

# The Level of Knowledge of Mainstream Teachers on Inclusive Education Programs

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## Abstract

The Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) is provided by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE) to provide opportunities for special education students to follow the learning together with mainstream students. However, during the implementation period of PPI until now, there are problems that exist based on the studies that have been carried out such as the issue of the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers about IEP is still in the moderate level. The knowledge of teachers in implementing IEP is very important to help pupils with special education in academic and social improvement. The purpose of this study was to examine the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on the Inclusive Education Programme in the Klang district. The study was conducted using the survey method and a sample of 60 mainstream teachers of primary and secondary schools involved in the Klang district. The study instrument is a questionnaire adapted and modified from the Mazarul Hasan et study. al (2021) in the form of *Google Forms* and distributed through Whatsapp and Telegram applications. The data findings were analysed using the *Statistic Package for Social Sciences* (SPSS) version 27.0 software. The findings found that the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on the Inclusive Education Programme as a whole is at a high level of mean=3.571 with a standard deviation of SD=0.35. The findings show that mainstream teachers have a good knowledge of IEP and need to be improved more deeply about IEP. Although teachers know about IEP, some teachers are less aware of their role in achieving inclusive education in schools. Further research is expected to examine the effectiveness of collaborative methods between special education teachers and mainstream teachers in improving the academic achievement of inclusive students.

**Keywords:** Knowledge Level, Mainstream Teachers, Inclusive Education Programs, Special Needs Pupils, Special Education Pupils

## Introduction

Through the Malaysian Education Development Plan 2013-2025 through the initiative to increase the enrolment of Special Needs Pupils (SNP) in inclusive education programmes, MOE provides the same learning environment opportunities to SNP as their normal peers

enjoy in normal classes (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2011). This is evidenced by the increase in the number of schools creating Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) in primary and secondary schools as well as SNP enrolled in the inclusive education from year to year from 2013 to 2016 with an increase rate of 30 percent per year (Siti Fatimah & Mustafa, 2018). The implementation of SNP is seen to increase the active involvement of SNP in academic and social fields in schools and communities as well as polishing their potential within them (Hasan et al., 2022).

However, during the implementation period of PPI until now, there are problems that exist based on the studies that have been carried out such as the issue of the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers about IEP is still in the moderate level. This is based on a study conducted by Mazarul et.al (2022) found that the knowledge of teachers is in a moderate level. Based on the findings of the study, mainstream teachers still do not have a high knowledge of IEP. The lack of mainstream teachers' knowledge of IEP led teachers to carry out teaching and learning in the same way as typical pupils due to the lack of clear guidelines (Noramlah and Nurfaradilla, 2021). In addition, IEP is also seen to face challenges in its implementation when mainstream teachers are seen to be negative towards SNP in the classroom and submit the solution of the problems that happen to the SNP to the special education teachers. This is not possible if mainstream teachers are exposed to IEP clearly and systematically (Lin and Hanafi, 2021)

Given the problems that have occurred, the latest study needs to be conducted to identify the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on Inclusive Education Programme (IEP). The objective of this study was to find out the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers towards IEP. This quantitative type of study was conducted using a questionnaire distributed to mainstream teachers who teach in Klang district.

### **Literature Review**

The Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) was prepared by the Ministry of Education Malaysia to provide an opportunity for SNP to study with typical students in the same class regardless of race, background, economic status and level of disability. The implementation of IEP is carried out in government schools and government assistance at the preschool, primary and secondary levels (Suzana et al., 2022). The implementation of IEP involves all parties including mainstream teachers. Mainstream teachers are teachers who teach mainstream students Year 1 to Year 6 and Form 1 to Form 5. The mainstream teacher is the main focus of ensuring that PPI meets the objectives set to produce the students.

In the field of education, teachers play an important role in the success of a plan by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Mainstream teachers need to have knowledge related to IEP as this is important so that mainstream teachers do not feel worried while implementing teaching and learning with SNP. In addition, they are more skilled to handle SNP in IEP more effectively (Lin and Hanafi, 2021). In addition, mainstream teachers need to have knowledge related to SNP to ensure that IEP can be implemented as planned. Without in-depth knowledge of SNP, IEP cannot be achieved. This is because to teach SNP requires a knowledge base to conduct SNP in the classroom (Noramlah & Nurfaradilla, 2021).

There have been many studies conducted locally and abroad related to the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on IEP. The findings of the study recorded in the study conducted by Mokhtar and Farhana (2019) showed that the level of knowledge of teachers is at a moderate level. Based on the data obtained, mainstream teachers know about inclusive pupils and why SNP is inclusive but they lack knowledge of the role they need to play to implement IEP. This gives the impression that mainstream teachers do not have high knowledge and are sufficient to carry out their duties to perform SNP.

Based on the results of a study conducted by Swee Lin and Hanafi (2021), it was found that mainstream teachers have a moderate level of knowledge and most teachers admit that they do not receive training related to IEP which is one of the reasons that the majority of mainstream teachers do not have knowledge of IEP. This is supported by a study conducted by Noramlah and Nurfaradilla (2021) which stated the lack of knowledge and training to mainstream teachers in relation to special education such as where special education teachers are given training rendering mainstream teachers unable to fully implement IEP.

Based on a study conducted by Christopher et. al (2019) in the Cook Islands found that mainstream teachers in the area need special education knowledge and ongoing support to run IEP as only 40% of mainstream teachers have the qualifications to implement IEP. Therefore, they feel less qualified to teach SNP in the area if they are not provided with sufficient knowledge and training.

In addition, according to a study conducted by Noramlah and Nurfaradilla (2022) states that mainstream teachers need to be better prepared and need special attention to teach SNP in normal classrooms. The challenge faced by them when they had to divide the focus of teaching towards normal students and SNP in a learning session. They also need to ensure that SNP is able to pass the assessment carried out by the school or MOE. This at the same time gives a negative response by mainstream teachers to SNP's ability to learn using the usual curriculum syllabus. Since the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on IEP is modest, the performance of SNPs who have undergone IEP successfully is below the target percentage rate set by the MOE (Rohaizat, 2019).

## **Methodology**

### ***Design and instrument study***

This study is a quantitative study with a survey design. A set of questionnaires was developed by adapting and modified from the Hasan et al (2022) study and answered by mainstream teachers in primary and secondary schools with the Integration Special Education Programme (SEP) in the Klang district. The questionnaire was reviewed by a research supervisor and a Malay Language Teacher at the place where the researchers had almost 20 years of experience. Questionnaires developed through Googleform software are distributed to mainstream teachers using the Whatsapp and Telegram apps online. Respondents answered the questionnaire based on the 5-point Likert Scale i.e. Disagree Strongly (DS), Disagree (D), Not Sure (NS), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA).

### ***Population and Sample***

Meanwhile, the population for this study includes all teachers who teach the mainstream in government schools in the district of Klang. Based on information obtained

from the Klang District Education Office, the number of mainstream teachers in the Klang district is 2689 people who teach in 132 schools. Therefore, in order to determine the sample size corresponding to the study population, the researchers refer to the Krejcie and Morgan table (1970) which states that the sample representing the study population is a total of 338 respondents. Sample selection is using a simple random sampling technique because the respondents have an equally large chance of being selected and the respondents have characteristics that represent the population.

**Data Collection and Analysis**

The respondent's answers are collected for one week from the date the form is distributed. This questionnaire has three sections, namely Part A on demographics, and Part B related to the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on PPI. The data obtained is analyzed using the Statistical Package of the Social Science software in the latest version. The pilot study was conducted using 10 respondents and the Cronbach alpha analysis received a coefficient of 0.68. and considered acceptable (Cronbach, 1951). The data is analyzed using the descriptive statistical inference method to obtain the mean average value, standard deviation, frequency and percent. The average mean obtained will be translated to the score level based on the table developed by Anieqah and Suziayani (2019) which has 5 levels as shown below.

Table 1  
*Score Interpretation*

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 - 1.89	Very Low
1.90 – 2.69	Low
2.70 – 3.49	Moderate
3.50 – 4.29	High
4.30 – 5.00	Very High

**Result**

The purpose of this study was to identify the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on inclusive education programmes in the Klang district. This study used descriptive statistical analysis to find the mean average, standard deviation, frequency and percentage. Using the mean average as a measure can give a clear picture of the appropriate problem ( Babin et al, 2013). Thus, the researchers listed the findings of the study on the background of the respondents and the level of knowledge of the mainstream teachers in Table 1 and Table 2 as below.

**Study Observation**

**Respondent Demographics**

Based on Table 2 below, the total number of respondents who took part in answering the questionnaire was 60 people comprising the gender of 13 male teachers (21.7%) and 47 female teachers (78.3%). For the respondent's age item, teachers aged between 41-50 years old took the most participation at 24 (40%), followed by teachers aged 31-40 years with 23 (38.3%), teachers aged 51-60 years old with 7 (11.7%) and teachers aged between 21-30 years at least 6 (10.0%). While for academic qualification items, almost all respondents were degree

holders, with 59 people (98.3%) while 1 respondent was a master's holder (1.7%). None of the respondents represented the holders of diplomas or PHD. For the last item of teaching experience, 14 respondents (23.2%) had 1-10 years of experience, 30 respondents (50.0%) had 11-20 years, 16 respondents (26.7%) had 21-30 years of experience and no respondents represented 31 years of experience and above.

Table 2  
*Demographics of Respondents*

Items	Options	Frequencies	Percent (%)
Gender	Men	13	21.7
	Woman	47	78.3
Age	21-30 Years	6	10.0
	31-40 Years	23	38.3
	41-50 Years	24	40.0
	51-60 Years	7	11.7
Academic Qualifications	Diploma	0	0
	Degree	59	98.3
	Master	1	1.7
	Doctor of Philosophy(PHD)	0	0
Teaching Experience	1-10 Years	14	23.3
	11-20 Years	30	50.0
	21-30 Years	16	26.7
	31 years and above	0	0

***Stage of knowledge of first-stream teachers on Inclusive Education Programs***

Table 3 below shows the findings from the questionnaires collected to identify the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers about Inclusive Education Programmes in the Klang district. The interpretation of the average mean score for each item is based on studies developed by Anieqah and Suziayani (2019) using five levels. Overall, the level of mainstream teachers' knowledge of IEP is at a high level with an average mean = 3.57 and SD= 0.3. Based on 20 items of the questionnaire, two items indicate a very high level of item 19 "I know about the rule that all pupils of special education are entitled to an education." and item 20 "I am aware of the responsibility of accepting pupils of special education and teaching according to their capabilities".

While 12 questionnaire items show high levels i.e. item 1, item 2, item 3, item 4, item 6, item 7, item 9, item 10, item 11, item 14, item 15 and item 16. In addition, there are three questionnaire items showing moderate levels i.e. item 8, item 12 and item 17. In addition, there are two items that indicate a low level, namely for item 13 "I have trouble teaching students with low cognitive level" and item 18 "Special Education Pupils interfere with mainstream pupils in the classroom". Furthermore, there is one item that shows a very low level which is item 5 "I am disappointed to teach pupils special education."

Table 2

*Stage of Primary School Teacher Knowledge on Inclusive Education Programs*

No.	Item	Frequency and Percentage (%)					MEAN	SD	Phase
		Scale Likert							
		DS	D	NS	A	SA			
1.	I know the teaching techniques of Special Education Pupils who participate in the Inclusive Education Program.	2 (3.3)	7 (11.7)	11 (18.3)	37 (61.7)	3 (5.0)	3.53	00.8	High
2.	I am confident in the abilities of the students.	1 (1.7)	5 (8.3)	0 (0)	47 (73.3)	7 (11.7)	4.00	0.5	High
3.	I figured out how to provide teaching materials for inclusive students.	2 (3.3)	5 (8.3)	13 (21.7)	37 (61.7)	3 (5.0)	3.57	0.8	High
4.	I know how to integrate the internet in the learning and facilitation process for the Inclusive Education Program.	1 (1.7)	4 (6.7)	16 (26.7)	35 (58.3)	4 (6.7)	3.62	0.7	High
5.	I was disappointed to teach Special Education Pupils.	35 (58.3)	14 (23.3)	2 (3.3)	8 (13.3)	1 (1.7)	1.77	1.1	Very Low
6.	I learned about the management of Special Education Pupils who follow the Inclusive Education Programme at school.	2 (3.3)	3 (5.0)	10 (16.7)	36 (60.0)	9 (15.0)	3.78	0.8	High

7.	I believe in the ability of Special Education Pupils to be inclusive.	0 (0)	1 (1.7)	6 (10.0)	45 (75.0)	8 (13.3)	4.00	0.5	High
8.	I know how to implement the Individual Teaching Plan for special education students who have been included.	4 (6.7)	7 (11.7)	17 (28.3)	30 (50.0)	2 (3.3)	3.32	0.9	Moderate
9.	I am confident in the academic abilities of Special Education Pupils which are assessed based on differences in the level of abilities of each pupil.	0 (0)	1 (1.7)	7 (11.7)	43 (71.7)	9 (15.0)	4.00	0.5	High
10.	I believe the attainment of Special Education Pupils will increase.	0 (0)	1 (1.7)	4 (6.7)	47 (78.3)	8 (13.3)	4.03	0.5	High
11.	I'm excited about Special Education Pupils.	0 (0)	1 (1.7)	7 (11.7)	45 (75.0)	7 (11.7)	3.96	0.5	High
12.	I am more confident in teaching Special Education Pupils who suffer from physical problems only.	8 (13.3)	10 (16.7)	13 (21.7)	25 (41.7)	4 (6.7)	3.12	1.1	Moderate
13.	I have trouble teaching students with low cognitive levels.	9 (15.0)	24 (40.0)	12 (20.0)	14 (23.3)	1 (1.7)	2.57	1.0	Low
14.	I can teach inclusive pupils	3 (5.0)	0 (0)	9 (15.0)	45 (75.0)	3 (5.0)	3.75	0.7	High



	who have moderate behavioural problems.								
15.	Special Education Pupils need learning as it exists in mainstream classes.	5 (8.3)	8 (13.3)	7 (11.7)	28 (46.7)	12 (20.0)	3.67	1.1	High
16.	Special Education Pupils can excel in lessons if inclusivity earlier.	1 (1.7)	3 (5.0)	10 (16.7)	31 (51.7)	15 (25.0)	3.93	0.8	High
17.	Special Education Pupils find it difficult to compete with mainstream pupils.	2 (3.3)	17 (28.3)	6 (10.0)	23 (38.3)	12 (20.0)	3.43	1.2	Moderate
18.	Special Education Pupils harass mainstream pupils in the classroom.	12 (20.0)	21 (35.0)	7 (11.7)	17 (28.3)	3 (5.0)	2.63	1.2	Low
19.	I know about the rule that all pupils of special education are entitled to an education.	0 (0)	2 (3.3)	0 (0)	29 (48.3)	29 (48.3)	4.45	0.5	Very High
20.	I am aware of the responsibility of accepting special education and teaching pupils according to their ability.	0 (0)	1 (1.7)	1 (1.7)	32 (53.3)	26 (43.3)	4.38	0.6	Very High
<b>Overall mean average</b>							<b>3.57</b>	<b>0.35</b>	High



**Discussion**

This study has identified that the level of mainstream teachers' knowledge of IEP as a whole is at a high level. This means mainstream teachers know SEP who study in mainstream classes need to get the same attention and education as other classmates. This can be evidenced by item 19 and item 20 in the questionnaire showing a very high average mean level. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of the qualitative study of Syahira and Mokhtar (2022) on the implementation of IEP among mainstream teachers. According to the interviews conducted, most of them prepare and plan adequately before starting teaching and learning in the classrooms involved with IEP. Respondents also know there are many benefits behind the implementation of this IEP.

The study also showed that mainstream teachers are concerned about the development of SNP in their classrooms. This can be seen with item 5 and item 18 explaining the low and very low levels. Mainstream teachers are aware of the need for SEP to potentially get adequate education with their other colleagues. This study is supported by the study of Lin and Hanafi (2021) that the attitude of mainstream teachers towards Special Education Pupils in IEP classes is positive. However, the right attitude towards SEP is not enough without sufficient knowledge in enhancing the potential of MBK in the IEP class. Mainstream teachers need to improve their knowledge and preparation in order to teach SEP more effectively.

There are several items in the study findings that scored moderate levels of item 8, item 12 and item 17. The findings showed that only 50 respondents knew how to prepare the Individual Teaching Plan (ITP) and 53 percent of respondents had confidence in teaching SNP physical problems only. These findings show that some mainstream teachers are less aware of the preparation they need to do to teach SEP in IEP classes. Some mainstream teachers also consider teaching SNP besides physical problems especially learning difficulties as a challenge for them. This finding is similar to the findings of the Nirmala and Hanafi (2021) study which stated that mainstream teachers have never received training and exposure related to teaching SEP and related professional skills.

However, the findings of this study are seen as contrary to studies conducted by Hasan et al (2022) and Swee Lin and Hanafi (2021) on the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers on IEP. The findings showed that the level of knowledge of mainstream teachers was at a moderate level. They argue that although mainstream teachers know the SEP involved with IEP, they do not know the appropriate teaching methods to help SEP learn. Mainstream teachers are also frustrated because they cannot obtain information and sources of IEP-related materials more clearly. Furthermore, workshops and courses related to teaching methods involving MBK are limited (Nirmala and Hanafi, 2021)

**Conclusion**

Based on the descriptive statistical analysis of this study, the overall level of knowledge of mainstream teachers about IEP in Klang is at a high level of average mean = 3.57. All educators need to be better prepared for the challenges and needs of the growing education system internationally. Educational institutions especially MOE and State Education Departments (SED) need to raise awareness and dissemination of IEP -related information among school administrators and mainstream teachers. The implementation of IEP which has the full support of school administrators and proactive teachers can bring good results to SEP

(Norliah and Hanafi, 2016). Special Education Teachers also need to play the role of companion teachers for mainstream teachers involved with IEP by holding skills sharing and teaching collaboratively on a regular basis (Norramlah and Norfaradilla, 2021). Further research is expected to examine the effectiveness of collaborative methods between special education teachers and mainstream teachers in improving the academic achievement of inclusive students.

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