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## **Inclusive programmes in Malaysia: mainstream school teachers' acceptance towards special education students**

**Datu Masjidin Datu Moksan, Gunasegaran Karuppannan**

Associate Professor, Centre for Graduate Studies, University Selangor, Selangor, Malaysia

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### **Abstract**

Inclusive Education is a programme where special education students are placed in mainstream classes with normal students. This study attempts to identify the acceptance and readiness of mainstream teachers and students' performance in Inclusive Education programme. Using quantitative method, the study focused on teachers from 17 schools in three districts in Sabah, Malaysia. Teachers' acceptance and their readiness and students' performance are measured through survey. Through the items assessed, the average mean score on the mainstream teachers' acceptance and their readiness level, and students' performance has a mean value of more than 3.00 which indicates that the teachers are positive and they are acceptive towards the presence of special students. The t-test on the teachers' acceptance and readiness level and their gender factor shows no significant relations. Thus, the gender is not affecting teachers' acceptance level. Furthermore, Correlation results on teachers' acceptance level shows positive relationships. Therefore, the results of this study show that mainstream teachers are more acceptive and willing to teach special education students. However, gender, age, education qualification and teaching experience of the teachers do not affect the level of teachers' acceptance. Overall, the results of this study shows that mainstream teachers are positive and ready to teach students who have learning disabilities.

**Keywords:** mainstream teachers, special education, inclusive programmer, acceptance, readiness and performance level

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### **Introduction**

In Malaysia, in-line with the National Education Philosophy, students with special needs are not left behind to have normal learning process. In the context of special education, the Inclusive Education Programme involves students who have various problems, especially in term of learning, sight and hearing disabilities. According to Doorlag and Lewis (2003) <sup>[8]</sup>, inclusive programmes are platform for students with special needs in their first grade. According to the Ministry of Education Malaysia (2008) <sup>[15]</sup>, the programme is established in day schools such as primary and secondary and also at the technical and vocational secondary schools. Inclusive Education Programmes provide opportunities for special education students in the mainstream to study together with normal students. Students are taught by regular teachers using the same teaching techniques and ways of learning regardless of the shortcomings faced by the special education students. According to Supiah (2010) <sup>[32]</sup>, studies on inclusive education in Malaysia are very few. Therefore, further research related to Inclusive Education Programmes are needed to obtain more vital information. The conduct of Inclusive Education Programmes received mixed reactions from the teachers, schools and also from the parents. Mainstream class teachers and special education teachers need to work together and accept special education children with a variety of behavioral differences. Teachers often look down on special education students and they are considered underprivileged, in fact there are a handful of teachers who look sceptically and do not want to accept the presence of special education students in their learning sessions. This was once expressed by Seu and Sue (2012) <sup>[29]</sup>, where according to them, teachers have negative perceptions and do not want to accept the fact that special education students too

should be accepted to attend learning process as normal students. According to Murugiah (1997) <sup>[22]</sup>, the attitude of teachers also affects the willingness and readiness of students to study. In general, motivational factors, emotional stress and self-confidence greatly influence students to learn and study.

### **Problem statement**

Teachers playing an important role in the establishment and sustainability of inclusive education (United Nation, 2006). Teachers who are positive about inclusive education are more likely to have well preparation and planning to adapt teaching methods to support the needs of special education students in their classrooms (Varcoe & Boyle, 2014) <sup>[35]</sup>. Meanwhile, teachers who have a negative attitude and do not accept the presence of inclusive students tend to feel frustrated because they are less confident and less motivated to carry out inclusive teaching and that will indirectly affect the effectiveness of the class (Agbenyega & Klibthong, 2015) <sup>[2]</sup>. In addition, the lack of resources and trained teachers in implementing inclusive programmes also affects teacher's acceptance level. According to Mohd Najib and Sanisah (2006) <sup>[19]</sup>, mainstream teachers do not provide supports and cooperation in the teaching of rehabilitation on special education students in inclusive classrooms. This indirectly raises the question of whether inclusive education programmes would benefit teachers or vice versa.

Factors such as gender, teaching experience, teachers' education level, and the subjects taught play vital role in determining teachers' acceptance and readiness in teaching and learning process. Mainstream teachers' acceptance is theoretically influenced by their teaching experience and attention towards the

students (Ghani & Ahmad, 2012) <sup>[9]</sup>. Experienced teachers will be more positive to accept inclusive programmes and implement them in a better manner (Pham, 2008) <sup>[26]</sup>. However, there are also studies that stress that the teaching experience of teachers does not affect the attitude of teachers in the classroom (Dapudong 2014; Poon et. Al., 2016) <sup>[7, 27]</sup>. According to Wood et. al., (2002) <sup>[40]</sup>, some teachers couldn't accept the presence of students with special needs due to the shortcomings and weaknesses that exist among the students so that some of them do not get the opportunity to attend the formal learning. In addition, the increasing number of students through inclusive classes also influences teachers' acceptance level. As special students are added to mainstream classes that originally has large number of students, the increase in the number of students resulting in teachers are not being able to focus fully on inclusive students and indirectly limiting interaction and learning process, which ultimately affect the effectiveness of inclusive education at large (Miyoshi, 2009) <sup>[18]</sup>. This study is looking at the extent of acceptance and readiness of mainstream teachers towards special education students in inclusive programmes as well as reviewing the performance of special education students. This study covered three districts, namely Kota Belud, Kota Marudu and Kudat in the state of Sabah, Malaysia.

### Research objectives

This study was conducted to examine the acceptance level of mainstream teachers towards special education students that taking part in Inclusive Education Programmes:

1. To measure the level of acceptance among mainstream teachers.
2. To measure the level of readiness among mainstream teachers.
3. To measure the performance of special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes.
4. To identify the relationship between the acceptance of mainstream teachers and the performance of special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes.
5. To examine whether the demographic factors of the mainstream teachers has a significant relationship with the level of acceptance among mainstream teachers.

### The Importance Of The Study

Teachers perspectives were assessed whether the presence of special education students in mainstream classes is a problematic situation or otherwise. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be able to provide useful input for the relevant parties such as Education Ministry Malaysia and thus, they are able to make better planning and implementation related to this programme, which will certainly be able to help the special needs students in the future. All stakeholders in the education system, whether private or public, need to play an equally important role for the benefit of inclusive education students.

### Scope of the research

Thus, the researcher examined the acceptance of mainstream teachers who are involves in Inclusive Education Programmes in Kota Belud, Kota Marudu and Kudat districts, involving eight

secondary schools and nine primary schools with special education students. The study was conducted to evaluate the level of teachers' acceptance and their readiness, and the performance of special education students.

### Development of special education in Malaysia

Education Policy (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2002) <sup>[14]</sup> requires formal education for all children including children with special needs. The laws also provide provision to prosecute parents who are failed to send their children to school. In addition, the government is also responsible in terms of providing appropriate education according to the needs of all children, including those with disabilities (Supiah Saad, 2010) <sup>[32]</sup>. In Malaysia, formal education for children with special needs began in 1920. At that time, formal education for special education was opened for children with obvious limb disabilities. Then in 1954, formal education for children with special needs with hearing impairment was introduced and in 1969 special education was opened for children with learning disabilities (Ghani & Ahmad, 2012) <sup>[9]</sup>. Therefore, inclusive education is not a new scheme in Malaysia. Previously, it was called as "integrated" programme (Zaleha, 1997) <sup>[43]</sup>.

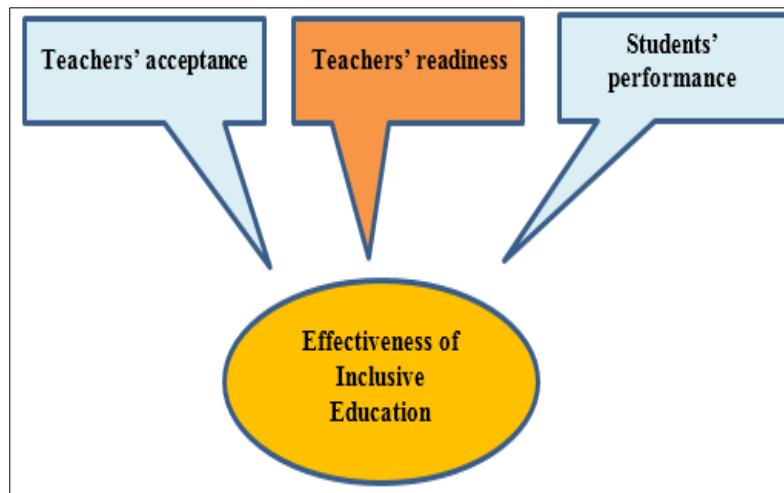
The Inclusive Education Programme was introduced as a reform and improvement especially for the special education students. The programme provides an opportunity for individuals or students with learning disabilities to study together with their normal peers to enable them to follow the lessons more effectively (Hamzah & Ashari, 1999) <sup>[11]</sup>. In Malaysia, students with special needs are given the opportunity to receive education by attending one of three school options, namely special education schools; Special Education Integration Programme or Inclusive Education Programme.

In order to implement and achieve the goals of Inclusive Education Programme, there are several challenges, obstacles and contradictions that result in educational reform (Supiah, 2010) <sup>[32]</sup>.

Among them are the acceptance level of mainstream teachers, the acceptance level of special education teachers, the acceptance level of parents, the acceptance level of schools and finally, the acceptance level of students towards special education in Inclusive Education Programmes are significantly different. Positive and negative reactions, especially from teachers are among the issues that surfaces in the implementing process of Inclusive Education programme in Malaysia. There are several studies show that teachers' responses and reactions towards inclusive education. In general, some support and some are not. Haniz's (1998) <sup>[12]</sup>.

study states that mainstream teachers are negative towards inclusive education. According to Haniz, the acceptance level of mainstream teachers is positive and they are more open towards students who have not been diagnosed and have no learning disabilities or deficiencies compared to students who are already labeled with some kind problem. This indicates that the mainstream teachers are not yet ready to accept the presence of special education students in their classrooms.

### Theoretical framework of the study



**Fig 2:** Mainstream Teachers’ Acceptance and Their Readiness, and the Students’ Performance in Inclusive Education Programmes

In-line with the objectives of the study, the theoretical framework of the study was developed in such manner to identify the appropriate domain and it was used throughout the study. According to Avramidis & Norwich (2002) <sup>[4]</sup>, the acceptance level of mainstream teachers towards students in inclusive programmes is influenced by several factors such as teaching experience, and teachers' skills to teach and manage students with special needs. Through experience, mainstream teachers could assess and observe students’ performance and indirectly be able to acquire teaching skills and appropriate teaching and learning techniques in the classroom. According to Subhan and Sharma (2005), teachers are need to have appropriate physical, mental and behavioral strength to guide their students. The class size, number of students and availability of teaching aids, teachers’s workload are among the challenges that need to be faced, especially teachers who conduct the teaching lesson inclusively. Careful preparation and planning will make it easier for the students to follow teaching and learning sessions and then to improve and enhance their performance.

**Methodology**

The researcher applied scientific educational research approach and therefore, systematic and orderly planning was carried out to collect data. This is in-line with Noraini (2010) <sup>[23]</sup> who had stated that the design of the study is determined by the objectives of the study. A pilot study was also conducted to determine the level of reliability and the actual study was conducted when the pilot study met the research standards. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire was used to collect data. The questionnaire consists of four sections, namely the demographic questions of the respondents placed in Section A while sections B, C and D were

questions that cover the domain of mainstream teachers’ acceptance level, mainstream teachers’ readiness and students’ performance in Inclusive Education Programmes. The study applied group sampling method with a total population of 110, with 59 of them from Kota Belud district, Kota Marudu (12) and Kudat (39). The researcher guided by the Krejcie and Morgan formula in the process of selecting samples. As such the study interviewed 86 respondents.

**Findings of the study**

**Demographics of the study**

Of the 86 respondents, a total of 47 or 54.7 per cent were female teachers and 39 (45.3 per cent) were male teachers. Most respondents were in the age range of 30-39 years with the number of 55 respondents (64 per cent) while 24 or 27.9 per cent (20-29 years), seven or 8.1 per cent (40-49 years) and no respondents aged 50 years and above. In terms of level of education, the largest group were those holds Bachelor Degree with 70 or 81.5 per cent, followed by those with a Master's Degree (16 or 18.6 per cent) and none of respondents have PhD qualifications. Most respondents have 11 to 20 years of teaching experience with a total of 57 people or 66.3 per cent. Those with 1-10 years of teaching experience were 25 or 29.1 per cent, and four respondents said that they have 21 to 30 years of teaching experience.

None of the respondents had more than 30 years of work experience.

**Research question: level of acceptance of mainstream teachers towards special needs students in Inclusive Education Programmes**

**Table 1:** Teachers’ Acceptance Level Domain-Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Items	Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation	Standard Deviations
S1	I understand the meaning of inclusive programs	4.03	High	.887
S2	I know the effective inclusive implementation methods	2.98	Low	.963
S3	I never disappointed in teaching special education students	4.06	High	.891
S4	I am confident in the abilities of special education students	3.16	Moderate	.944
S5	I am excited to teach special education students	3.33	Moderate	.987
S6	I believe in the potential of special education students	3.88	Moderate	.758
S7	I believe the achievement of special education students will increase through inclusive programs	4.15	-	.833

S8	I am confidence in teaching students with learning disabilities	4.01	High	.901
S9	I have no problem teaching students with low cognitive level	3.83	Moderate	.984
S10	I believe special education students need the social learning that exists in mainstream classes	3.47	Moderate	.954
S11	I am confident that the confidence of special education students will increase if they continue to be in mainstream classes	3.50	Moderate	.891
S12	I find that special education students do not bother mainstream students	4.28	High	.821
S13	I believe special education students could achieve a better academic performance if placed in an inclusive program much earlier	3.58	Moderate	.926
S14	I fully support the inclusive program	3.63	Moderate	.880
S15	The presence of special education students is not a burden for the mainstream teachers	3.56	Moderate	.939

Table 1 indicates the mean scores and standard deviations for the mainstream teachers' acceptance domain. The mean score for items S1, S3, S7, S8 and S12 exceeds 4.00, and therefore that level is considered high. While the mean scores for items S4, S5, S6, S9, S10 and S11 are in the range of 3.00 to 3.99, which is categorized as moderate. Only item S2 shows a low mean score of 2.98.

On the average the mean score is 3.69 and thus, domain of mainstream teachers' acceptance level towards special education should be interpreted as moderate. In other words, the teachers are able to accept special education students who are part of Inclusive Education Programmes.

### Research questions: readiness level of mainstream teachers

**Table 2:** Mainstream Teachers' Readiness Domain-Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Question Number (Item)	Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation	Standard Deviations
S16	I need courses to improve teaching skills in inclusive classes	3.58	Moderate	.939
S17	I am ready to diversify teaching pedagogy for special education students	4.05	High	.796
S18	I am willing to work with special education teachers to teach special education	3.93	Moderate	.865
S19	I am willing to work with parents of special education students	4.07	High	.892
S20	I am ready to attend classroom management courses for special education students	3.80	Moderate	.700
S21	I will teach without a negative perspective towards special education students	3.55	Moderate	.916
S22	I am willing to spend more time for special education students	4.19	High	.805
S23	I am able to teach inclusive students who have problems with moderate behavior	3.59	Moderate	.925
S24	I am willing to make physical changes in the classroom to facilitate the learning process	3.94	Moderate	.962
S25	I am willing to provide teaching aids	3.68	Moderate	.830
S26	I know the rights of special education students to sit for exams	3.60	Moderate	.986
S27	I know that all students are entitled to education	4.19	High	.805
S28	Facilities / learning facilities for students with special needs in the inclusive classroom are sufficient	3.22	Moderate	.951

Based on the mean score as shown in Table 2 can be concluded that the average mean score is between 3.00-3.99. This indicates that teachers' readiness is at the moderate level, and this is further explained through items S16, S18, S20, S21, S23, S4, S25, S26 and S28.

Meanwhile items S17, S19, S22, and S27 have a mean value above 4.00, which is considered high. Compared to earlier

research question, no low mean score was obtained. Overall, the average mean score is 3.45. Thus, this proves that teachers have a positive and moderate level of readiness in receiving special education students.

### Research question: performance of special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes

**Table 3:** Special Education Students' Performance Domain – Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Question Number (Item)	Statement	Mean Score	Interpretation	Standard Deviations
S29	Interaction between students becomes better	4.23	High	.821
S30	Special education students could compete with mainstream students	4.02	High	.970
S31	Special education students move actively in the mainstream class	3.51	Moderate	.979
S32	Students providing a good response throughout the learning period	4.26	High	.884
S33	Teacher's teachings is well accepted	3.98	Moderate	.782
S34	Students' communication with teachers increases	3.92	Moderate	.985
S35	Student academic performance improves through inclusive	3.62	Moderate	.883
S36	Special education students are able to work with other students (group activities)	4.12	High	.887
S37	Special education students show more behavioral problems when placed with normal students	2.60	Low	.997

The analysis of Table 3 shows the mean value scores and standard deviations for the performance of special education students in the inclusive class. Based on the findings, the researcher concluded that the average mean score is in the range of 3.00-3.99 or considered as moderate level. This is explained through items S31, S33, S34, S35 and S37. While the other items have a value exceeding 4.00 which is S29, S30, S32 and S36. In short, it can be concluded that the average performance of special education students is moderate.

**Mainstream teachers’ acceptance and readiness based on gender**

**Table 4:** Group Statistics – Teachers’ Acceptance and Their Readiness Based on Gender Factor

Aspect	Gender	N	Mean	Standard Deviations	SE
Teachers’ acceptance	Male	39	3.63	.296	.047
	Female	47	3.75	.311	.045
Teachers’ readiness	Male	39	3.81	.341	.054
	Female	47	3.79	.353	.051

T-test analysis was performed to look at the relationship between gender and mainstream teachers’ acceptance and, their readiness (Table 4). In term of teachers’ acceptance and gender, the mean score is moderate: male teachers (3.63) and female teachers (3.75). The findings also indicating moderate level of mean score in term of teachers’ readiness and gender. The value of mean score of 3.81 for male teachers and 3.79 for female teachers. The analysis also shows that there is a difference between the teachers’ acceptance and their readiness based on gender.

**9.6 Research questions – relationship between mainstream teachers’ acceptance and performance of special education students**

The findings show that there is a strong positive correlation that exists between the mainstream teachers’ acceptance level and special students’ performance ( $r = .254, p < 0.05$ ). These findings explain that there is a weak positive relationship between the two domains. In other words, the performance of special education students in inclusive programs will escalate if the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers increases.

**Table 5:** Correlation Between Teachers’ Acceptance Level and Special Education Students’ Performance

		Teachers’ acceptance	Students’ performance
Teachers’ acceptance	Korelasi Pearson	1	.254(*)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	-	.018
	N	86	86
Students’ performance	Korelasi Pearson	.254(*)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	-
	N	86	86

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

**Research questions – relationship between demographic factors and the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers**

Statistical analysis of ANOVA for the factors of gender, age, teaching experience and level of education was performed at 95% confidence level,  $p < 0.05$  (Table 6). The results show that there

is no significant difference in the score of the level of teachers’ acceptance with all the demographic factors of the respondents. Gender score with value  $[F (1.84) = 3.414, p = .068]$ , age of respondents  $[F (2.83) = .1939, p = .150]$ , education level score  $[F (1.84) = .526, p = .470]$ , and teaching experience score  $[F (2.83) = 1.561, p = .216]$ . The ‘p’ score for all demographic factors indicates an insignificant value because the p value exceeds 0.05. This means that the demographic factors of mainstream teachers, namely gender, age, level of education and teaching experience of teachers do not affect the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers towards special education students in inclusive programs.

**Table 6:** One-way ANOVA Test on the Demographic Factors and Mainstream Teachers’ Acceptance

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Teachers’ acceptance	In the Group	.318	1	.318	3.414	.068
	Between Group	7.822	84	.093		
	Total	8.140	85			
Age	In the group	.363	2	.182	1.939	.150
	Between group	7.777	83	.094		
	Total	8.140	85			
Education level	In the group	.051	1	.051	.526	.470
	Between group	8.089	84	.096		
	Total	8.140	85			
Teaching experience	In the group	.295	2	5.968	1.561	.216
	Between group	7.845	83	.687		
	Total	8.140	85			

**Discussions**

Based on the findings of the study, the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers towards special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes, teachers relatively agree and openly accept special education students. Although not totally accepting them, the teachers are willing to accommodate the presence of special education students. The findings of this study are in-line with the findings of Dapudong (2014)<sup>[7]</sup> in Thailand, which shows that the acceptance of mainstream teachers towards inclusive education is at moderate level as well as the study conducted by Manisah et. al., (2006). Manisah et. al. explained that 66 per cent of teachers in Malaysia have a positive perception on the implementation of the Inclusive Education Programme. However, the item S2 shows that mainstream teachers are less aware about the effectiveness of Inclusive Education Programme implementation methods. This is influenced by the lack of exposure to programme and the skills of approaching the special education students. This situation is also explained by a study by Sukbunpant et. al. (2013)<sup>[30]</sup>, who stressed that lack of awareness could affect the effectiveness level. The findings of the study also show that mainstream teachers are willing to accept special education students with low cognitive levels. With careful teaching planning, students with special needs can learn well along with normal students. This is contrary compared to the findings by Abdul Rahim and Khairul Anuwar (2013), who stated that mainstream teachers not incline to teach students with low cognitive level and thus, special education teachers are responsible in guiding them.

The study also found that a person's level of concern and readiness is usually not influenced by gender factor. On the other

hand, other factors such as knowledge and experience are among the reasons that determine a person's readiness (Dapudong, 2014)<sup>[7]</sup>. In the context of inclusive education, teachers' knowledge and experience will be able to assist teachers in the teaching and learning process. In fact, this study also shows that the readiness of teachers is at a positive level. This shows that teachers are ready and able to accept the presence of inclusive students in the mainstream class even though special education students have different shortcomings. This has to do with the theory mentioned by Imam Muhammad al-Ghazali, who explained that positive association regardless of individual shortcomings on the basis of respect will lead to the development of life and the sharing of knowledge. The willingness of mainstream teachers to accept special education students in inclusive classes is also commendable as it encourages gratitude and teachers' efforts to educate students who must have different challenges.

Based on this study, the performance of special education students in the classroom has a good perception from the point of view of the head teacher. This is influenced by the positive acceptance of teachers in accepting and guiding special education students. In addition, the responsibility and commitment of teachers in unearthing the talents and potential in students can improve the performance of special education students. Interaction between special education students, communication between students and teachers, active movement of special education students as well as giving a good response throughout being in the inclusive class shows an improvement in good performance in the primary class. The level of effectiveness and success of inclusive education can be assessed through the aspects of achievement and performance of special education students in the inclusive classroom. Improving student performance during and after the learning process shows good progress and shows inclusive effectiveness in a school. One of the factors of inclusive success can be influenced by teacher confidence and response.

The findings also show that there is a positive correlation between the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers and the performance of special education students. This explains the relationship between teacher acceptance level and student performance. In other words, the performance of special education students in inclusive programs will increase if the level of acceptance of mainstream teachers increases. Teachers who are positive and open minded in receiving inclusive education will certainly strive to improve the performance of their students. Mentors and educators should always encourage, motivate and show good personality to children (Muhammad al-Ghazali, 1988) because they are easy to follow and emulate the morals of the individuals closest to them. In the context of learning, students will emulate the teacher in all aspects.

In-term of relationship between teachers' demographic factors and their acceptance levels, the finding of this study is similar with the outcome shared by Dapudong (2014)<sup>[7]</sup>, Pham (2008)<sup>[26]</sup> and Poon et. al., (2016)<sup>[27]</sup>. It is clear that age, level of education and teaching experience have no affect in term of mainstream teachers' acceptance level towards special education students. According to Avramidis et. al., (2000)<sup>[5]</sup>, teachers' acceptance is influenced by the inclination, commitment and teaching experience of teachers. Through these factors, teachers' acceptance of inclusive education students can be seen either positively or negatively and will indirectly affect the success and

performance of special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes. However, there are studies that show that age and teaching experience influence the acceptance of mainstream teachers towards inclusive students. Younger teachers have less teaching experience than senior teachers, but younger teachers also could have positive attitude towards special education students (Avramidis & Norwich, 2002)<sup>[4]</sup>.

### **Implications of the study and recommendations**

The implications of the study are generally divided into two parts, namely the strategy of mainstream teachers in receiving inclusive education, the preparation strategy of mainstream teachers in shaping the performance of special education students in inclusive programs. In order to obtain a wider and comprehensive inclusion of inclusive students, the participation of more and more of mainstream teachers is strongly encouraged. Through more participation, mainstream teachers' approaches and strategies in receiving inclusive education can be better interpreted.

The study found four key findings: the level of teacher acceptance was moderate; the level of performance of special education students in inclusive programs is moderate; there is a positive relationship between teachers' acceptance and the performance of special education students in inclusive programs; and demographic factors covering gender, age, level of education and teaching experience of teachers do not influence the acceptance of primary teachers.

Special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes are recommended to improve communication or other skills. The ability to communicate is very important in the learning and teaching process to improve the relationship between teachers and inclusive students. In the process of teaching and learning, teachers can share experiences with their students and vice versa. In this way, students will get the expected benefits because a good teaching and learning process requires two-way communication (Habibah, Zaidatol & Rahil, 1995)<sup>[10]</sup>. Competent teachers will have a variety of new ideas to help improve student achievement, especially mainstream teachers who teach special education students in inclusive programs effectively and are highly capable in making teaching and learning preparation (James & Balasandran, 2012)<sup>[13]</sup>.

Researcher is of the view that further study is needed to compare the acceptance of mainstream teachers towards students in inclusive programs in other states in Malaysia with the involvement of wider population. The generalisation of the findings of the study in the Malaysian context shows that wider acceptance of mainstream teachers will help the Ministry of Education Malaysia. Further research is needed to determine whether the constraints or barriers that arise affect the acceptance of primary teachers towards inclusive students.

### **Conclusion**

Through this study the researcher felt that mainstream teachers are willing to accept and are ready to face special education students in Inclusive Education Programmes. Demographic factors such as gender, age, level of education and teaching experience did not show significant differences in terms of the acceptance of mainstream teachers over special education students. The approach in teaching and learning is very important in order to provide opportunities for special education students.

Students need to be given space and opportunities so that they can seek knowledge like other normal students in the mainstream. Mainstream teachers also need to be open-minded and be supportive so that the Inclusive Education Programme implementation can achieve goals, especially related to the acceptance of mainstream teachers towards special education students in inclusive programs.

The effectiveness of inclusive can be indirectly seen through the relevance of mainstream teachers' acceptance and its impact on the performance of students with special needs in inclusive programs. The implementation of inclusive education programme requires the cooperation of all parties so that this program could achieves its objectives and effectiveness. Inclusive Education Programmes provide opportunities towards strengthening the education system for special education groups as well as raising the status of Malaysian education in-line with the national education philosophy.

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