Inclusive education: Equality and equity
(Teachers' views about inclusive education in Malaysia's primary schools)

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Abstract

The desire for inclusive education is recognised by many countries, but the practice is inconsistent because of the complexities and variability in implementation. Malaysia has committed to and embarked on the journey towards educational system reform. The pledge to provide quality and inclusive education is emphasised in the 2013-2025 Malaysia Education Blueprint. However, Malaysia's contexts, including its diverse ethnicity, language, culture, religion, education and school systems, have implications for the implementation and promotion of inclusive education. This study explores and brings to light teachers' significant yet overlooked views of inclusion and inclusive education at this important juncture of the country's phase. It aims to bring a better understanding of the promotion of inclusive education in Malaysia's primary schools, by focusing on the practitioners' views. The study adopts a qualitative approach that employs descriptive and exploratory methods. Participants are purposely sampled from five national primary schools: three schools with the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) and two schools without SEIP. They, 25 teachers (mainstream and special education) including the headteachers, are interviewed individually and 51 participated in eight focus group interviews. The findings are processed through a thematic, inductive approach using qualitative analysis software. This paper argues that teachers view inclusive education as a challenging concept. Such views are influenced by a range of factors such as socio-cultural attitudes towards disability, educational systems, inefficient utilisation of resources, insufficient facilities, and teachers' lack of knowledge and skills about special education and SEN. The findings will be of value to those responsible for planning and developing the policy and programmes regarding inclusive education, special education, and specifically educational systems in moving towards inclusive systems and schools.

Keywords: inclusive education; inclusion; equality; equity

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia highlights its commitment to inclusive education through the 'Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025' (MOE, 2012). The country's' Ministry of Education (MOE) has targeted that "75% of students with special needs enrolled in inclusive programmes by 2025" and "every teacher equipped with basic knowledge" (MOE, 2013b). The effort to improve the quality of provision for special education and the overall education for an inclusive Malaysia, is, in fact a continuous journey of the government. Since independence, the Ministry of Education has been driven to develop the best system. According to Othman, Mohamad, and Ilmuwan (2011), the challenge includes the different approaches and the continuous change in curricula. Other scholars, Nurul-Awanis, Hazlina, and Yoke-May (2011), contend that the Malaysian education system is guided by the National Education Philosophy (NEP). The 1988 NEP emphasises the importance of building the potential of individuals in a holistic manner (MOE, 2011) that accommodates the country's multi-ethnics, religious, linguistic, and cultural society (Al-Hudawi, Fong, Musah, & Tahir, 2014), with no specific reference to pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Also, the target stated in the Blueprint seems impressive, it invites many queries about the policy and its implementation (Rosmalily and Woollard, 2019). The

country's context including the education and school systems have implications in promoting and implementing inclusive education.

Malaysia's context

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multilingual country as the result of colonisation. Malaysia education system has taken on building racial unity, identity, equal opportunity, lifelong education, quality culture and international competitiveness. The MOE emphasises that the system focuses on developing pupils holistically, with a strong sense of national identity (MOE, 2013b). Nurul-Awanis et al. (2011) state that Malaysia puts ongoing effort via holistic and integrated education into human capital development for the twenty-first century to become a knowledge economy.

The MOE reviewed the education system and developed the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (MOE, 2013b) outlining 11 shifts to transform it to keep abreast of rising international standards. These involve system and student aspirations with clear performance benchmarks to assess reformation progress. There are five system aspirations: access, quality, equity, unity and efficiency. The student aspirations are: knowledge, bilingual proficiency, thinking skills, ethics and spirituality, leadership skills and national identity (MOE, 2012).

Primary school system

Malaysia provides preschool, primary, secondary, post-secondary, special education, religious teaching, private and technical education (MOE, 2012). Education is accessible from free multilingual public schools, private schools or through home schooling.The elements of access involve obtaining education at school and remaining to achieve a minimum level of schooling (MOE, 2013b). The Education Act 1996 stipulates the adoption of the standard national curriculum by all schools, including pre- and private schools, specifying the knowledge, skills and values to be acquired by pupils by the end of their schooling (MOE, 2011). Pupils sit the Primary School Achievement Test (*Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah*, UPSR) at the end of Year 6.

School types

There are 20 schooling options at primary and secondary levels (MOE, 2012). Chong (2016) mentions that although education has increased, it is scattered. To understand the situation, it is best to briefly discuss Malaysia's history of school development. With a 'divide and rule' policy during British colonialism, the vernacular system resulted in Malay, English, Chinese, Tamil and religious Madrasah types of school (Othman et al., 2011). Othman et al. (2011) further explain that the dualism system was influenced by the political, economic, sociocultural and religious factors. English schools, built by the Christian missionaries in urban areas, were accessible only to the elite; they were seen as a route to employment in the administrative service or British-owned commercial houses. The Chinese and Indian immigrants developed their own schools and curricula. Malay vernacular schools were later established to increase literacy and were limited to producing better farmers and fishermen.

In the 1950s, a national education system was proposed to develop unity among ethnicities, hence the framing of NEP (Ibrahim, 2007). Consequently, after Independence, the Chinese and Tamil vernacular schools were preserved and maintained mother-tongue and cultural schooling, providing that they used the national curriculum (Othman et al., 2011). English language-medium schools were gradually changed in the 1970s in accordance with the national language policy(2013a). In 1997, the English language-medium schools previously known as National primary schools, or Sekolah Rendah Kebangsaan, SRK, were changed to National schools and identified as 'SK'.

Currently, there are three main types of schools: National schools (Sekolah Kebangsaan, SK) and National-type schools (Sekolah Jenis Kebangsaan): either Chinese (SJKC) or Tamil (SJKT) (MOE, 2012). Each is defined by the medium of instruction. Malay is the primary language of instruction at SK, while Chinese is used at SJKC and Tamil at SJKT. These three types jointly account for almost 99% of total primary enrolments. Additionally, there are numerous school options for niche provision, such as religious and special education schools, private schools, international schools and independent

Chinese schools. Consequently, the many options have resulted in complex education system that has implications for a quality education and inclusive society.

Education and nation building

After more than half a century, the government still struggles to promote nation building and enhance national unity via a unified education system (Khader, 2012). The government challenges could be seen in the effort put which includes the development of the national curriculum in the face of pressing demands from various interest groups the government implements programmes such as the 'Vision School' (*Sekolah Wawasan*) and RIMUP. Vision School is a concept school, introduced in 1995, to cultivate racial unity through integrated schools of all three types – SK, SJKC and SJKT – together(MCM, 2018), whereby the three share the facilities yet maintain separate administrative bodies and teachers. The 2006 Student Integration Plan for Unity (*Rancangan Integrasi Murid Untuk Perpaduan*, RIMUP) was a reintroduction of a similar programme halted in 1985 (MOE, 2012). These are to promote inclusiveness and to foster interaction and understanding among pupils of the various schools.

Inclusive education

The concept of inclusive education is related to the field of special education and disability. There is a continuous debate which resulted in the evolution of the concept of inclusion (Opertti, Brady, & Duncombe, 2009). The significance of the historical context (Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011; Clough & Corbett, 2000; Doveston, 2005; Gibson, 2015) to its theoretical and empirical transformation (Opertti, Walker, & Zhang, 2014) is highlighted in the literature. Figure 1 shows the development of the concept although a non-linear process.
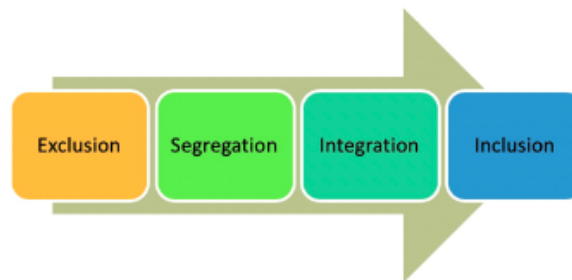

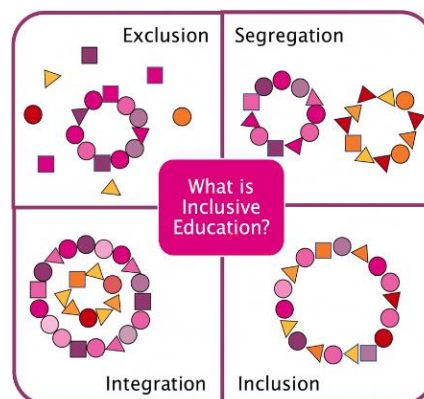**Figure 1**: *The development of inclusive education (Rosmalily & Woollard, 2019)*

Figure 2 *What is inclusive education?*

The pink hue colour represents the typical people, while the yellow hue symbolises the people with SEN. The different shapes and shades denote that each individual is unique. From the figure, **exclusion** could be seen as the denial to access the mainstream. It does not mean that only pupils with SEN but other pupils could also be at risk or vulnerable to exclusion and marginalisation, as highlighted by Messiou (2006). **Segregation** emphasises on SEN, focuses on deficits, and is supported by the medical model of disability (Clough & Corbett, 2000; Winter & O'Raw, 2010). **Integration** is the placement of pupils with SEN in existing mainstream education/schools, providing that they fulfil the necessary requirements (Farrell et al., 2004); is based on assimilation model (Winter and O'Raw, 2010). **Inclusion** however, means all pupils must be supported and facilitated to prosper (Farrell, 2000).

This wider perspective emphasises the vital aspects for inclusive education that is transforming the education system (Clough & Corbett, 2000) and highlights the inclusive practice (Ainscow, 2014; Farrell, 2000) at all levels in the system. Inclusion, thus, involves educational equality and equity system (Clough & Corbett, 2000), for all pupils regardless of their individual differences. According to Lincoln (2015), giving pupils with SEN the opportunity to achieve educational equality is a noble approach to inclusive education, yet the educational processes (availability of support, resources, access, survival and outcome) determine both educational equality and equity. Inclusion, therefore, is not just about placement but full participation of pupils (Jorgensen & Lambert, 2012) to experience all aspects of school life and obtain the quality education to fulfil their potential.

The recent Incheon Declaration for 'Education 2030: Towards inclusive and equitable quality' reaffirms the commitment to make the necessary changes in worldwide policies (UNESCO, 2015). This certainly requires inclusive values being demonstrated by all stakeholders. The process is certainly demanding, requiring changing ways of thinking (Ainscow, 2005), roles of organisational cultures and leadership (Ainscow & Sandill, 2010; Tony Booth & Ainscow, 2011); requiring inclusive values in policy formulation (T Booth & Ainscow, 2002; UNESCO, 2015); implementing practices at all levels (Ryan, 2011); and accepting the core pedagogical of transformability to enhance learning capacity of pupils of the co-agency and everybody (Hart & Drummond, 2014).

Inclusive education in Malaysia

Inclusive education was introduced by the Education Act 1996 in an extension of education provision for children with special needs (Jelas & Mohd Ali, 2014). It is a continuation of the opportunity for pupils with educational needs to be educated alongside mainstream pupils, apart from the provision of special education. However, the amended Education Act 1996 (1998) did not explicitly state the inclusion of children with disabilities.

Inclusive education is defined by the Ministry as 'mainstream schools that integrate one to five pupils with special needs into mainstream classes' (MOE, 2013b, p. 4-17). There are two approaches taken by the inclusive education programme involving pupils with SEN in SEIPs (MOE, 2016): the first is 'full inclusion', whereby pupils with SEN learn full time with mainstream pupils in all subjects, either based on the national curriculum or its modified version, with or without support services. The second is 'partial inclusion', in which pupils with SEN learn certain academic subjects or are involved in co-academic or co-curricular activities alongside mainstream pupils, also referred to as a 'pull-out' programme. Participation in co-academic and co-curricular activities is based on the pupils' potential, talent and ability. There are criteria for pupils' selection, their placement and eligibility to sit a national examination, as summarised in Figure 3.
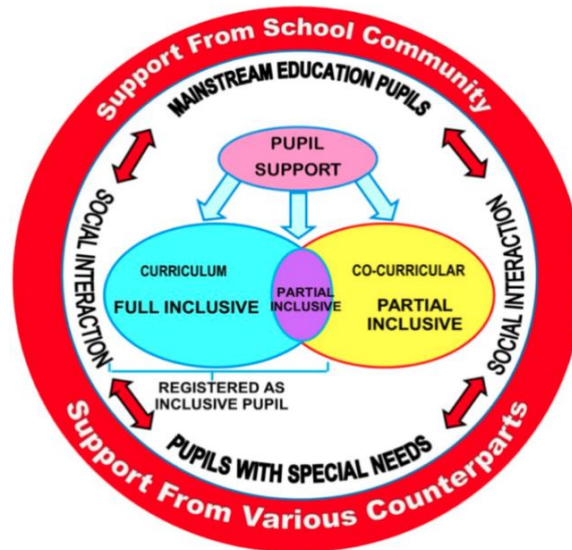
Figure 3: *The concept of inclusive education in Malaysia.*

The inclusive education programme in Malaysia is criticised by many scholars in Malaysia. Jelas and Mohd Ali (2014) for example, argue that the inclusion of pupils with SEN is consistent with the 1980s integration model. Jelas and Mohd Ali (2014) argue that this practice is based on an exclusionary process grounded in the legitimised paradigm of an 'ideal' concept of inclusive education. Furthermore, the notion of inclusive education focuses on SEN. Indeed it is a narrow definition as described by T Booth and Ainscow (2002) and not a total inclusion without conditions as stated in the national report of Malaysia (MOE, 2004).

OBJECTIVE

This study investigates the views about inclusive education of teachers (the practitioners), and gains insight to enhance the support for them as well as bring a better understanding to the requirements for the successful promotion of inclusive education in Malaysia's primary schools.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs interpretive qualitative design with multiple methods. There are semi-structured interviews of individuals and focus group engagement with teachers. Interviews are used as they are flexible and can effectively to obtain detailed answers to research questions (Creswell, 2014). Individual interviews of 60 minutes; the questions were informed by classroom observation of the same participant. The eight focus group interviews of 90 minutes each consist of five to seven participants per group. To avoid the language barriers, interviews are conducted in Malay language, the national language and recorded with the consent of participants. Ethical approval from both the UK and Malaysia authorities was obtained prior to the fieldwork.

Participants

The participants are recruited from five national primary schools in Kinta District, Perak, one of the state in Malaysia. There are three schools with the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) and two non-SEIP schools. The participants are inclusive of headteachers, mainstream teachers and special education teachers (only at SEIP schools). They are teachers with different options, ethnics, gender, and teaching experiences. Focus group 'a' consists of teachers who teach the core subjects while focus group 'b' involves teachers who teach other subjects. Table 1 shows the participant

distribution for the data collection. School 4 and School 5 are previously known as SRK. They are the schools with only girls while the three other schools are with mixed-gender pupils. Prior to the real data collection, a pilot study is implemented at a different SEIP school. For the pilot there were also staffroom observations and document analysis.

Data Analysis

Data are consolidated as a large corpus in the NVivo 11 software. They are thematically analysed via an inductive approach through the lens of interpretivist and constructivist approaches (Saldaña, 2015). There are constant splitting and lumping processes of the eclectic coding to re-assess and crystallise the codes, categories and themes (Bazeley, 2013). The themes, nodes and excerpts are translated to English language, but the analysis is done in the Malay language by a native Malay speaker. This strategy is adopted to stay close to the local context and present the accurate meaning of the participants' views while maintaining the English style required in reporting the study. Classroom observations were carried out prior to teacher interviews; the data informed the interview questions.

Table 1 *Data collection*

School		Number of participants	
SEIP	Non-SEIP	Individual interviews	Focus group interviews
1		11	13 (2 groups)
2		0	7 (1 group)
3		2	5 (1 group)
	4	7	13 (2 groups)
	5	6	13 (2 groups)

RESULTS

The translated version of extracts is presented without changing the meaning and nuance of the original. Participants viewed inclusive education as a challenging concept to be implemented. Participants' responses are based on their understanding of the Malaysia practice which reflected a narrow concept. The illustrated excerpts are cited from individual interview (II) and focus group (FG) 'a' and 'b'. The 'S' denotes school and '*' indicates special education teacher. All names and schools are anonymised.

Education system

Many queried the education system particularly the school types, curriculum, exam-oriented education, collective teaching and instruction time. Participants argued about the segregation system. They believed the different school types do not promote inclusive education, but contributes to communication barriers within society in daily life:

> "Weird to talk about inclusive. There're vernacular schools, unnecessary! I don't see equity. Everybody should enrol in SK, to promote the national language in daily life. I tried to communicate with a Chinese in my neighbourhood, but he couldn't understand, unable to converse in Malay language, which is… So, inclusive education is good". (II, S1, Zack)

In the extract, it is obvious that the participant is unable to speak Mandarin, and neither could they converse in English language. It was considered strange for a Malaysian to be unable to speak the national language. Another participant mentioned:

"It's separated – the Chinese, with Chinese language... Most teachers are Chinese at SJKCs. Everything is different, the system, teaching methodologies – much simpler examination than at SKs. Their UPSR is at Year 4 level! Better to teach there – more subjects; get higher percentages. I don't think the result for Malay language paper is qualified". (II, S5, Kathy)

This view about different school practices was common across schools and participants. The participant pointed to the language differences, teachers, teaching strategies and the syllabus at vernacular schools. The difficulty level for UPSR attainment test questions was commented for being lowered in comparison to the level at national schools (SKs). However, the vernacular schools are increasing, seen as due to the political interest. A participant said:

"Talking about inclusive, obviously we don't achieve the objective. Separated system: SK, SJKT and SJKC: very challenging for inclusive. How? The policy-develop more SJKs". (II, S5, Kathy).

Some participants pointed to the alarming decrease in Chinese and Indian children in national schools. The system intensified ethnic segregation because of parent thinking and preference.

"Parents' mentality – don't want the pupils to mingle, refuse to attend SKs. Chinese pupils are decreasing because SJKCs are greater. It's just, the school system is there; the choices". (II, S4, Safi)

Similarly, the special education teacher-participants expressed concern regarding the pupils with SEN' enrolment at SEIP National schools. Since SEIP programmes are established at national-type schools, parents were seen to prefer to send their children there:

Fisam*: Worsening. Soon, there's no more Chinese pupils because SJKC has the SEIP.
Edah*: Yes. Supposedly, not suit for nation building. (FGb, S3)

Many participants believed that it is better to have a single type of school:

Anusha: We must've one school system; '1Malaysia' schools. Malaysia education system fails to unite people. Pupils mingle, know, understand other cultures here, but not at vernacular schools. They don't know, not exposed to the environment. (FGa, S5)

Anusha argued that SJK pupils felt uncomfortable mixing with other ethnicities since they were confined to a homogenous culture, unlike those in the multi-ethnic National schools, such as the perception of other communities. It is believed that the vernacular system fails to unite Malaysians and, for most participants, it had many negative effects for Malaysians:

"In simple language: 'Finish'. No more cross-culture, separated, no integration. Not a good practice, many disadvantages. Indeed, need to be examined". (II, S1, Murni, Senior Assistant Student Affair)

It was believed that the vernacular system encourages segregation and need to be revised, and Tuah criticised the NEP:

"The NEP is worn out, irrelevant with the current education". (II, S1, Tuah, Senior Assistant Special Education)

Referring to RIMUP as an ad hoc programme, participants expressed:

Anusha: Limited. Once or twice a year.

> *Nazra: Depends on budget.*
> *Zara: Good, if there's budget. No budget, no good.*
> *Kafei: It's a touch and go programme… no continuity.*
> *Anusha: It's like testing… no improvement, no research to check whether it's right*
> *or wrong. (FGa, S5)*

Many participants asserted that RIMUP and Vision Schools had failed and it was suggested that differing management and external influences, such as from non-governmental organisations (NGO), had contributed to its failure.

> *"Vision School has no Vision. The SJKC-Chinese; SJKT-Tamil; SK-Malay; fractured, not united. There's disagreement between administrators, plus external forces, like NGO. Everybody fights for their own interest". (II, S1, Tuah, Senior Assistant Special Education)*

Unanimously, participants viewed that the education system places much emphasis on the academic achievement.
It was felt that Malaysia practised segregation for special education provision:

> *Zania: I want to emphasise our common practice. In mainstream schools, special education classes are segregated, isolated within the same premises. They never mixed up. Today, new category of mainstream schools emerged like Cluster schools- differs from the non-Cluster or suburb schools. (FGa, S4)*

Participants also pointed out mainstream schools' segregation with the banding practice reflecting academic achievement. Such brand awarded was the Cluster school of which was believed more prestigious and quality than other schools that were not chosen as ones or schools in suburb areas. Therefore, having pupils with SEN at such schools would lower the academic result and tarnish the school name, consequently the award withdrawn. They highlighted this practice (and provision of SEIP- special education within mainstream school) as common and contradict with the notion of inclusive education. From their views, this implied challenges for an inclusive education system.
Generally, participants felt that pupils with SEN are not suited to the mainstream system because they could not cope with its curriculum. The increasing number of subjects and levels are too demanding, not only for them but for mainstream pupils. When probed about the inclusion of pupils with SEN into the mainstream, Safa asserted:

> *"It's difficult for them to join mainstream classes with the curriculum level. They wouldn't be able to grab the current syllabus – even the normal pupils couldn't". (II, S4, Safa)*

Asked about the possibility of wider inclusion of pupils with SEN into mainstream, *Daxia* said:

> *But the government emphasises UPSR. If they want both, it isn't within teachers' capability. (FGb, S5)*

The participants unanimously admitted the challenges to be greater under the exam-oriented system. Primary education, according to them, is influenced and shaped by the UPSR test.
As Rachel said, mainstream teachers were informed that they do not have to focus on pupils with problems:

> *"We send pupils associated with learning complications or who failed the LINUS test to be diagnosed for special education. That's what we're told. For inclusive education, we shouldn't do that". (II, S5, Rachel, Headteacher)*

This suggestion may be good, however a diagnosis might be needed less to find what is 'wrong' with the pupils as to identify their needs so that their teachers can meet their needs and support them. Perhaps, on another note, it could be interpreted that teachers should not jump to conclusion to label pupils and try to discard them unfavourably without much effort.

Facilities, resources and funds

Generally, participants indicated challenges at schools regarding total school and classroom size. Classroom size was believed to have been reduced for more effective lessons. According to Yaqeen, this had been a focus for discussion in Malaysia, but it remained a theory. For successful inclusive education, the facilities were a concern. Without any support, teachers faced challenges in fulfilling pupils' diverse needs, in spite of strong theoretical knowledge. He claimed:

> "Since 1983, with the Primary School Integrated Curriculum, pupils weren't supposed to be 30 to 50 per classroom. But, it's not. It became a theory, not been realised. Teachers may have the knowledge, but couldn't practise; teach collectively, anticipating pupils are similar. 30 minutes is allocated for each subject, per session. Teaching quality is questionable – could be 5 minutes only. Now, the transformational phase – the plan emphasises pupils' outcomes and teachers as facilitators. Pupils are grouped in a small classroom. Cramped. We don't have enough equipment, no LCD TV, many limitations and weaknesses". (II, S1, Yaqeen, Headteacher)

Another aspect is school location. Many indicated a difference in quality. Mia compared her school with the neighbouring SJKC, saying that locality affected facilities; despite similar government funds, the SJKCs were better off:

> "SJKT is situated at the outskirts. The SK and SJKC are... Well, the school building, the high-rise and handsome SJKC buildings. SK is government's school, but it's of low-quality, different from SJKC". (II, S4, Mia)

Overall, lack of facilities, resources, teaching materials, and funding remained challenging for inclusive education. Government efforts to support teachers and improve school condition were seen as unfair due to political interests.

Teaching force and job position

Another common concern was a teacher shortage in SEIP and mainstream. Yaqeen said:

> "There should be assistants and support from special education teachers when SEN pupils join the mainstream. But, no. So, everything befalls mainstream teachers". (II, S1, Yaqeen, Headteacher).

There was consensus that teachers hold many responsibilities and roles, which could be carried out by other staff. Generally, participants expressed frustration and that the education system and workload prevented them from being more effective and inclusive. When probed whether a teacher would be able to cater for all pupils, regardless of difference, Rosie asserted:

> "The education system emphasises academic achievement. Teachers are pressured with many things. Different teacher at different class from morning until noon. Indeed, you must tackle all pupils, but with time limitation, additional works and other responsibilities, how can we concentrate on pupils with SEN? A teacher holds tasks for pupils' affair, co-curriculum and curriculum". (II, S4, Rosie)

Teacher capability

Common responses concerned teachers' capability. SEIP teacher-participants doubted mainstream teachers' capabilities to teach pupils with SEN, and most mainstream teacher-participants admitted that teaching pupils with SEN was beyond their capabilities, competencies and unquestionably their knowledge and skills. Some mainstream teacher-participants did not proclaim any lack of knowledge and skills relating to pupils with SEN in their strong belief that it was not their responsibility to teach them. Since teaching is based on specialisation, it was believed that pupils with SEN were better off in SEIP. In general, all mainstream teacher-participants admitted inexperience with pupils with SEN and

emphasised the difference between theory and practice, and that they were not prepared to include pupils with SEN into mainstream classrooms:

> *Cuifen: If such, what happens to the mainstream teachers? Do you think teachers are free, trained to teach these inclusive pupils? No. Can you give us LADAP? Can you teach, train us to teach them? (FGa, S1)*

The point was made after considering conditional inclusion of pupils with SEN. Still, issues with the workload, pre-service training and need for professional development to enhance teachers' inclusive practice were implied. However, a cynical view might be that Cuifen, above, was expressing doubts about mainstream teachers' competencies.

Below is an extract of special education teacher-participants' view. To be competent, they believed that professional knowledge and skills are needed:

> *"We'd be very happy to – just be the partner, observe mainstream teachers. But, are they capable"? (II, S1, Tuah, Senior Assistant Special Education)*

A lack of knowledge on strategies, implementation and the benefits were observed in interviews. The extract below shows the deviated response in comparison with others. While the common response regarding inclusive education was about the inclusion of pupils with SEN in the mainstream classroom, Tanvi said:

> *"Inclusive education means moving towards examination, where… er, pupils are better prepared to sit for UPSR". (II, S1, Tanvi)*

Note that Tanvi is a teacher at a SEIP school. Obviously, there is no warranty that teachers know and understanding about inclusive education although they are at SEIP school.

IMPLICATION OF FINDINGS

The foremost is the understanding and the core values of the concept inclusive education by all teachers. "Good practice also entails a clear understanding of the teachers' roles and competencies in both the mainstream and special education" (Rosmalily andWoollard, 2019, p. 6). Teachers themselves are responsible and accountable to engage in self-reflective activities and self-directed learning for professional development that would consequently benefit their pupils. With inclusive values and mutual respect, any school professional community could embark on the journey together to enhance their inclusive practice and provide an inclusive environment for the learning of pupils academically, socially, culturally, and spiritually.

This has implications for the provision and implementation of inclusive education at the primary schools.

CONCLUSION

To conclude participants, view inclusive education as challenging in Malaysia context. The system according to them does not promotes inclusive education. The segregation of schools with the vernacular system and special education may represent the notion of educational equality. However, the educational equity is not guaranteed. Placing pupils with SEN in the mainstream as an inclusive education strategy but without the appropriate support is not inclusive. Insufficient resources, non-inclusive school facilities, teachers' lack of knowledge and skills as well as teacher workload are highlighted. Pupils must be supported to succeed and achieve the highest potential without delimiting their abilities. Therefore, there is a need to review the policy about inclusive education.

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