

The Implementing of Zero Reject Policy in Malaysia : Teacher's Ability in Identifying Student with SEN in Mainstream Classroom

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Abstract: Early intervention will help special education need student to get early enforcement in learning. Therefore, this study aims is to identify teacher strategies and ability in identifying students with special needs. This mix method study involve 13 respondent in qualitative study while 230 respondent in quantitative study. The sample is convenience sampling and the data analysis with SPSS and thematic analysis. The research found that 56.53 % respondent achieve mastery level while 43.47 % was below mastery level. The research found a few themes based on interview conducted namely identify student with SEN based on their early intervention, cognitive ability, diagnostic or screening test and physical appearance. Therefore, the qualitative found that majority of respondents able to identify students with diagnostic or screening test, while some of them thru early intervention and cognitive ability. Based on the need analysis majority respondent mention that courses about introduction into special education was the courses that really needed to them, as there were mainstream teachers.

Keyword: SEN, Early Identification. Zero Reject Policy.

1. Introduction

Relatively ZRP is not a new policy but is related to compliance with the Education Act 1996 [Act 550], Section 29A. Compulsory Primary Education outlines that, Subsection (2) Every parent who is a Malaysian citizen residing in Malaysia shall ensure that if his child has attained the age of six years on the first day of January in the current school year the child is registered as a pupil in a primary school in that year and continues to be primary school pupils throughout the period of compulsory education. Subsection (4) a parent who contravenes subsection (2) shall be guilty of an offense and shall, on conviction, be liable to a fine not exceeding five thousand ringgit or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to both. In 2019, the Ministry has introduced a comprehensive Zero Reject Policy for Students with Special Needs (SEN). The implementation of this policy is to ensure that all people with disabilities are not exempted from entering the school environment. Apart from that, the 'Circular on Voluntary Parental Involvement in the Classroom' is also an important policy through "Initiative number 62 on Parental Involvement, Community and Private Sector in line with the aspirations in the Malaysian Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013 to 2025". Involvement of Volunteers in the Classroom in the preschool, primary, secondary school levels including special education schools and integrated special education programs will be able to assist in the launch of the Teaching and Learning (TL) process. The statement also clarified that at the end of June 2019, a total of 735 schools with fewer students with SEN had accepted this policy with the acceptance of SEN without any complaints. This was seen to have led to good and positive achievements at the initial stage in the implementation of the Zero Rejection Policy in the

country. The implementation of this policy is also for the monitoring of each MBK in terms of their respective strengths and weaknesses so that teachers can provide individual educational plans and teaching and learning methods for the students. Therefore, based on ACT 550, Ministry of Education in Malaysia emphasizes that SEN has the right to receive compulsory education at the primary school level. SEN also has the right to receive education in line with their disability either to Special Education Schools or mainstream schools through Inclusive Education or Special Education Integration Program. With the implementation of this ZRP, Students with Special Needs (SEN) can register anywhere in the school they are interested in and the school cannot reject the student's application. Because the characteristics of education are dynamic and constantly evolving, this change is a process of learning and improving the quality and delivery of knowledge. (BPKhas, 2018)

Literature Review

The effectiveness of the teacher training process also depends on the teacher's interest, knowledge and skills in the field. This is because extensive knowledge about the subject will help teachers identify aspects of student learning (Abdul Rahim Hamdan et al 2015), the level of teacher knowledge, interest, teacher skills in 42 schools in Pontian is at a moderate level which is only 59.07%. In fact, 69.97% of the respondents also admitted that the most dominant factor in the smoothness and effectiveness of teaching and learning was the level of knowledge and skills among teachers. The findings of Airil, H. M. &Intan. A. H. (2011) found that teachers still do not have good training in implementing inclusive classes. Norlia and Mohd Hanafi (2016), found that even 64.10% of primary teachers are willing to run inclusive classes, but they do not yet have strong skills to help create a more planned and organized teaching and learning. (Norlia & Mohd Hanafi 2016). The implementation of inclusive education has become an obstacle in this country due to the lack of skills in understanding the problems of students between those who have learning difficulties and students who lack self-motivation. This confusion about students with special needs involves teachers who have never heard and know about special education. The teacher's failure to understand this context causes the existence of elements of stigma and stereotyping that make teachers not give the same space to students who are said to have problems in learning (Nadhir et al. 2016). Therefore, mainstream teachers' acceptance of undiagnosed SEN students is more positive than students who have been labeled with a problem. The effect of labeling on SEN is significant in the implementation of inclusive education (Nadhir et al. 2016). This also has an impact on the implementation of teachers' teaching and learning involving SEN students. Thus, early exposure not only gives the right to equality in getting an education but also takes into account the humanitarian aspect. (greatly one academic achievement as well as human development). Nadhir et al. (2016) even the content of teacher education subjects now needs to be refined by giving exposure to all teachers to identify the diversity of students and students with learning problems (Zalizan et al. 2012). This is because, 60% of teachers have never attended a course on managing inclusive education, causing teachers to teach in a teach-a-whole manner (Norlia & Mohd Hanafi 2016).

Teaching techniques that use multiple levels in one class have been proven successful abroad. The study of Vassiliki, G., Marita, P. &Eleni, A. (2011) on students with learning problems in Greece proved a 27% increase in students' vocabulary after following inclusive learning for 45 minutes. However, the issue of lack of exposure to special education also occurs in Hong Kong where only 16% of teachers have knowledge about problematic students, on the other hand 67% only receive a little exposure. In fact, 70% of the teachers with less exposure are those who have served 6 years. Ho. F.C & Lam, C.S.L. .2020. In an interview Kantavong, P (2018) with 11 administrators from a school in the city of Khon Kean North East Thailand found that 63.6% of school leaders support the implementation of inclusive education but only 45.5% of administrators have sent teachers to undergo courses or training regarding the implementation of inclusive education in schools. Based on feedback from school administrators, the lack of budget also hampers schools to attend training or send teachers to attend courses. In addition, policies that often change are also an effect on the emphasis on inclusive education in schools. Meanwhile, the findings in the group interviews conducted with the teachers explained that they are still applying the knowledge gained in the last course by developing materials to help SEN. Teachers also stated that they gained knowledge about the teaching method of SEN from friends who attended the course either at their own school or from friends from other schools. 54.8% of teachers thought they could develop classroom management skills in inclusive education as a result of collaborative work among friends. their colleagues and

also the teachers who have been teaching in special education classes. However, 90.4% of teachers also think that the implementation of this inclusive education requires understanding from the parents of first class students who may have a bad view of SEN when studying with their children in the same class and strong support from school administrators. The teacher explained that teachers who have training this can help them to identify students who have SEN. In addition, teachers can also help parents give medicine to students such as ADHD students so that they do not act too aggressively in class. Interviews with teachers also concluded that the majority of teachers felt that they had neglected SEN to do their own work in class because they no longer knew what to do to attract the students' interest. They also voiced that they help students based on their conscience and compassion for the student. They also said they were actually tired but still tried to do their best to help.

2. Method

Research conducted in mix method study whereby the qualitative data will support the finding in quantitative data. The sample was convenience one, questionnaire distributed to 230 respondent and in depth interview conducted with a group of 13 respondent from four different school. The quantitative data will generated using SPSS version 22, and data was analyzed descriptive and inferential, while the interview data will, analyzed using thematic analyzed. Researcher help the interviewees for missing link by given a probing in to keep the conversation on a good track. In this research, logistics such as obtaining the official permission to do the interview and while school was on – going were duly compiled

Findings

The respondent was tested by answering 10 item based on their general knowledge toward characteristic of Special Education Student. The result in Table 1.1 show only 6.1% of respondent able to answer all correct whereby majority or 28.7% of respondent was answer 8 item correct and follow by 9 item correct with margin 21.7%. However, there were 13% of respondent was only able to get 5 and below correct.

Table 1.1 Item with Correct Answer

Score	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
2.00	1	.4	.4
3.00	3	1.3	1.7
4.00	9	3.9	5.7
5.00	17	7.4	13.0
6.00	29	12.6	25.7
7.00	41	17.8	43.5
8.00	66	28.7	72.2
9.00	50	21.7	93.9
10.00	14	6.1	100.0
Total	230	100.0	

The researcher summarize the score with indicated the mastery level are those answer 8 item correctly. Therefore, based on Table 1.2 below, indicate that only 130 or 56.53 % respondent are achieve mastery level whereas, 100 or 43.47 % non-mastery level. Even though the mastery level score was higher, but the percentage of non – mastery level was consider still very high. It may gapping between collaboration between resource and mainstream teacher in teaching special education and also linking on exposure towards SEN in mainstream teacher.

Table 1.2 Summarize of Mastery Level

	Answer	Frequency	Percent
Mastery Level	No	100	43.47
	Yes	130	56.53
	Total	230	100.0

How teacher identify SEN in mainstream classroom?

Interview was conducted among 13 teacher that teach in primary school and the data was analyzed using thematic analyses. From the interview conducted 12 of them have an experiences teacher student with SEN or student with SEN characteristic or multiple intelligent student. The summarize of the findings was Table 1.3 below

Tema	Responden	Frekuensi
Early intervention	R1T1,R11T11,R2T2	3
Cognitive ability	R7T7,R12T12,R8T8,R9T9	4
Dignostic / screening test	R10T10,R1T1,R2T2,R3T3,R4T4,R5T5,R6T6	7
Physical apperance	R13T13	1

Based on Table 1.3 above , there are three methods for teachers to identify MBK in class. The method that is often used is through screening and diagnostic tests, seven people stated that they use this method, namely R10T10, R1T1, R2T2, R3T3, R4T4, R5T5 and R6T6. Meanwhile, three interviewer respond that they identify the student with SEN with early intervention R1T1, R11T11 and R2T2. While R7T7, R12T12, R8T8 and R9T9 mention that they examine student cognitive ability. While only one respondent identify thru the student's physical characteristics However, there are two respondents who choose two methods in identifying the characteristics of MBK, namely respondents R1T1 and R2T2

Obervation thru early intervention

According to respondent R1T1, he identified the characteristics of MBK through early signs. "...Identifying theearly signs of students..." R1T1.Meanwhile, for respondent R11T11, he identified MBK through student behavior and early detection of students. "...Identify from past behavior and early detection..."R11T11. For respondent R2T2, he often looks at the student's signs through observation "...It is often from observation and those signs are..." R2T2

Oberservation thru cognitive ability

Meanwhile, for respondent R7T7, this SEN was found not to have the skills to write letters correctly. "...What I see, they do have early signs such as not being able to write letters correctly and sometimes there is no appearance of letters..." R7T7. For respondent R12T12, he identified SEN when the student was unable to answer any question correctly and did not master any learning objective even though it had been a month of learning "...Identified when the student failed to answer any question correctly and also the student was unable to master any objective learning about a month of PdPc sessions have been implemented..." R12T12. In addition, according to respondent R8T8, students also give less answers when asked and often also give respondents with wrong answers. "...I will look for early signs, for example not giving a good response, often answering questions incorrectly..." R8T8. For respondents R9T9, MBK also has a speech delay problem and is faced with the

problem of fluency in identifying letters and syllables "...Speech delay, fluency in identifying letters and syllables..." R9T9

Diagnostic Analysis and screening

Table 1.4 Theme, respondent and Frequency

Theme	Respondent	Frequency
Dignostic Test	R10T10,R1T1,R2T2	3
Screening	R8T8,R6T6	2
LINUS Instrument	R3T3	1
Classroom Assesment	R4T4,R5T5	2

Identification of SEN characteristics using screening and diagnostic test methods is the most popular method used by respondents in this study. Based on Table 1.4 a total of eight respondents namely R10T0, R1T1, R2T2, R3T3, R4T4, R5T5 and R6T6 stated that they use screening and diagnostic test methods. There are four sub-themes identified, namely, diagnostic tests, screening, LINUS instruments and Classroom Assessment. According to respondents, this method is often used since the introduction of the Literacy and Numeracy (LINUS) program and there are still schools using the LINUS instrument as an instrument to test students' abilities. Normally, this screening is carried out at the beginning of each year for. In addition, respondents also said that this screening is carried out after the teacher makes observations of the students' early signs.

Diagnostic Tests

According to respondents, it is common in schools that they use diagnostic tests to identify SEN. "...Diagnostic tests..." R10T10. However, there are also schools that use screening and use diagnostic skills to identify the state of student achievement "... carry out screening and use diagnostic skills to identify their condition..." R1T1. Meanwhile, respondent R2T2 stated that this diagnostic test is usually held at the beginning of the year and he will also ask the previous teacher about the student's achievement. "... and the second from the diagnostic test at the beginning of the year, usually if I just entered the second year, first year or third year class I would ask them if they had a previous teacher..." R2T2

Screening

Apart from diagnostic tests, there are also teachers who carry out self-screening of students who have been identified as having the characteristics of MBK. "... Then only make screening..." R8T8. There are also teachers who screen to identify reading skills and ensure that students can master the skills that should be mastered according to the level and age of the students. "...I made a screening such as the ability to read and remember things or simple topics that should have been mastered without problems for students of the same age..." R6T6

LINUS Instrument

Although Linus is no longer implemented in schools, the use of the Linus instrument in screening students is still relevant to identify student achievement, especially for nine-year-old students. "...We use the linus instrument to screen students who do not reach the minimum level of level 2 at the age of 9..." R3T3

Classroom Assessment

For respondents R4T4 and R5T5, classroom assessment is also used as one of the methods to evaluate the characteristics of SEN in the classroom. For students who have not yet mastered the level, these students will be sent to take remedial classes and if they have not been successfully rehabilitated then these students will be sent for the outreach program "...Student learning records such as Classroom Assessments and screening tests..." R4T4. Observation and the results of assignments in class is also one of the methods used in classroom

assessment which will ultimately help teachers identify the characteristics of students who have the potential to become MBK. "...Through observation, assignment results, student responses in the classroom and classroom assessment..." R5T5.

Theme 4: Physical Appearance

In this study, there was one respondent, R13T13, who said this was a way for them to identify the characteristics of SEN students. This method is easier because it involves the physical form of the student and is external "...I identify the student based on the student's physical characteristics and the student's attitude..." R13T13.

Overall, for the research question about the extent to which teachers are able to identify SEN, a total of 130 teachers have reached the mastery level, while 100 teachers have were not. However, a total of 6.1% (14) of the teachers managed to answer all the questions correctly. Overall, the researchers concluded that teachers have the skills to identify the characteristics of SEN based on the physical characteristics of students, namely students with Down syndrome, vision problems and hearing problems. But teachers are still need guidance in recognizing the characteristics of SEN with autism, ADHD and Dyslexia. In summary, the teacher can answer correctly when the question involves the characteristics of MBK in physical form. Meanwhile, the findings of an interview with 13 respondents about the method used by teachers to identify MBK found that seven respondents said they identified SEN through early signs, while eight respondents used screening or diagnostic tests, skills cognitive of two respondents and physical characteristics of one

Need Analysis

Table 1.5 List of courses and responses based on the importance of the course for each respondent

Courses	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10	R11	R12	R13
Introduction to Special Education	2	1	3	10	1	3	9	14	1	1	1	4	1
Behavior management	4	2	9	9	3	1	7	2	11	8	2	5	8
Class Control	9	3	10	11	4	5	8	3	12	7	3	6	7
Student Screening	5	4	11	8	5	2	1	4	2	3	10	2	4
Identification of SEN	1	5	1	6	2	4	4	1	10	2	8	1	6
SEN Assessment	10	6	7	5	6	12	13	5	3	9	9	3	13
How to teach MBK	6	7	2	7	7	6	10	6	9	6	4	10	9
Lesson Planning	7	8	12	1	9	7	12	7	13	5	14	7	10
SEN registration process	8	9	4	14	13	11	2	11	14	4	11	9	5
Management	3	10	14	13	14	8	3	10	4	13	7	8	2
Inclusive education	12	11	5	4	8	9	5	9	8	12	13	14	12
Differentiate Learning	13	12	6	2	10	10	14	12	5	11	5	13	11
Adaptive Teaching Skill	11	13	8	3	11	13	6	8	6	10	6	12	14
Zero Reject Policy	14	14	13	12	12	14	11	13	7	14	12	11	3

In this study, the researcher has listed 14 courses and training and asked the respondents to list the courses according to the importance of the courses for each respondent. Based on the interview, the majority stated that familiarization with special education courses is the course they need the most at the moment. This is because six out of 13 respondents said they agree that an introduction to special education courses was their first need at the moment. In addition, four respondents made identifying the characteristics of SEN the most necessary course or training for them. While there was one respondent who stated that they needed behavior management courses, student screening and the preparation of individual lesson plans. In conclusion, with this finding, the researcher can conclude that the teachers in the study area really need an exposure course to special education itself. This is because the primary teachers in this study were not have a good exposure towards special education as well as SEN identification, SEN screening, SEN evaluation and also the writing of individual lesson plans.

3. Discussion

The findings in this study show that almost half of the teachers in the study area have not yet reached the master's level. Teachers more often answer questions less accurately for questions that do not involve physical characteristics. This shows that teachers do not yet have good skills in identifying the characteristics of SEN. This also happened in the study of Hanafi et al. (2019) who studied 219 primary teachers in the interior of Kapit showed that out of 219 primary teachers, 109 teachers were did not reach the mastery level and only 110 teachers were reached the mastery level. In this study as well, respondents could only answer correctly for the physical questions. Meanwhile, in the SalmahJopri et al. 2020 study, it was found that only 50.2% of teachers were able to identify the characteristics of SEN well. This situation is in line with Suhartika & Rosadah's (2020) study of 100 non-option teachers in Kuching Sarawak they doesn't have knowledge about special education and also lack of knowledge in identifying SEN. Meanwhile, the teachers in this study stated three methods that are often used by teachers in identifying the characteristics of SEN. The most popular method is through screening and diagnostic tests. There are respondents who stated that this screening test is implemented in schools and still use the LINUS instrument to make screening tests even though LINUS is no longer implemented in schools. These screening and diagnostic tests are mostly conducted when students are in Year 1. In addition, screening is also done to assess students' literacy and numeracy skills. Assessment is also carried out when teachers carry out classroom assessments. For students who have not yet mastered the level, these students will be sent to participate in remedial classes and if they have not been successfully rehabilitated then these students will be sent to the outreach program. SEN also have lower cognitive skills compared to normal students of their age. Teachers explained that they identify SEN through cognitive skills when they have taught the same subject for a certain period of time but this student has not yet mastered those skills. Then the teacher will suggest the name of this student to be taken to the superiors for the purpose of a doctor's examination. Apart from the teacher's skills, they also stated that they see the students from the initial signs of the students. Most of these SEN have different behavioral characteristics from normal students and this makes it easier for teachers to identify SEN quickly. Meanwhile, SEN that has physical characteristics is easier to identify as SEN because it is physical and externally easier to see and evaluate. While in the interview study Hanafi et al. (2019), two methods were identified as a way for teachers to identify the characteristics of SEN, namely through observation methods and through student academic achievement. Overall, teachers in the study area are still lack of knowledge in identifying the characteristics of SEN and only rely on the physical characteristics of students. In the interview, teachers explained that they rely on observation and try to identify these characteristics by performing diagnostics such as screening. Therefore, in this study the researcher asked the respondents to list courses and training according to the level of teachers' needs. A total of 14 courses and training were listed and the findings showed that the majority stated that the introduction of special education courses was the most necessary course. This is because six out of 13 respondents said they agree that an introductory course to special education is their first need at the moment. In addition, four respondents made identifying the characteristics of SEN the most necessary course or training for them. While there was one respondent each who stated that they needed behavior management courses, student screening and the preparation of individual lesson plans.

In conclusion, with this finding, the researcher can conclude that the teachers in the study area really need an exposure course to special education itself. This is because the primary teachers in this study area have not yet had good exposure to special education. The same is the case with the skills of identifying SEN screening SEN, evaluating SEN and writing Individual Teaching Plans. The hope is that with the implementation of this course and training, the effectiveness of Zero Reject Policy implementation in schools can be improved. This is consistent with the findings of Alqurani et al. (2020) against 130 teachers, only 48 people (36.9%) had attended a course related to the policy in question and even more unfortunate, only 32 people out of that number implemented the policy. Thus, the findings of Alqurani et. al (2020) found that 74% of respondents agreed.

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