

# Teaching Students with Special Educational Needs in Inclusive Settings: Are Malaysian Teachers Ready?

Mohd Syaubari Othman\*<sup>ID</sup>, Mohd Ridhuan Mohd Jamil<sup>ID</sup>,  
 Nik Muhammad Hanis Nek Rakemi<sup>ID</sup>, Mohd Muslim Md Zalli<sup>ID</sup>  
 Faculty of Human Development  
 Sultan Idris Education University, Perak, Malaysia

**Abstract.** The Malaysian Inclusive Education Program is an initiative that provides students with special educational needs the access and opportunity to learn alongside their peers in mainstream classrooms. However, successful implementation of inclusive education requires a high level of cooperation and commitment, especially from classroom teachers. The purpose of this study was to assess the level of readiness in terms of teaching skills, available resources, and action plans necessary for implementing teaching for students with special needs in inclusive settings. A survey method was employed using a questionnaire to gather data on teaching skills, resources, and action plans. The study involved a sample of 310 teachers from the Malaysian states of Kedah, Perak, and Pahang. The instrument used was a questionnaire comprising 39 items, targeted at principals, senior assistants (curriculum), special education teachers, and class/mainstream teachers who met specific criteria. The findings revealed a high level of readiness in action plan aspects (mean = 4.06, SD = 1.15), resource aspects (mean = 4.04, SD = 1.21), and teaching skills aspect (mean = 3.74, SD = 1.33). These results indicate that teachers are generally well-prepared to teach students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings, particularly in terms of teaching skills, access to resources, and structured action plans.

**Keywords:** action plans; inclusive education; learning resources; special needs students; teaching skills

## 1. Introduction

The educational landscape in Malaysian schools has changed significantly over the past ten years. The Ministry of Education (MOE) has taken initiatives to clarify the Education Act 1996. As part of this effort, the Minister of Education enacted the Education (Special Education) Regulations 1997, which were later replaced by

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\*Corresponding author: Dr Mohd Syaubari Othman, [syaubari@fpm.upsi.edu.my](mailto:syaubari@fpm.upsi.edu.my)

the 2013 version. Thus, the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 serve as key references in designing educational programs for students with special educational needs (SEN) in the country. The implementation of inclusive education for SEN students was initiated by the MOE as early as 1995, a year after Malaysia signed the Salamanca Statement. The ministry adopted both the international declaration and the national education policy, which led to the formulation of the Education Act 1996. Practices highlighted in the international declarations of Education for All (1990) (UNESCO, 2006), the Salamanca Statement (1994) (UNESCO, 2006), and Malaysia's earlier Education Democracy Policy (1962) were reinforced by the enactment of the National Philosophy of Education in 1988. These developments required the MOE to implement inclusive education to the best of its capacity for SEN students.

However, after 20 years of implementation, statistics from the Malaysian Education Development Plan (Ab. Latiff et al., 2015) revealed that only 6% of SEN students had been integrated into mainstream classrooms. The national target of incorporating 75% of SEN students by 2025 may therefore be difficult to achieve (Masnan et al., 2017). In light of this, it is crucial to conduct more research on teachers' readiness to implement inclusive education, particularly in terms of teaching skills, available resources, and implementation action plans. Thus, the present study aims to assess the level of teachers' readiness in relation to their teaching skills, resources, and action plans required to teach SEN students in inclusive settings.

## 2. Literature Review

Today, in Malaysia, students with SEN have access to the programs and resources they need due to legislation such as the Education Act 1996 and the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013. SEN students may choose to attend a special education school, a special education integration program (SIEP), or a regular school with mainstream classes that can accommodate their needs. The clarification of the definition and implementation methods of inclusive education in the Education Act 1996 indicate that students with SEN are permitted to attend regular classes alongside their peers. In practice, however, inclusive education in Malaysia's mainstream schools presents a complex challenge. Several boundaries and constraints exist—most notably, the level of acceptance within the school community. Studies have revealed that many teachers leave the profession early because they do not feel adequately prepared to teach in inclusive classrooms (Ab. Latiff et al., 2015).

At the international level, the concept of inclusive education was adopted when the United Nations introduced the Education for All initiative (Ruffina & Kuyini, 2012). This concept was further reinforced at the UNESCO Sub-Regional Seminar on Policy, Planning, and Organization of Education for Special Needs in Harbin, China, where the need for an integrated action plan was emphasized (Zalizan, 2009). According to Khochen and Radford (2012), the Salamanca Statement on Principles, Policy, and Practice (1994) placed significant emphasis on equitable access to education for all, including students with special needs. The global education community has expressed support for the principle that all children,

regardless of ability, deserve access to education. In Malaysia, this principle is supported by the Education Act 1996 and the Persons with Disabilities Act 2007, which form the foundation of current special education practices.

The Inclusive Education Program (IEP) is an initiative aimed at providing SEN students with the opportunity to learn alongside their peers in mainstream Malaysian classrooms (Hosshan, 2020). IEP implementation has led to substantial changes in educational policy. Initially, the IEP was introduced in schools that already had SEN students, as a transitional effort to integrate them into the mainstream environment. The MOE later established specific regulations for the placement of SEN students in mainstream settings (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Clearly, the education system in Malaysia does not discriminate against SEN students. To strengthen IEP implementation, the government introduced the Malaysian Education Development Plan (MEDP) 2013–2025 as a comprehensive strategy for inclusive education. In the context of evaluating best practices across Southeast Asia, Hosshan et al. (2020) recommended using the inputs–processes–outputs (IPO) model to map current practices. Among the 14 elements of the IPO model, teacher education and professional development emerged as critical components of the inputs stage. Teaching skills and the availability of appropriate resources in inclusive classrooms were identified as key factors in supporting SEN students (Hosshan, 2022).

Furthermore, providing quality inclusive education requires sustained effort from all stakeholders to understand and apply appropriate teaching approaches. According to the Committee of Special Education School Program (JPPKS) of the Ministry of Education in 2013, SEN students participating in the IEP at the primary level may continue the same program at the secondary level (Ministry of Education, n.d.). For optimal implementation, mainstream classes should ideally have no more than 35 students, and no more than 5 SEN students per class, placed according to their achievement levels. Wheelchair users should be located on the ground floor, and written consent must be obtained from parents before placing SEN students in the IEP. Moreover, students must undergo a three-month trial period in a selected mainstream class, followed by feedback and evaluation. The MOE's direction for the IEP is rooted in a holistic approach to enhance the potential of SEN students (Mat Rabi, 2016).

Although the MOE has implemented inclusive education in selected schools, data have revealed that only 6% of SEN students were integrated into mainstream classrooms as of 2012. This suggests that full acceptance of inclusive education in Malaysia is still lacking. A study by Mohd Ali (2006) found that while mainstream teachers were generally positive about IEP implementation, MOE data from the same period indicate otherwise. This discrepancy raises questions about the practical realities of inclusive education. Making inclusive education a success requires systemic change—a process that is often slow, unpredictable, and difficult.

The government's effort to implement the IEP aligns with Malaysia's educational growth goals. In the third wave of the MEDP, the action plan emphasized that every SEN student has the right to access quality and relevant education (Ministry of Education, n.d.). The government has set a goal to include 75% of SEN students

in the IEP by 2025. Inclusive education implementation also faces indirect challenges. Chhabra et al. (2009) found that mainstream teachers were unprepared to support SEN students in regular classrooms due to a lack of training and concerns about academic standards being compromised. Additionally, categorization and negative attitudes toward SEN students remain significant barriers.

Knoster's managing complex education change model (Knoster et al, 2000) may be useful for assessing teacher readiness in terms of teaching skills, resources, and action planning. A school environment that is not conducive to inclusive education will hinder IEP implementation. Currently, inclusive education in Malaysia still lags behind Western countries, particularly in collaborative teaching practices. A large gap exists between special education and mainstream teachers, with limited cooperation in IEP implementation (Van der Bij et al., 2016). Furthermore, research indicates that many teachers lack knowledge and proper training regarding the IEP (Khochen & Radford, 2012; Ocloo & Subbey, 2008). This lack of preparedness contributes to the difficulty in realizing the full potential of inclusive education (Andrews & Frankel, 2010; Paliokosta & Blandford, 2010).

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study employed a survey method, utilizing a questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection. The questionnaire was adapted from the Modified Student Participation Questionnaire (mSPQ) (Sauro & Lewis, 2012) and the managing complex education change model (Freeth, 2017). A total of 310 teachers—including senior assistants (curriculum), special education teachers, and class/mainstream teachers with experience in the IEP at secondary schools—were selected through purposive sampling. The questionnaire focused on three main constructs: teaching skills (15 items), resources (9 items), and action plans (15 items). Descriptive data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and percentage indicators.

### **4. Results and Discussion**

The IEP challenges teachers to integrate students with special needs into mainstream classes, requiring a high level of cooperation and commitment from multiple stakeholders. Inclusive education involves collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers in their efforts to teach a diverse group of students—including those with special needs—in a shared, flexible, and inclusive learning environment (Friend, 2010).

Table 1 presents the 15 questionnaire items (C1–C15) related to the teaching skills construct. Descriptive analysis was performed to determine the preparedness level of teaching skills for educating students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings. The highest mean score was recorded for item C8 (Special education teachers can guide mainstream teachers on appropriate teaching and learning methods based on the disability category of students in the inclusive classroom). This item reflects the teaching skills of mainstream teachers and recorded a mean value of 4.49 (SD = 0.965), with 52.9% of the 310 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement, while only 4.1% disagreed.

**Table 1: Results related to the aspects of searching skills**

Statement	SD	D	MD	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
C1. Mainstream teachers have the ability to adapt to the mainstream curricula to meet the needs of students with learning difficulties.	2.9% [9]	16.8% [52]	16.5% [51]	23.9% [108]	26.0% [74]	5.2 % [16]	3.75	1.219
C2. Mainstream teachers are given in-service training on inclusive education prior to implementation.	11.3% [35]	22.3% [69]	24.2% [75]	19.7% [61]	17.4% [54]	5.2% [6]	3.25	1.405
C3. Mainstream teachers are capable of designing individualized learning for students with special needs.	7.4% [23]	16.5% [51]	24.2% [75]	25.8% [80]	20.6% [64]	5.5% [17]	3.52	1.331
C4. Mainstream teachers have the ability to foster communication among typical and special-needs students.	1.9% [6]	8.4% [26]	15.5% [48]	31.9% [99]	37.1% [115]	5.2% [16]	4.09	1.112
C5. Mainstream teachers face the challenge of teaching typical students with special-needs students in one class.	4.8% [15]	8.1% [25]	17.1% [53]	27.4% [85]	29.4% [91]	13.2% [41]	4.08	1.323
C6. Mainstream teachers adapt teaching and learning activities according to the individual student's ability.	5.5% [17]	9.4% [29]	11.3% [35]	31.6% [98]	34.5% [107]	7.1% [22]	4.03	1.272
C7. Special education teachers lack the ability to work collaboratively with mainstream teachers in inclusive education.	21.6% [67]	30.3% [94]	18.4% [57]	18.1% [56]	9.4% [29]	1.6% [5]	2.69	1.339

Statement	SD	D	MD	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
C8. Special education teachers can guide the mainstream teachers regarding appropriate teaching and learning methods according to the special-needs students' disability category in the inclusive classroom.	0.6% [2]	3.5% [11]	7.1% [22]	35.8% [111]	40.6% [126]	12.3% [38]	4.49	0.965
C9. Student management assistants are not trained in how to assist students with special needs in the inclusive classroom.	11.3% [35]	24.2% [75]	19.7% [61]	20.3% [63]	16.5% [51]	6.8% [21]	3.28	1.454
C10. The role of student management assistants in inclusive education programs is clearly listed.	5.5% [17]	7.4% [23]	20.6% [64]	30.3% [94]	27.7% [86]	6.8% [21]	3.90	1.244
C11. Typical students do not have the skills to help their classmates with special educational needs.	6.1% [19]	11.9% [37]	19.0% [59]	33.5% [104]	23.2% [72]	5.8% [18]	3.74	1.274
C12. Typical students are able to help special-needs students in solving difficulties.	1.0% [3]	10.6% [33]	18.7% [58]	44.2% [137]	20.6% [64]	4.5% [14]	3.87	1.038
C13. Typical students have trouble interacting with special-needs students.	6.1% [19]	11.6% [36]	32.3% [100]	31.9% [99]	14.2% [44]	3.2% [10]	3.47	1.156
C14. Special-needs students in inclusive programs have satisfactory social skills.	0.6% [2]	3.9% [12]	14.2% [44]	32.3% [100]	41.3% [128]	6.8% [21]	4.31	0.973
C15. Special-needs students who are inclusive have satisfactory communication skills.	1.0% [3]	5.2% [16]	14.2% [44]	31.3% [97]	38.1% [118]	9.4% [29]	4.30	1.057
OVERALL Skill	6.12%	18.95	18.8%	28.3%	27.6	5.31	3.74	1.335

Note: SD – strongly disagree, D– disagree, MD – moderately disagree, MA – moderately agree, A – agree, SA – strongly agree

The IEP challenges teachers to place students with special needs in mainstream classes, requiring high levels of cooperation and commitment from various stakeholders. Inclusive education fosters collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers to deliver instruction to a diverse group of students, including those with special needs, in a common and flexible learning environment (Friend, 2010).

The results in Table 1 indicate that respondents felt that mainstream teachers are prepared to teach students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings, especially with guidance from special education teachers. The Integrated Special Education Program serves as a foundation to evaluate the readiness of both special education and mainstream teachers in terms of teaching skills, resources, and action plans. Inclusive education presents a significant challenge for both teacher groups, requiring high levels of collaboration. This finding aligns with the study by the Department of Education and Science of Ireland (2007), which found that mainstream teachers possess adequate teaching skills and understanding of learning styles for students with special needs and are capable of setting appropriate learning goals and objectives in the individualized education plan. Furthermore, Wave 1 (2013–2015) of the MOE's Education Development Plan highlighted the need to strengthen policies on school choice for SEN students based on competency. SEN students who can follow the mainstream curriculum and assessments are encouraged to participate in the IEP.

In terms of teaching skills among mainstream teachers, the results revealed their ability to foster communication among typically developing students, despite challenges in teaching both typical and special-needs students in one class. They are also able to adapt teaching and learning activities to meet the individual abilities of SEN students. This was reflected by a high mean score of 4.66 ( $SD = 1.235$ ), with 72.4% agreeing or moderately agreeing, while 31.5% disagreed.

Conversely, the lowest mean score on teaching skills was related to statement C2 (Special education teachers lack the ability to collaborate with mainstream teachers in inclusive education), with a mean value of 2.69 ( $SD = 1.339$ ) and 70.3% of respondents disagreeing. This indicates strong cooperation between special education and mainstream teachers in managing teaching skills. These findings support that of Elton-Chalcraft et al. (2016), who explained that placing SEN students in mainstream settings enhances communication and social interaction with peers, thus helping them integrate into the local community. It also allows them access to a broad, balanced, and relevant curriculum to prepare them for adult life.

Regarding teaching skills among special education teachers, the same low mean score of 2.69 ( $SD = 1.339$ ) was yielded, with 70.3% of respondents disagreeing with the statement that they lacked collaborative abilities. This suggests that special education teachers' skills are essential in successfully implementing the IEP. The overall preparedness in teaching skills for teaching students with learning disabilities was high for items C4, C5, C8, C14, and C15. However, items C2, C7, and C9 were found to be at a lower level regarding the acceptance of SEN students in inclusive settings. This finding is supported by Vermeulen et al. (2012), who emphasized the importance of fostering positive school attitudes toward inclusive

education through proper training and management. Similarly, Thousand and Villa (2005) advocated for structured training programs for both mainstream and special education teachers. Avramidis and Kalyva (2007) noted that experienced special education teachers can collaborate effectively with their mainstream counterparts in supporting students with special needs. Openness from teachers, as highlighted by Vermeulen et al. (2012) and Hosshan et al. (2021), accelerates the acceptance of students with learning disabilities.

Overall, 62.1% of the respondents agreed and 37.9% disagreed that both special education and mainstream teachers possess the necessary teaching skills to support SEN students in inclusive settings. The mean score was 3.74 (SD = 1.335), indicating a high level of preparedness. This finding aligns with the study by Kuyini et al. (2016), who emphasized that effective teaching competency – reflected in classroom management, preparation of materials, teacher support, and adequate training – enhances the inclusive classroom environment.

Table 2 presents the results for the 9 questionnaire items (E1–E9) addressing the second research question related to the preparedness level of resources for teaching students with learning disabilities in inclusive settings. Descriptive statistical analysis yielded the highest mean score for human resources for item E8 (Special education teachers work closely with mainstream teachers to address issues arising in inclusive education), with a mean of 4.68 (SD = 0.968). In all, 89.9% of the respondents agreed, while only 10.1% disagreed.

**Table 2: Results related to the aspect of resources**

Statement	SD	D	MD	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
E1. Schools always strive to provide the infrastructure needed for special-needs students to enhance the effectiveness of inclusive education.	2.3% [7]	6.8% [21]	11.6% [36]	26.5% [82]	45.2% [140]	7.7% [24]	4.29	1.128
E2. Teachers share appropriate teaching and learning materials for students with special needs in the inclusive program.	1.0% [3]	7.1% [22]	10.6% [33]	32.9% [102]	40.6% [126]	6.5% [20]	4.26	1.040
E3. The school has been proactive in providing resources for classrooms that offer inclusive education.	0.6% [2]	10.3% [32]	12.9% [40]	34.8% [108]	32.9% [102]	7.1% [22]	4.12	1.098



Statement	STB	TB	ATS	ST	S	SS	Mean	SD
E4. The school has documents distributed by the Ministry of Education Malaysia regarding the implementation of inclusive education.	1.9% [6]	6.5% [20]	13.2% [41]	26.5% [82]	42.6% [132]	8.4% [26]	4.27	1.120
E5. Drafts on the implementation guidelines for inclusive education programs are not provided for reference to teachers involved in the implementation of inclusive education.	10.0% [31]	18.4% [57]	22.9% [71]	24.8% [77]	19.4% [60]	3.2% [10]	3.35	1.338
E6. The expertise of special education teachers is fully utilized in the implementation of inclusive education.	1.0% [3]	9.4% [29]	11.9% [37]	31.0% [96]	36.1% [112]	9.7% [30]	4.22	1.134
E7. Special education teachers do not provide an individual education plan for students with special needs in the inclusive program.	16.8% [52]	22.6% [70]	23.2% [72]	17.7% [55]	15.2% [47]	3.2% [10]	3.03	1.409
E8. Special education teachers are always collaborating with mainstream teachers to address arising issues in the implementation of inclusive education.	1.3% [4]	1.9% [6]	6.1% [19]	24.8% [77]	49.0% [152]	16.1% [50]	4.68	0.968
E9. Student management assistant services are provided for mainstream classes that incorporate inclusive education when necessary.	9.7% [30]	15.8% [49]	9.4% [29]	23.9% [74]	32.6% [101]	7.4% [23]	3.78	1.477
OVERALL Resources aspect	5.9%	10.6%	13.7%	24.4%	39.9%	8.26%	4.04	1.216

*Note: SD – strongly disagree, D– disagree, MD – moderately disagree, MA – moderately agree, A – agree, SA – strongly agree*

The results for E5 is consistent with Terzi's (2014) study on the IEP, which found a strong collaboration between special and mainstream teachers regarding social dimensions and support for at-risk students. This collaboration aligns with the social justice perspective in education (Liasidou, 2012; Slee, 2013), which forms the foundation of inclusive education. Inclusive programs involve educating SEN students in mainstream schools with appropriate support and resources (Winter, 2006). de Boer et al. (2011) also stressed that successful implementation depends heavily on the positive attitudes of school staff.

The findings also show a high mean score of 4.29 (SD = 1.128) for physical resources, with 83.3% of the respondents agreeing that schools strive to provide the necessary infrastructure for SEN students, and 16.7% disagreeing. Similarly, a high mean of 4.26 (SD = 1.040) was recorded for teaching and learning resources, with 80% agreeing that appropriate materials are provided, while 20% disagreed. The Department of Education and Science of Ireland (2007) also emphasized that adequate financial support and accessibility are essential to produce high-quality teaching materials for SEN students in the IEP. The buddy system involving both teacher groups enhances SEN students' learning experience.

For documentation, the highest mean was for statement E4, at 4.27 (SD = 1.120), with 77.5% of the respondents agreeing that schools possess official documents from the MOE Malaysia regarding IEP implementation. Only 22.5% disagreed. However, a lower mean of 3.03 (SD = 1.409) was reported for statement E7 (Special education teachers fail to provide IEPs), with 36.1% agreeing and 63.9% disagreeing. Although many international education systems have embraced the philosophy of inclusion, the interpretation and implementation of inclusive programs vary significantly. Successful implementation often hinges on school staff perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes. Negative staff attitudes can hinder the effective rollout of inclusive programs (Ernst & Rogers, 2009).

Additionally, analysis showed a moderate mean score of 3.78 (SD = 1.477) for the item regarding student management assistant services (E9). This supports the view that SEN students, despite having mild learning challenges, may require unique support. The presence of student management assistants helps mainstream teachers address behavioral issues (Booth & Ainscow, 2002).

Items E2, E4, and E8 recorded the highest mean scores, followed by E1, while E5 and E7 scored moderately high. Overall, the resource readiness level for supporting students with learning difficulties in inclusive environments was high, with a mean score of 4.040 (SD = 1.216). Overall, 69.4% of respondents agreed and 30.6% disagreed that human, physical, and documentary resources were sufficient for inclusive education. Successful inclusive learning depends on teacher expertise and favorable learning conditions, including various teaching approaches, appropriate classroom size and space for group activities, and adequate learning materials (Howes et al., 2009). This supports the study findings regarding school readiness in infrastructure, classroom setup, and the expertise of special education teachers.

Table 3 presents the results for the 15 questionnaire items (F1-F15) related to action plans, which address the third research question regarding the level of readiness in action planning for students with learning disabilities in inclusive

environments. According to the descriptive analysis, the highest mean score was recorded for item F7 (Schools ensure that students with special needs interact with typical students), with a mean value of 4.70 (SD = 0.909). A total of 89.7% of the 310 respondents agreed with this statement, while only 11.2% disagreed. This finding suggests that monitoring interactions between special needs students and their typical peers should be a priority in inclusive education programs.

**Table 3: Results related to the aspect of action plan**

Statement	SD	D	MD	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
F1. The school has a projected number of special-needs students for the inclusive program annually.	2.9% [9]	6.8% [21]	8.4% [26]	26.5% [82]	48.7% [153]	6.8% [21]	4.32	1.131
F2. The school is always planning to build positive relationships among the typical students and special-needs students in all school activities.	- [-]	5.2% [16]	8.7% [27]	20.0% [62]	56.8% [176]	9.4% [29]	4.56	0.959
F3. The school is always planning to build positive relationships among typical students and special-needs students in all non-academic activities in school.	-% [-]	1.6% [5]	7.1% [22]	21.0% [65]	60.3% [157]	10.0% [31]	4.70	0.807
F4. The same assessment strategies for typical pupils are used to assess the progress of students with special needs in the inclusive program.	3.2% [10]	4.2% [13]	8.1% [25]	24.2% [75]	56.1% [174]	4.2% [13]	4.38	1.060
F5. Various methods are used to assess the achievement of students with special needs in the inclusive program.	0.6% [2]	2.3% [7]	12.6% [39]	25.5% [79]	54.5% [169]	4.5% [14]	4.45	0.897
F6. The school has planned activities for the typical student to value the capability of students with special needs.	0.6% [2]	4.2% [13]	7.1% [22]	25.5% [79]	52.6% [163]	9.4% [29]	4.55	0.957
F7. Schools ensure that special-needs students always interact with the typical students.	1.0% [3]	1.6% [5]	6.8% [21]	21.3% [66]	55.5% [172]	12.9% [40]	4.70	0.909
F8. Mainstream teachers are less likely to monitor the progress of their special-needs students in the inclusive program.	9.0% [28]	23.2% [72]	30.3% [94]	20.6% [64]	13.2% [41]	2.9% [9]	3.16	1.269

Statement	SD	D	MD	MA	A	SA	Mean	SD
F9. There is no monitoring conducted by the school to observe the effectiveness of inclusive education.	15.8% [49]	27.1% [84]	28.4% [88]	13.5% [42]	11.6% [36]	3.2% [10]	2.89	1.347
F10. The school is constantly striving to develop the school's physical infrastructure to meet the special needs of students with learning difficulties.	0.3% [1]	8.7% [27]	10.0% [31]	23.9% [74]	49.0% [152]	8.1% [25]	4.37	1.076
F11. Planning in a mainstream classroom takes into account the special needs of students with learning disabilities.	1.3% [4]	7.1% [22]	14.8% [46]	25.2% [78]	44.8% [139]	6.8% [21]	4.25	1.098
F12. The school is constantly reminding its staff of the importance of inclusive education implementation.	2.9% [9]	6.5% [20]	21.6% [67]	27.7% [86]	38.1% [118]	3.2% [10]	4.01	1.118
F13. Schools are constantly campaigning to promote inclusive education best practices.	4.2% [13]	11.9% [37]	21.3% [66]	29.0% [90]	28.4% [88]	5.2% [16]	3.81	1.236
F14. The school annually reviews the strategic plan of its inclusive program.	3.2% [10]	8.4% [26]	20.0% [62]	31.0% [96]	34.5% [107]	2.9% [9]	3.94	1.135
F15. The development of an inclusive education strategy plan is shared with all school staff.	5.5% [17]	7.7% [24]	21.0% [65]	23.2% [72]	39.0% [121]	3.5% [11]	3.93	1.243
OVERALL Action plan aspects	4.3%	9.2%	15.3%	23.5%	40.9%	6.5%	4.069	1.156

Note: SD – strongly disagree, D– disagree, MD – moderately disagree, MA – moderately agree, A – agree, SA – strongly agree

Inclusive programs, implemented in the context of special needs education, refer to the process of educating SEN students in mainstream schools with appropriate support and resources (Winter, 2006). This finding is supported by studies conducted by Howes et al. (2009) and Booth and Ainscow (2002), who noted that while many discussions support a radical approach to inclusion in schools, action planning remains a common shortcoming. Effective implementation requires those involved in inclusion to be thoughtful and communicative regarding *how*, *with whom*, and *in what sequence* the steps of inclusion are formulated, communicated, and executed. Head teachers and senior staff must be involved, along with an external figure—such as an educational adviser, psychologist, or member of a higher education institution—who is both supportive and constructively critical of the inclusion process.

The analysis also yielded a high mean score of 4.70 ( $SD = 0.909$ ) for item F7 (Schools ensure that special-needs students always interact with the typical students), with 88.3% of respondents agreeing and 11.7% disagreeing. This finding is consistent with Elisa (2013), who emphasized the teacher's key role in collaborative teaching. Similarly, Jones (2012) found that special education and mainstream teachers often demonstrate a positive attitude toward collaboration. This collaborative relationship will form distinctive personality traits in the teaching and learning process.

Supporting this, Missiuna et al. (2012) and Scruggs et al. (2007) stated that collaborative teaching practices benefit both student achievement and teacher professional development. Pancsofar and Petroff (2016), as well as Smith (2015), also found that teachers actively involved in inclusive teaching tend to be more positive compared to those not engaged in shared teaching.

However, a lower mean score of 2.89 ( $SD = 1.347$ ) was recorded for statement F9 (No monitoring is conducted by the school to observe the effectiveness of inclusive education), with 29.5% agreeing and 71.5% disagreeing. This result highlights that consistent monitoring is a crucial component of effective action planning in inclusive education. The Department of Education and Science of Ireland (2007) emphasized that action plans should align closely with the school's aims and objectives for all students and should reflect the values stated in the school's mission. If the mission statement does not support an inclusive philosophy, it should be revised accordingly. Policies and procedures in the school plan should explicitly reference the inclusion of students with special needs.

Formulating effective action plans is complex, requiring a balanced mix of strategic planning and ongoing action, as well as the active involvement of all stakeholders throughout the process. Thousand and Villa (2005) outlined essential principles to consider when developing effective strategies for inclusion, reinforcing the need for well-coordinated and inclusive planning efforts.

## 5. Conclusion

One of the most effective teaching and learning approaches to meet the needs of special education students is the implementation of an inclusive approach. The findings of this study indicate that teachers are willing and prepared to teach students with learning difficulties in inclusive settings, particularly in terms of teaching skills, resources, and action plans. The presence of these key components—combined with team teaching strategies—can significantly enhance the effectiveness and meaningfulness of the IEP. From the perspective of teacher readiness, educators have demonstrated preparedness for collaborative teaching based on planned components, well-defined goals, anticipated challenges, and inclusive education strategies. However, several issues and challenges must be addressed at the executive level, especially to reduce the high level of dependency among special education learners on immediate support from teachers and peers. In alignment with the findings of this study, Malaysian teachers are ready to engage in co-teaching practices in inclusive settings, provided that certain modifications are made to current teaching practices. Optimistically, the inclusion program has the potential to foster self-reliance among students with learning

difficulties while also gradually reducing negative perceptions and societal stigma toward them.

## 6. Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank Research Management Innovation Centre (RMIC), Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) for their support FRGS 2023-0076-107-02 & FRGS/1/2023/SS107/UPSI/02/9 and the Department of Educational Studies, Faculty Human Development, Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) for their support in this research.

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