

Inclusive Education Approach For Children With Autism In Malaysia: A Collaborative Effort Pilot Project

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Special Education Programmes in Malaysia were primarily initiated by missionary organizations. It started with the opening of a special school for the blind by Malacca Anglican Church in 1926, followed by the opening of Princess Elizabeth School for the blind in Johor in 1948, and The Federated School for the Deaf in Penang in 1954. Subsequently, after Independence, several special schools were build for children with sensory disabilities. The Ministry of Education (MOE) extended the special program through the initiation of the Integrated Special Education Classes in mainstream school for children with sensory impairment in 1962.

In 1988 the concept of Integrated Special Education Classes was expanded to cater for the educational needs of children with learning disabilities (LD), and the first special integrated class for children with LD was established. The LD terminology covered children with learning difficulties, behavioral and emotional problems, Down syndrome, Autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), speech problems, specific learning difficulties, late developers, slow learners and developmental delay. It also embraced children with specific learning disabilities such as dyslexia. To cater for learning needs of children with disabilities who have difficulty accessing the National Curriculum, an alternative curriculum was designed and implemented in the MOE programme for LD. The curriculum acts as a guideline for teachers in planning teaching and learning activities.

Children with LD who can cope with mainstream learning, follow the national curriculum and are being taught in mainstream classes by mainstream teachers with minimum support

services when available. Prior to inclusion, these children are equipped with relevant basic skills and knowledge to enable then to cope with mainstream learning demands. Only those who are deemed capable to cope with mainstream requirement would be included. The inclusive education approach was initiated with the aim of increasing the participation of children with SEN in educational and social life of mainstream schools in-line with ‘Salamanca Statement of 1994’. Nevertheless, the concept was adapted to the national education system and the implementation of inclusive education approach in Malaysia is not synonymous with international practices of inclusive education. “Acceptance, belonging, and about providing schools setting in which all disadvantaged children can be valued! equally and be provided with equal educational opportunities” are not fully available in the Malaysian context.

The Ministry of Education Malaysia has successfully included children with visual impairment in mainstream classes under the inclusive education approach. Two types of inclusions are practiced, namely full inclusion and partial inclusion. In full inclusion settings, children with special needs are fully placed in mainstream classes whereas in partial settings, the children are placed in mainstream classes for specific subjects only. The needs and interests in providing the same opportunity for children with LD in particular children with autism were expressed by the parents of these children and representative of National Autistic Society of Malaysia (NASOM). At the same time, the MOE anticipates the production of exemplars of inclusion practices that are democratic, nurturing, and responsive to autistic learners in diverse

contexts, and most importantly that works. The Special Education Department is looking for collaborations and partnerships in delivering quality education for children SEN with government and non government agencies. Collaboration with NGOs is one of the agenda in strategic planning outlined in department's blueprint. This collaboration pilot project was initiated in 2004. The main rationale of the pilot project was to determine an effective and practical approach of including autistic children in mainstream settings for the purpose of planning tangible program for these children in the future. Thus the aims of the pilot project are:

- i. to study the impact of inclusion on autistic children's social and emotional progress as well as academic performance in framed period of time namely; initial outcome after 4 months of implementation, outcome and arbitrary impact (intermediate assessment after 12 months inclusion), and final outcome of the project.
- ii. to develop a benchmark program that could be emulated by other schools, where only minimum support for inclusion is available within the system.
- iii. to identify the role of NASOM and MOE in future inclusion projects.
- iv. to formulate guidelines and procedures for including children with autism in other mainstream schools.

To achieve the aims, several meetings between the MOE and NASOM were set up in 2004. A task-force committee comprising NASOM and MOE was formed to oversee the pilot project. The roles of each parties were defined where in principal both parties agreed to engage in giving support, assistance, and direct involvement in the following position;

- MOE will facilitated and monitor the project by providing help when needed; in-service training for mainstream teachers
- NASOM will provide assistant teachers to assist, monitor and scrutinize the progress of each child during the lesson; and to make

reports available for NASOM, parents and MOE.

Preparing autistic children and mainstream teachers for this project was the main focus during initial planning stage. It was recognized that putting an autistic child in a new setting can be challenging to both child and mainstream teachers. These teachers need to be informed about the particular needs of targeted students. Mainstream teachers need to understand and accept that certain behaviours they observe are not deliberately defiant or disruptive, but reflect an apprehensive reaction to something or someone in the environment which the child cannot expressed in words. Hence, the mainstream teachers in the selected school were given a 3-days exposure course. The maximum number of children with autism in each mainstream class involved in this project was decided to be ten percent of the class population (between 2 to 3 children with autism in each class). At the beginning of the project, the assistant teacher will as with the children in the class for full time, gradually decreasing the assistance according to progress made by each child. They were assigned to provide assistance to the children according to the class activities. In particular they were given the following assignments:

- i. Classroom assistance:- academic and non academic task
- ii. Social interaction and communication of children with autism during outdoor activities (support during school assembly, physical education, as well as lunch time in the canteen etc)
- iii. Keeping a home-school diary for each child involved

The modus operandi of the pilot project is given in table 1. Some of the children with autism in the 1st cohort are quite independent and very minimal assistance was needed. The evaluation of the project's outcome will be done at the end of 2006.

Table 1: The modus operandi of the pilot project

Phase	Meeting	Main agenda	Outcomes
	Initial meeting	Established prerequisites Negotiation between MOE and NASOM	Goals; Informed consent - To find what strategy works for autistic children in mainstream schools
	Follow up meetings with NASOM	Selecting criteria for choosing students	6 students will be included as introduction to the process
	Within the MOE meeting	Negotiation between MOE and administrators of selected school	Reassurance of the impact of the project to school reputation
		Negotiation between MOE/school and mainstream teachers of selected school	Reassurance of the support from special education department
	Between MOE and NASOM	Setting treaty/agreement between school and NASOM/parents of autistic children	School come out with a set of MOU statement
	State Education Department (SED)/ School and NASOM	Registration of autistic children as special education pupils	Collaborative effort between NASOM and SED/school
		8 autistic children were chosen 1 st cohort (2005)	Full inclusion (in 4 different classes)
		6 autistic children were chosen 2 nd cohort (2006)	Full inclusion (in 6 different classes)
	Monitoring, strategy meetings (on-going)	1. Ongoing processes of monitoring done by the MOE officers and NASOM staffs.	Stages and comprehensive collaboration effort
		Semi structured interview with teachers/parents	Teachers, assistant teacher, parents/ guidance knowledge of autistic children as well as hope, fear and aspirations of all will be gathered.
		Observations and interviews with students	
		Sociometric test	

Projects to Support “Special Support Education” Provided at Japanese Schools Abroad

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In FY2005, the NISE Clinical Center for Children with Special Needs conducted a survey covering Japanese schools abroad by utilizing its scientific research expenses. The purpose was as follows: to survey the contents, wishes and requests, and needed information respecting the needs for educational consultation for children with disabilities and their parents who live abroad; on this basis, to construct a system for educational consultation and support for such persons at the National Institute of Special Education (NISE); and to construct a network of the related domestic and overseas organizations and agencies.

This survey was conducted by e-mailing questionnaires to 84 Japanese schools abroad. 77 schools replied to this mail, for a recovery rate of 91.7%. Children with disabilities were enrolled in about 30% or 27 of these schools. The measures taken by these schools were as follows. About 50% (13) had established special classes. At other schools, consideration was given such as provision of special guidance for disabled children, and increase of teachers. About 50% (39) of the entire number of schools that replied were handling inquiries and requests for consultation related to admission and change of schools regarding children with disabilities. At more than 80% (33) of these schools, teachers in managerial positions were handling such inquiries and requests. More than 70% (59) of the entire number of schools that replied felt it necessary to develop and improve the systems for accepting disabled children.

These findings can be said to show that the interest in “special support education” has been gradually increasing. They also showed that the schools concerned had difficulties obtaining

information on the contents and methods of guidance for disabled children and support and collaboration by specialized organizations and agencies. Additionally, given the fact that there are few such organizations abroad or locally, the needs for and expectations placed on NISE, which are not so large at present, are expected to become larger in the future. Another issue is that as mentioned, teachers in managerial positions are handling inquiries and requests for consultation relating to admission and change of schools by disabled children. This means that those in managerial positions at the said schools should have at least the basic knowledge about disabilities and educational consultation. To this end, it will be necessary for such persons to receive the needed training and education.

Based on such findings, a field survey was conducted by covering 18 Japanese schools in the following countries and cities which are providing (or trying to provide) special support education: Seoul, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Tianjin, Shanghai, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Panama, Mexico, New York, Vienna, Munich, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Berlin, Dusseldorf and Singapore. The findings are summarized below.

(1) The people sent by companies, etc. to abroad are getting younger every year. They are raising younger children, which has been increasing the requests for consultation relating to the education for disabled children. However, Japanese schools abroad are established by local associations of Japanese. For this reason, they have had problems in the area of the educational environment such as size of school, managerial and

financial issues, lack of specialized teachers, and deficiency of educational facilities and equipment. For this reason, they have had difficulties accepting disabled children. However, in the last few years, there has been a major change in this situation, and the interest in special support education has been mounting.

(2) The schools generally lack teachers who have specialized knowledge and guidance skills relating to disabilities (including minor developmental disorders). For this reason, they are always uncertain when it comes to provision of educational consultation for disabled children and about the method of guidance. The schools strongly expressed the need for provision of supervision and consultation relating to the measures to be taken by the schools and the school system itself.

(3) The schools generally lacked the specialized knowledge to correctly assess the condition of disabled children. They requested specific support in meeting with individual cases such as the method for assessing such children (assessment of learning difficulties and specific guidance methods), how to deal with children who have difficulties communicating and in human relations, how to acquire teaching aids and equipment, and hints and ideas about guidance.

(4) The schools felt it difficult in reality to make use of local resources partly for the problem of language. For this reason, both the schools and parents practically have nowhere to turn to in consulting about the condition of disabilities or how to understand the actual condition of children.

(5) When the time comes for the family to come back to Japan, the parents are often uncertain about their children. They would like to have some organization that would provide consultation and advice relating to this matter, or for some consultative organization abroad to provide information.

(6) The schools are having difficulties obtaining information about the trends of special support education such as general information about disabilities in Japan and abroad, the national



Shang-hai Japanese school

and local trends of special support education, and the measures taken by other Japanese schools abroad. They feel the need to construct a network to exchange these types of information. However, the fact of the matter is that it is difficult for any of the Japanese schools whose staff change every three years to manage such a network.

(7) The children are going abroad with their families. This has its own psychological effects. To cope with such effects, it would be urgently necessary to assign nurses, teachers and school counselors.

Based on the findings from these surveys, this summer, the Clinical Center for Children with Special Needs held an “Educational Consultation Week for Children Attending Japanese Schools Abroad” to provide support for parents and teachers who came back to Japan for the vacation. This was held for one week from the end of July to early August. Ten schools mainly in South Korea, China and Chinese Taipei requested for participation in this program, and the Center provided consultation and support to parents and teachers.

The Center has also established a system of cooperation with the Japan Overseas Educational Services (JOES) by linking the home pages to provide support through collaboration.

The Center is also examining the use of ICT as a method to support special support education provided by Japanese schools abroad. As specific projects, NISE will provide information using the *Skype* communication software by mainly covering

Japanese schools in eastern Asia. On December 22 this year, it will hold a conference on special support education for Japanese schools abroad to exchange information with the aim of constructing a network of such schools. It is calling upon such schools to participate in this conference.

As described, NISE would like to propose specific support measures in the future also, so that the problems faced by Japanese schools abroad as identified in the mentioned surveys can be solved as much as possible.

Report of the NISE and KISE 6th Seminar on Special Education

Masahiro Watanabe, Researcher, *Department for Teacher Training and Information, NISE*
 Hirofumi Osaki, Senior Researcher, *Department for Counseling and Consultation, NISE*
 Hiroaki Ikeda, *Headmaster, Hokkaido Takuhoku Special School*

I. Preface

The NISE and KISE Seminar on Special Education is an international seminar on special education being held as part of the efforts based on an agreement for cooperation signed between NISE (National Institute of Special Education, Japan) and KISE (Korea Institute for Special Education) in 1995. It is held periodically in Japan and Korea by providing the venue for the purpose of the two countries to share and confirm issues and achievements relating to special education provided in the two countries and explore future issues and policies. The table below shows the venues and seminar themes of the past Seminars.

1st	2/2001	NISE(Japan)	The Current Status and Future Trends on Special Education in Japan and Korea
2nd	2/2002	KISE(Korea)	Current Status and Future Trends of Special Education Delivery System of Korea and Japan
3rd	2/2003	NISE(Japan)	The Status Quo and Future Trends of Special Education for Students with Severe and Multiple Disabilities in Japan and Korea
4th	2/2004	KISE(Korea)	Policies and Practices of Inclusive Education of Korea and Japan
5th	1/2005	NISE(Japan)	The Current Status and Future Trends of Informatization on Special Education in Japan and Korea
6th	4/2006	National Special School for Students with Physical Disabilities HANGUK WOJIN HAKGYO(Korea)	Educational Practices to Facilitate Communication Skills of Students with Severe disabilities in Korea and Japan

The 6th Seminar was held at the National Special School for Students with Physical Disabilities HANGUK WOJIN HAKGYO in Korea under the theme “Educational Practices to Facilitate Communication Skills of Students with Severe disabilities in Korea and Japan”.

II. Outline of the NISE and KISE 6th Seminar on Special Education

1. About the Seminar

The NISE and KISE Seminars on Special Education are held periodically based on an agreement for cooperation between NISE and KISE. The outcomes of these Seminars are shared by the two countries, to contribute toward the development of special education in these countries.

2. Theme

“Educational Practices to Facilitate Communication Skills of Students with Severe disabilities in Korea and Japan”

3. Date

April 12 (Wednesday) – 15 (Friday), 2006.

Itinerary

12th (Wed.) Arrival in Korea

13th (Thu.) Visit to Seoul National School for the Blind

Visit to Seoul National School for the Deaf

Visit to Seoul GYEONG UN School (a public special school for intellectually disabled children)



(Seoul National School for the Deaf)

14th (Fri.) Seminar

Venue (including visit): The National Special School for Students with Physical Disabilities HANGUK WOOJIN HAKGYO



(The National Special School for Students with Physical Disabilities HANGUK WOOJIN HAKGYO)

15th (Sat.) Arrival in Japan

4. Presenters

(1) Japanese side

Mr. Masahiro Watanabe, Researcher, Department for Teacher Training and Information, NISE

Mr. Hirofumi Osaki, Chief Researcher, Department for Policy and Planning, NISE

Mr. Hiroaki Ikeda, Headmaster, Hokkaido Takuhoku Special School

(2) Korean side

Mr. Jong-moo Kim, Educational Researcher,

Division of Information Management, KISE

Ms. Jung-yeon Kim, Teacher, National Special School for Students with Physical Disabilities HANGUK WOOJIN HAKGYO

Ms. Sung-yeon Cho, Teacher, Hankook Yukyung School



5. Programs

◆AM

9:00 A conversation with KISE Director General, and Headmaster, National Special School for Students with Physical Disabilities HANGUK WOOJIN HAKGYO

9:30 Opening Ceremony (Opening Address: Mr. Yong-wook Kim, Ph.D., Director General, KISE)

9:40 Introduction of presenters

9:50 **Presentation I**

○ **Japan:** Masahiro Watanabe

“Development of Japanese Version Symbol Communication Device and Educational ICF Database for Children with Disabilities”

○ **Korea:** Jong-moo Kim

“The Current Status of Development of AAC Devices”

11:20 Q&A and Discussion

11:40 Lunch Break

◆PM

1:00 **Presentation II**

○ **Japan:** Hirofumi Osaki

“Education for Infants and Children with Multiple Disabilities having Physical Disabilities”

- **Korea:** Jung-yeon Kim
 “Instruction Method of AAC for Students with Multiple Disabilities”
- 2:20 Q&A and Discussion
- 2:40 Recess
- 3:00 **Presentation II**
- **Japan:** Hiroaki Ikeda
 “Education for the Improvement of the Communication Skills of Children with Severe Disabilities — Curricula for such Children”
- **Korea:** Sung-yeon Cho
 “The Actual Condition of Instruction of Communication Using AAC for Children with Severe Autism -mainly focusing on Language Classroom Social Story-”
- 4:20 Q&A and Discussion
- 4:50 Closing Ceremony

III. Outlines of Presentations

○ **Presentation I, Masahiro Watanabe**

Mr. Watanabe made his presentation under the theme “Development of Japanese Version Symbol Communication Device and Educational ICF Database for Children with Disabilities”. He provided topics for discussion by performing a demonstration. In the first half of his presentation, he provided explanation about the development of “Voice Output Communication Aid (VOCA)” which is operated based on symbols. In the second half, he explained about the development of “e-Automatic NaviGation for individualized Educational support pLan” (e-ANGEL) which is an educational ICF database. Mr. Jong-moo Kim also provided a demonstration in his presentation “The Current Status of Development of AAC Devices”. The participants asked questions about costs of development and outlooks on practical application, showing great interest in aid equipment.



(Mr. Watanabe)

○ **Presentation II, Hirofumi Osaki**

Mr. Osaki made his presentation under the theme “Education for Infants and Children with Multiple Disabilities having Physical Disabilities”. He provided topics for discussion by supplying information on such issues as the present state of education for infants and children in Japan having multiple disabilities (having physical disabilities) and the actual education provided for such children.

He mainly talked about revision of systems for the change to “Special Support Education”, related “Medical Care”, and the communication ability of children having multiple disabilities. The participants asked questions especially about “Special Support Education” and related “Medical Care” in the future, and carried out discussions actively.



(Mr. Osaki)

○ **Presentation III, Hiroaki Ikeda**

Mr. Ikeda made his presentation under the theme “Education for the Improvement of the Communication Skills of Children with Severe Disabilities — Curricula for such Children”. He presented the curricula of his Hokkaido Takuhoku Special School and Hokkaido Makomanai School for the Physically Challenged, as well as practical case studies relating to the communication ability of children with profound and multiple disabilities. Perhaps for the fact that this time's Seminar was held at a school, there were many teachers participating from Korea. Concerning the curricula presented, the participants asked specific questions about systems for promoting education that valued each child.



(Mr. Ikeda)