Mohamed & Mohd Hanafi Mohd Yasin, 2016); and educators' attitudes can pose a major limitation to transitions being successful in inclusion. Konza (2008) suggested that educators may not see themselves as acquiring the necessary skills to support students of varying needs and given the lack of desire to do so, places them with feelings of vulnerability and naturally, a reluctance to do so. Hence, the practical implementation of transitions is increasingly viewed in an unfavourable light with increasing resistance.

If low levels of knowledge of their roles are reported, a lack of understanding may possibly lead to a variety of conflicts, dissonance and personal disequilibrium. Findings have shown that educators who display a lack of job understanding find themselves in scenarios that exude alarming burn out symptoms of role conflicts (Mohd Zuri Ghani, Aznan Che Ahmad & Suzana Ibrahim, 2014; Chua, Saili & Sabil, 2018). The drastic shifts in their roles as educators and a lack of proper job understanding may have potentially given rise to detrimental work hazards such as job stress as well as emotional burn outs and evidenced that these occurrences are currently taking place where stress caused by dissonance, conflicting understandings of their roles and personal disequilibrium are leading a significant increase in emotional burn outs and lower attrition rates among educators in Malaysia (Mohd

Kamel Idris, 2011; Mohd Zuri Ghani, Aznan Che Ahmad & Suzana Ibrahim, 2014; Nurmazlina Mohd. Isa, Hardev Kaur & Rozalli Hashim, 2018).

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that there is a general lack of knowledge in mainstream educators and special needs educators, and this is indicative that both groups of educators are clearly not proficient, skilled or experienced enough to support transitions into mainstream classrooms. The findings of this study go on to demonstrate that mainstream educators show low levels of knowledge in general as compared to special needs educators. This has provided us with necessary evidence needed to support previous claims by professionals for the need for more trained professionals. Findings of this study also shed some light on possibly relations between the limited readiness of the Malaysian education system practically via time, effort, facilities, resources and funding towards embracing inclusion, and the lack of available trainings for educators. With a lack of sufficient training, the lack of training coupled with underwhelming sense of proficient knowledge may possibly correlate to the attitudes of the educators. For that reason, outcomes of this study is hoped for educators to be better able to prioritise workload and reduce the chance of work and role conflicts between mainstream and special needs educators. This will not only allow them to utilise their expertise to the fullest but sizable amount of teaching resources is lost accomplishing duplicates of roles and responsibilities. Positive transitions that is often brought about by supported transitions from families, schools and educators are significant to a student's continuity of learning and emotional well-being (Holmstrom, Olofsson, Asplund & Kristiansen, 2014) and ensuring better transition provision is more likely to result in fewer difficulties in adapting to an inclusive classroom environment (Aron & Loprest, 2012). Hence, further research and interventions should focus on extending equipping and increasing the educators' level of knowledge in order for positive and optimistic attitudes of inclusive education to remain high. Only then can effective inclusive education be one step closer to reaching efficiency.

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