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Transliteration Table: Consonants

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
ب	b		ط	ṭ
ت	t		ظ	ẓ
ث	th		ع	‘
ج	j		غ	gh
ح	ḥ		ف	f
خ	kh		ق	q
د	d		ك	k
ذ	dh		ل	l
ر	r		م	m
ز	z		ن	n
س	s		ه	h
ش	sh		و	w
ص	ṣ		ء	’
ض	ḍ		ي	y

Transliteration Table: Vowels and Diphthongs

Arabic	Roman		Arabic	Roman
اَ	a		اَ، اِيَّ	an
اُ	u		اُو	un
اِ	i		اِي	in
اَ، اِ، اِيَّ	ā		اَو	aw
اُو	ū		اَي	ay
اِي	ī		اُو	uww, ū (in final position)
			اَي	iyy, ī (in final position)

Source: ROTAS Transliteration Kit: <http://rotas.iium.edu.my>

Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities in Mainstream Classrooms: The Challenge of Teacher Preparedness

Ratnawati Mohd Asraf*
Harvindar Kaur**

Abstract: The global movement from special education to inclusive education has transformed mainstream classrooms. Students with physical and learning disabilities are now increasingly educated alongside other students who do not have these conditions. Although inclusive education is aimed at protecting the right to education of all students, this conceptual and analytical article focuses specifically on students with *learning disabilities*, because they present certain teaching challenges for classroom teachers. Outlining both the arguments supporting inclusion as well as the doubts regarding its feasibility, this article underscores the crucial importance of teacher preparedness in supporting these learners, whose ability to engage in learning depends largely on teachers' knowledge, skills, and confidence in meeting their learning needs. It concludes with implications for Malaysia and other contexts, including Muslim-majority countries where inclusive education initiatives are increasingly being implemented.

Keywords: Inclusive Education; Inclusive Classrooms; Inclusion; Teachers' Readiness; Teachers' Preparedness; Learning Disabilities.

Abstrak: Gerakan global daripada pendidikan khas kepada pendidikan inklusif telah mengubah bilik darjah arus perdana. Pelajar yang mengalami masalah fizikal dan pembelajaran kini semakin dididik bersama pelajar lain yang

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tidak mempunyai keadaan ini. Walaupun pendidikan inklusif bertujuan untuk melindungi hak pendidikan pelajar yang mempunyai pelbagai kebolehan dan ketidakupayaan, artikel konseptual dan analitikal ini memberi tumpuan khusus kepada pelajar bermasalah pembelajaran, kerana ia memberikan cabaran pengajaran khusus untuk guru bilik darjah. Menggariskan hujah-hujah yang menyokong pendidikan inklusif serta keraguan mengenai kebolehlaksanaannya, artikel ini menekankan pentingnya kesediaan guru dalam menyokong pelajar-pelajar ini, di mana keupayaan mereka untuk melibatkan diri dalam pembelajaran sebahagian besarnya bergantung pada pengetahuan, kemahiran, dan keyakinan guru dalam memenuhi keperluan pembelajaran mereka. Untuk menyediakan konteks, artikel ini juga menggabungkan perbincangan tentang bagaimana ketidakupayaan pembelajaran mempengaruhi pembelajaran pelajar. Artikel ini diakhiri dengan implikasi untuk Malaysia dan negara-negara lain, termasuk negara majoriti Muslim di mana inisiatif pendidikan inklusif semakin dilaksanakan.

Kata kunci: Pendidikan Inklusif; Bilik Darjah Inklusif; Kesediaan Guru; Masalah Pembelajaran.

Introduction

The movement from special education to inclusive education has transformed mainstream classrooms, bringing together learners with differing abilities and learning needs. Established on the principles of equity and the right to education, inclusion seeks to ensure that *all* learners are provided with the opportunity to obtain a good and sound education (UNESCO, 1994, 2005, 2009). In Malaysia, the development of inclusive education has been shaped by a series of policy and legislative frameworks aimed at widening access to education. The Education Act 1996 (Government of Malaysia, 1996), for instance, formally incorporated special education within the national education system, allowing for the placement of students with special educational needs (SEN) in both specialised and mainstream settings. This was further strengthened by the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 (Government of Malaysia, 2013), which clarified guidelines for the identification, placement, and support of SEN students, while more recently, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Ministry of Education, 2013) and initiatives such as the Zero Reject Policy ((Ministry of Education, 2019) were introduced to reinforce national commitment to inclusion.

Inclusive education involves, among others, the teaching of students with physical and learning disabilities in mainstream classes, where the latter account for a significant proportion of them. Supporting these learners requires more than placing them in inclusive settings; it requires that teachers adapt lessons to accommodate their learning needs as well as those of their peers, and an understanding of how learning disabilities affect their engagement with learning. This significantly transforms the expectations placed upon mainstream teachers, who are increasingly required to attend to diverse learning needs within the same classroom setting. Consequently, the role of the teacher has expanded beyond the conventional delivery of content to the use of differentiated instruction, where accommodations need to be made to meet the needs of learners of various abilities.

Inclusive education has been widely advocated for its potential academic, social, and ethical benefits. However, its expansion has not always been accompanied by comparable developments in teacher preparation, professional training, and classroom support systems (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Consequently, teachers are increasingly expected to accommodate a wide range of learning needs, often without sufficient preparation to do so effectively. This is more so when it comes to their preparedness to teach students with learning disabilities in mainstream classrooms, and whether they possess the specialised knowledge and pedagogical skills required to support these learners effectively as this requires not only an understanding of the nature of these difficulties but also the ability to differentiate instruction to meet their learning needs (Forlin, 2010; Loreman et al., 2013).

Indeed, concern about teacher preparedness has been raised in many countries, including Malaysia and Muslim-majority countries, where the momentum towards inclusive education has accelerated in recent decades, reflecting global educational trends. Malaysia, for instance, through its national education frameworks and inclusive education initiatives, has demonstrated increasing alignment with inclusive education practices. However, there still exists a gap between policy aspirations and classroom realities, especially as it pertains to teachers' preparedness to support students with learning disabilities in the mainstream classroom (Ali et al., 2006; 2020). This concern is further echoed by Amar-Singh (2018), who has emphasised the need

for stronger professional support and training for mainstream teachers to effectively meet the diverse learning needs of children with special educational needs.

Given these circumstances, it is insufficient to discuss inclusive education only in terms of its philosophical justification or policy implementation. A more crucial concern is to address the issue of whether teachers are adequately prepared to support children with diverse learning needs in mainstream classrooms. While inclusive education supports the learning needs of all students, this article focuses specifically on the inclusion of children with *learning disabilities*, because their needs often present certain teaching challenges for classroom teachers, as their disabilities are not always visible and require specialised pedagogical strategies to support learning.

Adopting a conceptual and analytical approach, this article presents the arguments advanced by the proponents of inclusive education as well as the doubts about the feasibility of its implementation. Most importantly, it seeks to critically examine the issue of teacher preparedness in teaching these students in inclusive, mainstream classrooms as it is central to the successful implementation of inclusive education. By situating the discussion within the global context while touching on the Malaysian experience, this article argues that the success of inclusive education ultimately depends not only on policy implementation but also on the extent to which teachers are prepared to support diverse learners in mainstream classrooms. Further, it suggests that the issues examined here are also relevant to many Muslim-majority countries, where inclusive education is increasingly being implemented.

The next section examines the nature of learning disabilities and how they may affect students' participation and learning experiences in mainstream classrooms, thereby underscoring the importance of teacher preparedness.

Learning Disabilities in Inclusive Classrooms: Challenges for Learning and Teaching

The Learning Disabilities Association of America (n.d.) defines learning disabilities as those neurodevelopmental conditions that affect how individuals process information, impacting how they acquire, retain,

understand, and use information, causing them to have difficulties with specific skills such as reading (for those with dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia), or mathematics (dyscalculia). These difficulties often become apparent during the early years of schooling, when children are expected to acquire foundational skills such as reading, writing, and mathematics. They also vary in severity and often require focused instructional support, such as using differentiated instruction to adapt lessons to their strengths and challenges, and scaffold learning by guiding them through manageable steps until mastery is achieved (Lyon et al., 2003; Bender, 2012).

It is important to underscore the fact that children and individuals with learning disabilities¹ have between average and high intelligence and *can learn* and succeed if the appropriate support is provided. The learning challenges they face are brought about by their neurological condition, which affects how they process linguistic and cognitive information. This causes them to struggle with tasks that constitute the foundation of formal schooling, such as reading and writing, and remembering sequences of information or understanding numerical concepts. Without the appropriate emotional and instructional support, these challenges may lead to frustration, reduced academic self-concept, and negative learning experiences. Hence, it is crucial for teachers to possess the knowledge and skills necessary to support their learning needs, especially in inclusive classrooms, where they learn alongside their peers who may not have these challenges.

It is also important to point out that learning disabilities are not visually apparent in individuals with the condition. As such, these students, who take more time to learn how to read, write, and do arithmetic compared to their peers, may sometimes be misunderstood by their teachers as being “slow,” when in reality, they are experiencing specific difficulties in processing and responding to instructional demands. Such misinterpretations can influence teachers’ expectations and instructional decisions, and as a result, they may not be given the needed emotional

1 The term, “learning disabilities” *does not* denote that an individual with the condition is “learning disabled.” The term is used for legal purposes to ensure that these individuals are recognised under national disability legislation, enacted in various forms across countries, and are thus afforded corresponding rights and protections.

support or the appropriate instruction that would help them to succeed. In this context, the success in meeting their educational needs depends significantly on teachers' ability to recognise their learning difficulties and respond with the appropriate instructional strategies (Lyon et al., 2003; Bender, 2012), especially given the context of the inclusive classroom, where students of various abilities and disabilities learn alongside each other.

Conditions such as Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and autism have sometimes been included in discussions on learning disabilities. This is because both are frequently associated with learning-related challenges that affect students' engagement with classroom instruction. Students with ADHD may experience difficulties with attention regulation, organisation, and task completion, while those on the autism spectrum may encounter challenges in communication, social interaction, and flexible thinking.

In contexts such as Malaysia, these distinctions are often less rigid. Students with ADHD and autism are frequently included within broader categories such as "students with special educational needs" (SEN) in view of the fact that they require similar forms of instructional adaptation and teacher support in inclusive classrooms (Ali et al., 2006).

To fully appreciate the challenges surrounding teacher preparedness in inclusive classrooms, it is necessary to critically examine both the arguments supporting inclusion and the concerns regarding its implementation, as these perspectives highlight the expectations placed on teachers as well as the constraints that shape their ability to carry out inclusive practices.

Support for Inclusive Education

Inclusive education views access to quality education as a fundamental right for all learners, and has emphasised the importance of ensuring that all children have opportunities to quality education (UNESCO, 1994, 2005, 2009).

Consistent with these principles, a growing body of research has examined the outcomes of inclusive education for students with disabilities. Studies conducted in various educational contexts have investigated whether inclusive classroom environments contribute to improved academic achievement, greater social participation, and

enhanced opportunities for learners with disabilities. Mitchell and Brown (as cited in Mngo, 2017) and Downing et. al. (1997), for instance, assert that inclusive education sets the platform for children's language competency development. As elaborated by Downing et al. (1997), this is because inclusive classrooms provide children with opportunities to engage with authentic language in natural learning environments. According to the teachers they interviewed, such exposure increases children's attentiveness and eagerness to learn. Similarly, Mitchell and Brown (as cited in Mngo, 2017) argue that social interaction with peers plays an important role in facilitating children's language development, particularly during the early stages of development. Its positive impact was also illustrated in a study by Bruwer et.al. (2014), where the teachers expressed their satisfaction with the improvement in their children's language competence; attributing this to the fact that the inclusive classes had had an enormous impact on the children's language development, which led to their rapid progress.

Research has also examined the educational outcomes associated with inclusive education. A systematic review conducted by Kalambouka et al. (2007), which examined a large body of studies on the academic outcomes of students with special educational needs, found that most of the research they reviewed reported positive, or at least neutral, effects of inclusive classrooms on academic achievement. Similarly, a comprehensive review and synthesis of 280 studies across 25 countries conducted by Hehir et al. (2016) shows that educating students with disabilities alongside their non-disabled peers benefits both groups academically and socially. However, the report also highlights that the successful implementation of inclusive practices is highly dependent on teachers' knowledge, skills, and professional training.

Researchers have also found that children with disabilities become more attentive and disciplined in the inclusive school setting. As reported by the teachers in Downing et al.'s (1997) study, when their students were placed in an inclusive classroom, they developed the passion to learn and became more focused. On the contrary, they portrayed unruly behaviour when they were put in special education classes. This is because, in mainstream classrooms, they emulated the behaviour of their non-disabled peers, who were more disciplined; hence helping them to become calmer and more active listeners. In other words, they regarded these peers as their role-models (Raj, 2002). The inclusive classroom,

then, becomes more manageable; and this, according to Farlow (as cited in Fried, 2007), results in their remarkable academic growth, which cannot otherwise be achieved in a segregated classroom setting. In other words, inclusive education ensures these students' active participation in classroom activities and the teaching and learning process in general (Renfroe, 2006).

Another benefit of inclusion, as reported in the literature, is that the non-disabled children in the mainstream classroom learn to respect and accept their differently abled peers. The teachers in the study conducted by Mngo (2017) believed that inclusion strengthened the children's understanding of their disabled peers by teaching the former to accept the latter. Cambridge-Johnson et.al (2014) also found that when children with learning disabilities were placed in the inclusive setting, it helped to develop high reverence and understanding among the classmates, while Leatherman (1999) reported that inclusion taught the children tolerance and acceptance. These researchers posit that inclusive education is likely to result in increased acceptance and tolerance of students with learning disabilities by their peers, and this, in turn, is likely to result in the curbing of the endemic discrimination faced by these children.

Doubts About the Feasibility of Implementing Inclusive Education

As discussed in the previous section, there is a substantial body of research that has highlighted the benefits of inclusive education. However, despite its merits, doubts have also been raised as to whether its implementation is feasible and whether it benefits all children.

Fried (2007) and Ketrish et al. (2016), for instance, caution against viewing inclusive education as a universal solution for learners with special educational needs. The researchers argue that inclusive settings cannot be treated as a "one-size-fits-all" model, stating that some learners—particularly those with conditions such as autism—may experience difficulties communicating their needs and interacting effectively with teachers and peers in mainstream classrooms. Because these learners often require more specialised forms of instruction, teachers need to recognise these differences and respond with the appropriate instructional strategies that can support their learning.

Questions have also been raised on teachers' knowledge of inclusion. Barned et. al. (2011), for example, discovered that their

teacher-participants did not have sufficient knowledge about children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) to accommodate them in their classrooms. The same was also found by Sucuoğlu et. al (2013), who reported that 86.8% of the teachers they studied admitted that they had *no knowledge whatsoever* of children with learning disabilities while Amr (2011) and Page et al. (2018) reported that the teachers faced challenges in meeting the educational needs of their students in inclusive settings, as they lacked specialised training or support. These difficulties are also compounded by their perceptions of the additional instructional demands required of them to support learners with learning disabilities (Anderson et. al., 2017; Bari et. al., 2014; Muwana & Ostrosky, 2014; Obiakor et al., 2012; Round et al., 2015).

Hence, despite the support for inclusive education, there are still many unanswered questions that need to be addressed before it can be considered to have been successfully implemented. Many of the issues raised in this debate point to a central question: “Are teachers adequately prepared to support students with diverse learning needs in inclusive educational settings”? The following section, therefore, examines the issue of teacher preparedness and its significance in meeting the needs of students with learning disabilities and other learning difficulties.

Teacher Preparedness for Inclusive Education

The adoption of inclusive education in a majority of school systems across the world has significantly increased the responsibilities placed on teachers, particularly in mainstream schools where learners with diverse needs, including those with learning disabilities such as dyslexia and dyscalculia, are taught together in the same classroom. To help their students to learn, teachers are now expected to adapt their teaching to accommodate the different learning needs of their students, which requires that they have the requisite knowledge, skills, and professional training to be able to do so effectively. However, research conducted in different parts of the world indicates that many teachers do not feel adequately prepared—nor confident—to carry out inclusive education effectively (Florian & Rouse, 2009; Forlin & Chambers, 2011), while other studies suggest that teachers’ confidence is strongly shaped by their prior training in special and inclusive education.

Forlin and Chambers (2011), for example, found that teacher education programmes play a key role in enhancing teachers’ readiness

for inclusion. They found that teachers who had received the requisite training demonstrated higher levels of self-efficacy and were more willing to adopt inclusive practices compared to those who had not. Similar findings were found by Savolainen et. al. (2012), who reported that the teachers' perceived competence greatly affected their readiness to teach in inclusive classrooms. These findings highlight that teacher preparedness depends not only on knowledge, but also on the development of confidence through professional preparation.

Another aspect that affects teachers' preparedness for inclusive education is their understanding—or lack thereof—of learning disabilities. When teachers have limited awareness of conditions such as dyslexia or dyscalculia, they may misinterpret their students' learning difficulties as a lack of effort or "low ability" (Norwich, 2008; Slee, 2011). Consequently, they may form negative perceptions of these learners or fail to provide the required support to help them to succeed (Florian and Black-Hawkins, 2011).

In this regard, a substantial body of international research consistently indicates that teacher knowledge, awareness, and readiness to support students with dyslexia remain a persistent concern in many countries (Mather et. al., 2020). This is also illustrated in Folia and Malisiova's (2025) systematic review of research across multiple countries on EFL teachers' perceptions and preparedness to teach students with dyslexia, which found—according to their self-reports—that they had limited conceptual understanding of, and lack of formal training in dyslexia. They also reported having low confidence in tailoring instruction to students' individual needs, leading to insufficient classroom support. Similarly, Mather et.al. (2020), in their global overview of dyslexia-related services and educational opportunities, highlight that a common challenge across countries is the scarcity of teachers with specialised knowledge of dyslexia-specific instruction.

Large-scale meta-analytic evidence further demonstrates that teacher preparedness is a central factor influencing the implementation and success of inclusive education. Dignath et al. (2022), in a meta-analysis of 102 studies across 40 countries, found that teachers' beliefs about inclusive education are strongly shaped by factors such as professional training, self-efficacy, and prior experience in inclusive settings. It is important to point out that although teachers frequently express

positive attitudes toward inclusion, this does not always translate into effective classroom practices if they do not have sufficient knowledge of pedagogy. Systematic reviews of research further substantiate the fact that teachers' acceptance of students with special educational needs is closely linked to their perceived competence, training, and provision of professional support (DeBoer et.al., 2011). These findings suggest that teacher attitudes, knowledge, self-efficacy, and preparedness are closely connected, and that effective inclusive practices depend not only on positive beliefs about inclusion but also on teachers' practical knowledge and skills. Teacher preparation is therefore crucial in building their competence and confidence to teach inclusively.

The literature on inclusive education in Malaysia highlights the same concerns. Although educational policies support inclusive education, several studies suggest that teachers in mainstream classrooms often do not feel sufficiently prepared to address the diverse learning needs of students with learning disabilities. According to Jelas (2000), teachers frequently report limited knowledge and skills to support students with special educational needs. The same was found by Ali et. al. (2006), whose teacher-participants reported limited knowledge of learning disabilities and insufficient professional training to help learners. More recent studies have similarly found that teachers may possess general awareness of inclusive education but lack confidence in implementing appropriate instructional strategies for learners with disabilities; particularly those with learning disabilities (Bailey et al., 2015). As a result, teachers often rely on personal experience or informal strategies when supporting these learners.

Questions have also been raised on the disparity between policy and practice. Amar-Singh (2020), a respected practitioner and advocate for students with special needs, emphasises that mainstream teachers frequently lack specialised pedagogical knowledge and systematic professional preparation to support students with learning disabilities, and that their efforts are further constrained by insufficient institutional and professional support within schools. He emphasises that without sustained professional development and support, teachers are unlikely to implement inclusive practices in a meaningful and sustainable manner. Amar-Singh (2018) also argues that mainstream teachers require stronger professional support and training to effectively support children with special educational needs in inclusive settings. This is also

the view of Jelas (2010), who argues that the successful implementation of inclusive education in Malaysia requires that teacher education programmes be reoriented to address the issue of learner diversity and the need for inclusive pedagogical practices.

Broader critical analyses corroborate the research findings and views of the aforementioned scholars. In a critical review of special needs education in Malaysia, Alshoura (2023) identifies persistent structural issues such as inadequate teacher preparation, limited resources, and insufficient support services for students with SEN. Notwithstanding the advancements made in inclusive education in Malaysia as they pertain to students with special needs, these limitations constrain teachers' capacity to translate inclusive ideals into effective classroom practices.

As outlined in the preceding review, both global and Malaysian research point to the lack of teacher readiness for inclusive classrooms. Therefore, continuous efforts should be made to prepare teachers for inclusion as this is a primary prerequisite for its success. Recognising its importance allows for a more balanced and realistic understanding of inclusive education, where policy development, teacher training, and classroom practice are aligned. Such an approach ensures that inclusion moves beyond policy and becomes a reality for learners with diverse educational needs.

Preparing teachers for inclusion

To prepare teachers for inclusive education, we believe that schools, local education councils, and ministries of education should first attempt to change teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education, where they have been reported to be dissatisfied when assigned the task of teaching in an inclusive setting (Kandhari & Chowdry, 2016; Saloviita & Schaffus, 2016; Shah et. al. 2016; Sucuoğlu et al., 2013; Whitaker, 2011; Wiggins, 2012). However, initiating a change in their attitudes may not be possible unless the required support is provided for them. A similar view is shared by Main et. al. (2016), who observed in their study that the in-service teachers in Seychelles were more favourable towards accommodating children with learning disabilities upon completing a unit on inclusive education from Australia.

In addition to addressing teachers' attitudes, we should also increase the amount of administrative support that schools render to teachers.

Research has shown that teachers tend to support inclusion when support is provided (Ahmmed et. al., 2014; Anati, 2013). For instance, providing the necessary teaching aids, disabled-friendly facilities, teacher assistants, in-service training, and scrupulous guidelines on inclusion would boost teachers' confidence to teach in inclusive classes. Additionally, Murphy (2017), in her study, discovered that the school principals boosted their teachers' professional development through both formal and informal means by providing them with essential and proper training as well as staff development, thus, enhancing their ability to serve in the inclusive education setting effectively. The importance of in-service training is also highlighted by Cambridge-Johnson et al. (2014), where about 63% of the teachers in their study agreed that they became motivated to teach only after they had received adequate training. Meanwhile, continuous training endorsement by the Ministry of Education of the United Arab Emirates acted as a catalyst for teacher support for inclusive education as the teachers were more inclined to teach in inclusive classrooms after attending the training sessions (Anati, 2013). The same was found by Thomas (2017), where the participants recommended some form of training for teachers teaching children with learning disabilities in inclusive settings.

Finally, the synergy between academic staff is yet another form of support for teachers teaching in inclusive classrooms, as interacting and cooperating with other parties facilitate teacher readiness. Having close collaboration with early childhood teachers, special education teachers, and other resource teachers, for example, helped certain teachers prepare themselves for inclusion (Miller, 2015). Similarly, the synergy between colleagues and peer observation participants would also help to prepare teachers for inclusion as they boost their self-confidence through knowledge acquisition (Iaquinta, 2014).

Conclusion

Teacher readiness is central to the effective implementation of inclusive education. Without it, children with learning disabilities may not be able to receive fair and equitable educational opportunities. Hence, it is crucial that we give continuous attention to the professional development of teachers. This includes equipping them with the ability to recognise students with learning disabilities, adapt teaching strategies to meet their learning needs as well as that of their peers, and create learning environments that are conducive for all learners.

The discussion has shown that although inclusive education is widely supported for its academic, social, and ethical benefits, concerns have been raised regarding its implementation. These have to do with the challenges teachers face in addressing diverse learning needs within mainstream classrooms. These challenges do not undermine the value of inclusion; but rather, underscore the conditions required for it to be effective. The evidence reviewed in this article also suggests that while inclusive education is a commendable aim, its success ultimately depends on the extent to which teachers are adequately prepared for inclusive classrooms, particularly in supporting those with learning disabilities, whose ability to be engaged in learning depends, in large part, on teachers' ability to recognise their learning needs and respond with the appropriate instructional strategies. Hence, strengthening teacher readiness—through ongoing professional development and institutional support—is essential to ensure that inclusive education moves beyond policy aspirations to meaningful classroom practice.

In the context of Malaysia, national policies such as the Education Act 1996 (Government of Malaysia, 1996); the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 (Government of Malaysia, 2013); the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013–2025 (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2013); and initiatives such as the Zero Reject Policy (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2019) have expanded access to inclusive education. This makes the role of teachers even more critical. While these frameworks demonstrate a strong commitment to inclusion at the policy level, they also place increasing demands on teachers to support a diverse range of learners within mainstream classrooms.

The issues discussed in this article also carry implications for Muslim-majority countries. As we continue to pursue the goals of providing educational equity and access, investing in teacher preparedness will remain a key factor in ensuring that the aims of inclusive education are translated into meaningful learning opportunities for *all* students.

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