



**FACTORS INFLUENCING PARENTS' DECISIONS IN
SELECTING SCHOOLS FOR CHILDREN WITH
SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Equal access to education is an essential element in achieving community well-being, as equally important as providing educational facilities that are accessible for children with special education needs. The implementation of the special education integrated programme under the Ministry of Education has now reached more than a decade. The five objectives of this study are; to study the development of schools with special education programmes and its locations, to examine the suitability and accessibility of special schools environment for the special pupils, to identify the school considerations and guidelines in accepting the special pupils enrolment, to analyse the factors influencing the decision of parents in selecting special education and schools for their special children, as well as to assess the issues and problems faced by parents in selecting schools for their special children. This study focuses on the special education integrated programme or the Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi (PPKI) which is a special education programme that forms part of the mainstream school system. A questionnaire survey was conducted among parents with a child in PPKI, and the 134 survey data gathered were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software. Findings showed that the school facility is the most important factor for parents in selecting the school for their special children while the education cost is the least important factor. Interviews with PPKI teachers were conducted to validate the survey data. As the school facility is the most important factor for parents in selecting a school, selected case studies were conducted to examine the facility provision and condition of the school physical facilities. The assessment of the school facilities carried out revealed that majority of these schools were greatly lacking in the required facilities due to limited available space. Recommendations therefore include a more comprehensive facility planning in both the physical and social aspects of special education by the relevant authorities. Such improvements would facilitate and enhance learning, as well as help develop skills and self esteem, thus creating a more realistic move towards quality education for special education needs.

ملخص البحث

إن المساواة في الحصول على التعليم عامل أساسي في تحقيق رفاهية المجتمع، وتكون بنفس الأهمية بالنسبة لتوفير المرافق التعليمية التي يمكن وصول الأطفال من ذوي الحاجات الخاصة في التعليم إليها. وقد مضى على تنفيذ البرنامج المتكامل للتعليم الخاص تحت إشراف وزارة التعليم أكثر من عقد من الزمان. ولهذا الدراسة خمسة أهداف، هي: دراسة تطور المدارس ذات البرامج التعليمية الخاصة ومواقعها المختلفة من أجل الوقوف على مدى ملائمة البيئة المدرسية ومراعاتها لذوي الحاجات الخاصة من التلاميذ. تحديد اعتبارات المدرسة وتوجيهاتها واتجاهاتها في قبول وتسجيل التلاميذ من ذوي الحاجات الخاصة. تحليل العوامل المؤثرة على قرار الآباء في اختيارهم مدارس التعليم الخاص لأطفالهم، علاوةً على تقييمهم للقضايا والمشاكل التي يواجهونها إزاء التعليم الخاص واختيار المدارس الملائمة لأطفالهم من ذوي الحاجات الخاصة. وأما إطار هذه الدراسة فهو التركيز على البرنامج المتكامل للتعليم الخاص (PPKI) Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi وهو برنامج التعليم الخاص الذي يشكل جزءاً من النظام المدرسي السائد في البلاد. وقد أجريت الدراسات الاستقصائية على الوالدين مع أطفالهم في برنامج PPKI. وتمّ تحليل 134 من بيانات المسح باستخدام برنامج حزمة الإحصائي للعلوم الاجتماعية (SPSS). وأظهرت النتائج أن توافر المرافق والخدمات هو من أهم العوامل للوالدين في اختيار المدارس لأطفالهم من ذوي الحاجات الخاصة، بينما تكلفة التعليم تمثل عاملاً ثانوياً من حيث الأهمية. ولتحقق من صدق بيانات المسح الميداني أجريت المقابلات مع معلمي برنامج (PPKI) بالإضافة إلى إجراء دراسة الحالة بغية الوقوف على أوضاع المرافق المادية للمدرسة وحالاتها. وأشارت دراسة الحالة التي أجريت أن معظم تلك المدارس ليست لديها المرافق اللازمة بسبب محدودية المساحة المتاحة لها. وقدمت المقترحات لتحسين المرافق لبرنامج PPKI وذلك من خلال التخطيط الملائم من الناحية المادية والاجتماعية على حد سواء، مما يجعل تلاميذ برنامج (PPKI) أكثر اهتماماً وانجذاباً نحو التعلم، وتطوير المهارات، وتنمية الثقة بالنفس، وبالتالي تكون المساعي المتخذة إزاء التعليم لذوي الحاجات الخاصة أكثر واقعيةً وجوداً في المستقبل.

APPROVAL PAGE

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This thesis is dedicated to my beloved family members,

*Ainon Jariah Muhamad, Amin Arif, Yuslinaniza, Ainil Ainiah, Mohd Zulhairy, Anis Adriana,
Amin Ashraf, Ammar Hadif, Zahara Amani, Aiman Hafidh, Zahir Aariz, Zil Adli.*

In loving memory of the most beloved father, and the most admired role model,

*Ahmad Shuhaimi bin Mat Dom
(07 April 1956 – 08 April 2016)*

Al - Fatihah

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

SEN	Special Education Needs
MOE	Ministry of Education
PWD	People with Disabilities
MS	Malaysian Standards
PPKI	Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi
PPI	Program Pendidikan Inklusif
PPK	Program Pendidikan Khas
JPNS	Jabatan Pendidikan Negeri Selangor
PPD	Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah
MOH	Ministry of Health
MOW	Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development
MAB	Malaysian Association For The Blind
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
NASOM	National Autism Society Of Malaysia
ADH	Attention Deficit and Hyperactive Disorder
API	Air Pollution Index
LP	Learning Problems
HR	Hearing Impairment
VIS	Visual Impairment
SPSS	Statistical Package For Social Science
RII	Relative Importance Index
SKM	Sijil Kemahiran Malaysia
GLC	Government Liaise Company

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the overall structure of the study that begins with the research background, which introduces the subject matter, followed by the problem statement, research objectives, research questions, research significance, and the scope of the study. A summary of the methodology adopted and a brief structure of this research are also included in this chapter.

1.2 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Special education in Malaysia first introduced by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia (MOE) in the 1920s and later the Malaysian education system went through rapid change within 50 years (Mohd Zuri Ghani & Aznan Che Ahmad, 2011; Siti Eshah Mokhsein, Hussein Haji Ahmad, & Vongalis, 2009). The special school initially focused on the visually impaired children, the blind, which later included the hearing impaired or deaf children. It was not until later in the 1980s (Mohd Zuri Ghani & Aznan Che Ahmad, 2011) that the Government of Malaysia looked into the intellectually challenged children. Malaysia is committed to provide equal access to education to all citizens without any discrimination (Zaleha Kamarudin, Ismail Sheikh Ahmad, & Syahnaz Sulaiman, 2005).

Special children are those that are gifted with a different sense of intellect, different growth rate that restraints them from developing either physically or

mentally at the same level as those of normal children (Abosi & Teng, 2008; Peters, 2003). Their special conditions prevented these children from getting beneficial development in the mainstream school, thereby reaffirming the need for special education schools. As well as to provide special education programme to meet the children's utmost potential, reasonable within their league. In Malaysia, the special children are categorised into the physically disabled and intellectually disabled. Previous studies agreed that early childhood intervention by the family is crucial in order to classify and justify the needs of these special children (Drabble, 2013; Eimei, 2000; Kupper, 2009; Mitchell, 1995). Clinical diagnostic is currently practised in Malaysia, early detection helps to identify the education and skill needed by these children in their education, in order to provide them with the suitable assistance in developing their social, intellectual and life skills.

In the Education Act 1996, the Government highlighted special education either in special schools or in the mainstream schools indicating the trends towards a more integrated special education services (Sunardi, Mucawir Yusuf, Gunarhadi, Priyono, & Yeager, 2011). The programmes provided for the disabled and special children in Malaysia are available in the form of integrated model, inclusive model and dedicated special schools. Both integrated and inclusive programmes are available in the mainstream schools to allow greater interactions between the special pupils with their peers, allowing them to develop their social skills within the mainstream environment as how they will have to do in the future when they leave the school environment, joining the real world (Abosi & Teng, 2008). Combining special pupils with normal mainstream pupils within one school boundary requires the school to ensure mobility and orientation of pupils with SEN, especially in making accessibility and mobility easy for those with physical challenges. Despite the developments of the

Malaysian Standards (MS) building requirement for People with Disabilities (PwD), the odds are, that half of their case study buildings are yet to comply to the MS and Universal Design (Abdul Kadir Syazwani & Jamaludin Mariam, 2012).

Special education programmes in Malaysia are available and provided both by the Government and by the private entities. Special education is a programme formed to assist children with special needs in achieving their basic education. Conducive learning environments are crucial for pupils with SEN to gain their basic life skills and skills that would increase their employability. These future adults should be able to seek job opportunities and achieve job and economic stability in accordance to the Code of Practice of Employment of Disabled Person in Private Sectors (Nov 2001) established by the Ministry of Human Resources in increasing job opportunities for PwD (Abdul Kadir Syazwani & Jamaludin Mariam, 2012). SEN is also referring to a programme that moulds the teaching and learning environment to suite the special conditions of the pupils with SEN that are in difficulties to keep up with the mainstream schools learning and teaching environment.

This research looks into the special education facilities available in the Gombak district. The research aims to assess the school locations, physical conditions and the strategic policies for children with SEN. Special Education Integrated Programmes/ *Programme Pendidikan Khas Integrasi* (PPKI) is the focus of the study in line with the author's attempt to look into the education and the learning environment provided for the intellectually challenged pupils with SEN.

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.3.1 Location of PPKI Schools

The Limited number of schools providing special education for pupils with SEN confines parents' choice and option for their special needs children. Currently, the available public schools that cater or address the education need of children with SEN are limited and parents tend to face difficulties in selecting schools for their children. A report by Utusan Malaysia in 2014, reported that there are 33 special schools and 2076 PPKI schools in Malaysia. The numbers however do not meet the demand to the total number of hopeful special children. The limited number and distribution of special schools and mainstream public schools that cater to special education for disabled children makes it more difficult as it confines to limited range for parents to select options in selecting the best school for their special children. The town planning studies on public schools that address the need of special children are limited. There is a need for this study especially factors related to location, facilities, parents' preference and the performances of these special children.

A study done by Mohd Nordin Awang Mat (2001) reported that the limited number of integrated special secondary schools have led to failure in enrolment of special children into the next level of education. Peters (2010) concluded that the current available education programme in Malaysia is not adequate to address the real demand for special education intervention. In addition, Siti Eshah Mokhsein et al. (2009) added that there has been an increase in enrolment rate in the past 40 years. Enrolment in the secondary education, for example, on the average is 58.9% in the past 15 years (1990-2015), however, the increase is not uniform for all states due to the different rate of state development (Siti Eshah Mokhsein et al., 2009). In 2006, the

Government introduced the monetary initiatives for all registered special pupils, which resulted in an increase in enrolment rate in 2007 and 2008. However, no studies were conducted to investigate the actual factors of enrolment rates (UNESCO Jakarta, 2009). The site selection for educational facilities in Malaysia involves many local authorities and departments such as the local district education office, the local planning authority, the state education department, and the state planning authority, in which planning approvals from these parties are compulsory prior to the physical construction. However, locating a school site is always a problem and the weaknesses to seeking approval are multilevel process and time consuming nature (Z. Bukhari, Rodzi A.M., & Noordin A., 2010). The Government should consider of the impacts of policies and positions on schooling and its influence towards the pupils' academic performance and teachers' productivity (Adepoju & Oluchukwu, 2011). The location of a public school within an urban development affects the teacher-pupil ratio while the teacher-pupil ratio affects the learning and teaching environment (Kiumi, Kibe, & Nganga, 2013).

1.3.2 Access to Conducive Learning Environment for Pupils with SEN

Current available schools, whether private or public schools, were not developed with the intention to accommodate the education needs of special pupils but were only improvised upon the admission of these special children. Despite the MOE assurance that at least the basic four physical assistances which are ramps, hand rails, toilets and car parks for the disabled (Utusan Malaysia, 2014), studies have shown otherwise. A study by Abrizah & Ruslina Ahmad (2010) on inclusive programmes, uncovers the challenges faced by inclusive programmes, which includes the lack of

teaching equipment and learning materials and the school failure to make modifications to the school physical built environment to improve accessibility for pupils with SEN. Moreover, there are evidences that the SEN pupils still have difficulties in navigating themselves within the mainstream school facilities (Abrizah & Ruslina Ahmad, 2010). The issues of physical facilities for the special pupils provided within these schools need to be examined and adhered. Syazwani and Mariam (2012) even found that half of Putrajaya buildings failed to comply with the Malaysian Standards for People with Disabilities (PwD). Moreover, some of the modifications were not constructed according to the codes; hence, they are risky to the users.

There has been limited research done on the Inclusive Education Programme/ Programme Pendidikan Inklusif (PPI) in Malaysia despite it being practised for over a decade in Malaysia (Hjh Kamaliah Muhammad & Wan Amimah Wan Muhammad, 2010). Special Education is defined as the education scheme for pupils with at any schools providing Special Education Programme (SEP/PPK) or Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP/PPKI), or at any school providing Inclusive Education Programme (IEP/PPI) for pre-school, primary school, secondary or higher secondary school. Abrizah and Ruslina Ahmad (2010) and UNESCO (2009) commented that the common scenario in Malaysia is that these children with SEN have the option to be enrolled into special school or into PPKI schools. Furthermore, it seems that for majority of pupils with learning problems choose to enrol into PPKI schools.

Xu (2009) reported that educators have continuously held discussions towards better understanding of pupils' capacity to regulate their own learning (based on perceptions, affects, actions and features of the environment). The public's

perceptions and thinking leading to discrimination and negative attitudes towards PwD need to be addressed. These could result in making them feel less confident in facing their peers in school and in society overall (UNESCO, 2009). In order to understand the pupils' learning capacity, the teachers' attention towards each pupil plays an important role that greatly depends on the teacher-pupil ratio. The challenge in providing adequate teachers with special education skills would be due to the enrolment trend of the pupils with SEN (UNESCO, 2009).

1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this research are:

1. To study the development of schools with special education programmes and the locations
2. To examine the suitability and accessibility of special schools environment for special pupils
3. To identify the school considerations and guidelines in accepting the enrolment special pupils
4. To analyse the factors influencing the decision of parents in selecting special education and schools for their special children
5. To assess the issues and problem faced by parents in selecting schools for their special children