

EXPLORING THE EARLY ESTABLISHMENT OF EMPLOYMENT  
PREPARATION PROGRAMMES BY HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF  
SPECIAL NEEDS LEARNERS VIA THE SPECIAL EDUCATION  
INTEGRATED PROGRAMME IN MALAYSIA

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## Abstract

Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) are not part of the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) curriculum in Malaysia, and no specific operational guidance is provided to schools regarding them. EPPs are, however, currently performed in a non-uniform way in some schools. This study concerns the early establishment of EPPs in the SEIP in Malaysia. Within the context of the study it is important to note that the partnership programme between schools and outside collaborators is not yet fully established in all secondary schools in Malaysia as stipulated in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

This study aims to explore the implementation of EPPs; delineate the hindrances for special educators, teachers and heads of departments; and, identify the areas of improvement needed to establish vocational educational programmes as early as possible to assist special needs learners towards an independent life through employability. In order to achieve these aims a qualitative study using case study design has been carried out. Semi-structured interviews of Special Education Teachers and Department Heads were undertaken as the main method to elicit data from a purposive sample of fifteen EPP participants. Data was also collected about special needs learners' activities and other relevant emerging themes using an observational method in a real-life setting that included two observations in each EPP at each of the five schools, making 20 observation sessions in total. Relevant documents including official documents from Ministry of Education, modules outlines were also collected from the respective schools and subsequently subject to documentary analysis. To enhance the trustworthiness of the findings, data was triangulated and analysed in light of the Malaysian Education Blueprint along with other previous literature.

Findings indicated that leadership and management; academic background knowledge and mastering vocational skills; the social and physical environment; and, collaboration and coordination play an important role in harnessing the potential of special needs learners. The contribution to knowledge of this study is the formation of a framework to clarify the issues impeding effective the implementation of Employment Preparation Programme, and the establishment of key priorities within that implementation effort. Overall, it is argued that this study exemplifies how

important it is that the implementation of EPP needs to become an integral part of schools as organisations.

***Key words:*** Employment Preparation Programmes, Special Education Integrated Programme, Special educators, Special needs learners.

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## List of Abbreviations

EPP	- Employment Preparation Programme
SEIP	- Special Education integrated Programme
HoD	- Head of Department
SET	- Special Education Teacher
UNCRPD	- Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
FAMA	- Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority
DVS	- Department of Veterinary Services
DoL MHR	- Department of Labour Ministry of Human Resources
MoE	- Ministry of Education
MoHE	- Ministry of Higher Education
MEB	- Malaysian Education Blueprint
IDEA	- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
IEP	- Individual Education Plan
KSSM	- Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (Secondary School Standard Curriculum)

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Introduction

Employment is the key element of a successful independent life journey for people with disabilities after education and training (Rabren and Schiffer, 2016; Hussain and Maarof, 2017). Employment enables people with disabilities to participate in a meaningful career, which promotes empowerment and helps to build a healthy social network. It also contributes significantly to increased levels of self-esteem, confidence and feelings of value in society (Rabren and Schiffer, 2016). There are several institutions in Malaysia, both governmental and non-governmental, that deliver vocational courses for special needs learners once they have completed their secondary education. However, the quality of vocational education and training remains poor in Malaysia and the programs fail to fully prepare special needs learners for employability.

The inadequacy of such education is mainly caused by the lack of focus on career experience and by the failure to create inclusive settings. Since this is the case, pioneering programmes, such as the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) for special needs learners are crucial initiatives that have commenced in the Malaysian Education System which focus on young people between the ages of 16 to 19 years old as part of the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) for Secondary Schools. These programmes enable special educators to identify the learners' career interests, enhance the degree of choice and expose young people to the skills and training that they need for future employability.

This study will investigate how this programme has served special needs learners and at the same time investigate the barrier issues faced by the special educators while conducting the programme. This research will thus identify possible areas to be improved in order to create successful employees with disabilities and enhance their future life chances.

## 1.1 The Malaysian Special Education system

The curriculum for special education in secondary education has been significantly revised in Malaysia, with an enhanced focus on the acquisition of basic skills linked with moral values and on promoting early specialisation, as well as encouraging school-based management and teacher empowerment (Lee, 1999). This indicates that the special education curriculum of 1999 was in practice when this study took place. However, the special education curriculum for secondary school was updated in 2017 with an emphasis on identifying special educational needs, creating a pipeline of trained teachers and other specialists. This offered an infrastructure of robust support, both financially and by creating public awareness of the valuable contribution made by special needs learners and their involvement in the secondary school system (Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah, 2017).

Currently, there are three options provided for the students with disabilities, chosen according to their category of disability. The first option is that all special needs learners are allowed to choose their preferred schools in the National Special Education system, including special needs schools where all of the students are typically classified as disabled. The second option is the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) where a special needs programme is offered for special needs learners in the same school as the national mainstream education. In these schools, special education and mainstream students study in a separate setting. The third option is the Inclusive Education Programmes where special needs students who meet the basic criteria to be included, such as the ability to write, read, count, follow instructions and to complete assigned tasks, are placed in mainstream classes and follow the national education programme (Jelas and Mohd Ali, 2014). In this inclusive programme, those students are allowed to follow mainstream students' pathways and may sit for the Malaysian general examination (Jelas and Mohd Ali, 2014). Below is a model of the special education system within the national schools system, which outlines the academic journey to reach an independent work life.

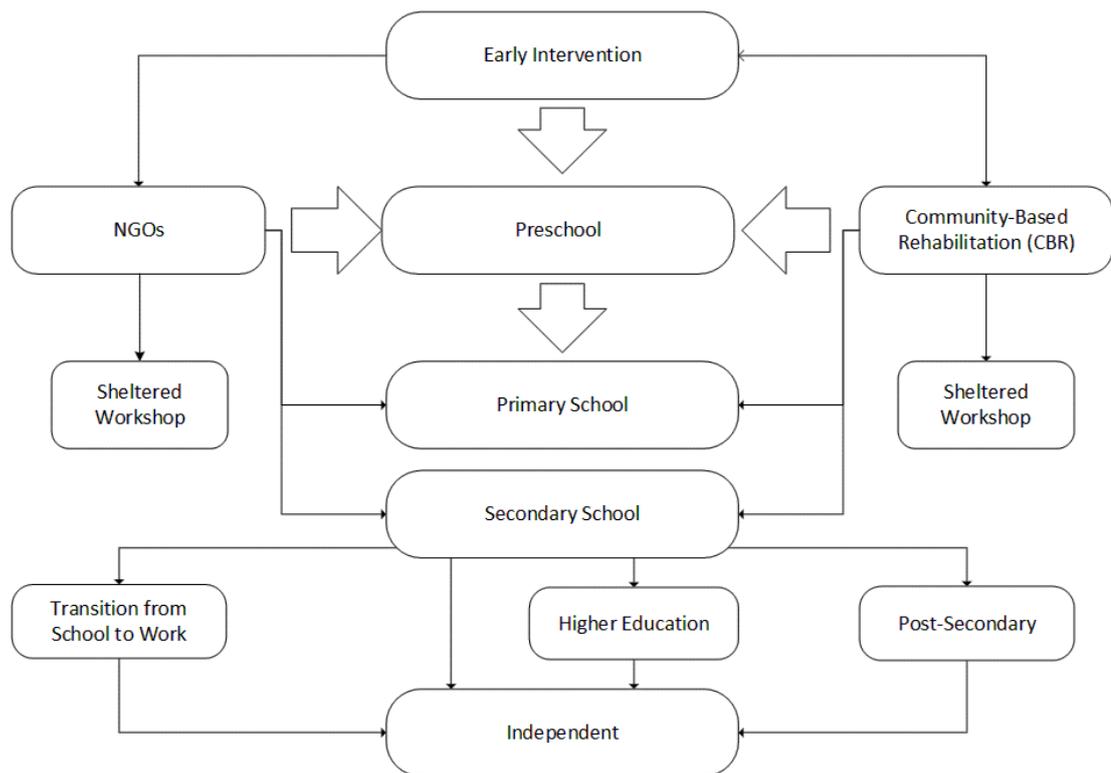


Figure 1: Model of the Special Education System in the National School in Malaysia

Malaysian Special Education requires students to acquire skills and knowledge within five main dimensions. One of those dimensions places emphasis on flexibility, relevance and quality within the curriculum, in order to allow further adaptation which extends to the specific requirements in life-skills and preparation for employment (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p. 4-15).

The Malaysian Education Development Plan (MECC) 2013-2025, placed emphasis on the need to strengthen vocational education and training skills amongst students with special needs in an attempt to integrate them into the labour market. In addition, it also emphasised the need to recruit an appropriate number of well-trained teachers and specialists to design the education and vocational training programmes for the special needs learners. As reported in the MECC, one of the existing programme's failures is due to the lack of qualified teachers. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Malaysia should prepare all teachers to train in basic handling techniques to ensure all teachers are equipped with the relevant knowledge to meets special needs learners' requirements and their parents' expectations.

The current Education Development Plan (2013-2025) also indicates that, a support infrastructure involving technical aids should be put in place along with adequate funding to meet the needs of the special needs learners. Moreover, this effort will only be successful with the cooperation of the public and the level of social integration in the community. The Ministry aims to facilitate a rights-based model to raise awareness amongst the teachers and other supporters to integrate efficiently in the inclusive environment.

The Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025) also emphasised the need to improve equality of achievement in education between rural and urban schools. This is applicable to all special needs learners in order to facilitate sufficient resources to all rural and urban schools. At the same time, it is expected that this will be tailored in such a way as to create an efficient education plan.

There are many programmes and plans designed for the special needs learners in Malaysia. Such programmes include the Malaysian Skills Training Programme (MSTP), also known as Malaysian Skills Training Certification, which is one of the certification programmes under Vocational and Education Training (VET). The MSTP has been authorised and administered by the Department of Skills Development (DSD), the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia. For Level 1 and 2 students (Lower Level Skills Certificate), the competency requirements are considered to be moderate and achievable for secondary school level. The Level 1 certificate is awarded when learners are considered capable of carrying out a set of training tasks and/or work-based activities which are unchanging in routine. For level 2 to be awarded, a learner has to display a competency in performing a more varied set of tasks in variable contexts, necessitating a level of responsibility and self-reliance. However, for Level 3, 4 and 5 students (High Certificate/Diploma /Advanced Diploma Skills), the ability to adapt to relevant technology is important for efficiency (Department of Skills Development, 2013).

The Buying Seats programme, which was introduced in the year 2011 to 2013 for special needs learners, is inclusive of young people who are learning vocational skills (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013). This programme supports the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action (1994) that all special needs learners should have access to general institutions and thus helps to prevent discrimination

(UNESCO, 1994). Similarly, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 also emphasised that all special needs learners should be given equal rights in education (Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (Act 685). Under this legislation, the special needs learners will be selected by the special educational teachers in the schools itself. The general educator in the inclusive settings will educate the selected successful candidates in colleges authorised by the Ministry of Education, Malaysia. The government funds the special needs learners, and their placement is located away from their parents.

In introducing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs), the transitional school to work programme in SEIP secondary schools in Malaysia allows a wide range of organisations to collaborate, including non-academic and academic groups from private and government sectors. As a result of high demand for vocational courses, a collaboration between Public Institute of Skills Training (ILKA) and Private Institute of Skill Training (ILKS) was established which included both mainstream and special needs learners. In addition to this public and private sector collaboration, special needs learners were also given the opportunity to enrol in the National Secondary Special Needs Vocational Schools (SMPKV) once they reach 16 years old (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013-2025, p.7-7). However, the criteria for enrolment is a recommendation from their lower secondary school. This is expected because, learners need to display a certain amount of independence, as they will be living away from home throughout the duration of this particular course (ibid). Therefore, in order to fulfil the mission in the Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2015), SEIP has taken this opportunity to set up EPP by harnessing the potential of special needs learners in SEIP secondary schools in Malaysia.

## 1.2 Statement of problem

Even though there are several schooling options available for learners with special needs, including special education schools, SEIP and inclusive education programmes, the quality of the education delivered to the special needs learners has many complications. According to Malaysian Education Development Plan (2013-2025), the lack of qualified educators and professional support increases the likelihood of the failure of the current special needs programme (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p.7-9).

Further, even though the curriculum was revised for students with special needs, including those with visual impairment and hearing impairment, nevertheless there is still a lack of support and guidance for students with learning difficulties or disabilities. There are major issues which need to be given priority to discover how special needs learners that are keen to undertake the vocational curriculum in order to prepare them with the necessary life skills compare to an academically focussed curriculum. Other challenges in the list are the lack of facilities, equipment and aids required by the special needs learner in the general national education as well as the support service (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p.7-9).

Another problem identified by the researcher is the parental needs and expectations about their children's pathways once they have completed their education. It became evident that parents do not know how to guide their children after their secondary education is completed and that they depend on school staff to guide them (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p.7-7). Educators find it difficult to direct such parents to the best solution. Nonetheless, those parents who depend on a school's guidance often tend to come from those with the lowest status in society who are in socioeconomic need or poverty. Hence, this lack of information and appropriate support provided by the policymakers to schools and educators means that teachers are unable to provide the solution to parents needs and thus to those of their children.

Recent research about hiring of people with disabilities from the perspective of employers by Yusof et al. (2014) has indicated a willingness to offer employment to people with disabilities and some of the employers' groups have encouraged schools to review the skills and training provided for future successful implementation of vocational education and training programmes. From all the above reason, the rationale of this study will focus from the perspectives of educators, Department Heads and special education teachers as well as observing those special needs learners in the field in order to clarify what more can be done to enhance such skills and change their life.

### 1.3 Purpose of the study and main approach

The purpose of the study was to explore how the early establishment of EPP in the secondary schools is harnessing the potential of special needs learners towards employability skills in SEIPs. In addition, this study will also scrutinise the factors that pose hindrances to special educators in effectively conducting the programmes in five SEIPs in the West and Southwest States in the peninsular of Malaysia. As a result of this, the researcher will be able to identify the areas of special education which are in need of improvement.

A qualitative research approach was adopted to serve the purpose of this study. The nature of the data collected was descriptive and was recorded in a naturalistic setting. The sample for study was chosen purposively from the list of schools that had undertaken the Employment Preparation Programme in Integrated Secondary Schools in the Peninsular of Malaysia. Also, the locations of the schools were particularly selected from West of Peninsular Malaysia, the fourth largest State in Malaysia and the Southwest region of Peninsular of Malaysia, which are in the list of the recognised programmes in Malaysia.

It was the intention of this study to help policymakers establish systematic policies for special needs learners. It will also enable the Department Heads in schools to enhance their role in leadership in establishing employment related programmes. These roles includes management, administration and teacher readiness, meeting the students' needs and parents' expectations. Moreover, this study will help special education teachers to become more confident in delivering employment preparation education programmes in the SEIP secondary schools in Malaysia.

The purpose of the study was also to discover how far the government department in Malaysia supporting and providing opportunities for delivery of a successful special education system. The final point is to analyse the implementation of EPP in different schools, and how influential EPP are in nurturing the potential of special needs learners through SEIP in Malaysia.

#### 1.4 The significance of the study

There have been limited studies carried out regarding employment preparation programmes that have involved both non-governmental and inter-governmental collaborations in the SEIP secondary schools. According to a preliminary report of Education Development Plan (2013-2025), about 5% of students enrol in special education school and 6% in inclusive education settings. Nevertheless, around 89% of students enrol in the SEIP in Malaysia (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2012, p. 4-17). These statistics are also cited by Amina and Yasina (2016) to highlight the implementation's, status of these minority inclusive settings and the difficulties faced by the educators. The culture of elitism, which pressures the teachers to prepare students to achieve the highest rankings in examination, has left no time to accommodate the special needs learner's individual learning needs in the inclusive settings (Jelas and Mohd Ali, 2014, p. 1000). Furthermore, according to Malaysia's Education Blueprint (2013-2025), schools do not have the ability to assess even the basic necessities required to equip, support and assist the students with special needs in the inclusive programmes. What can be concluded here is that high scores in examination are not the only pathway to achieve success in one's life. Instead of focusing on the minority group of inclusive students who are struggling in academic activity, there is a need to increase the research focusing the majority population of special education, the 89% enrolled in SEIP (Amina and Yasina, 2016, Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2012, p.4-17). This will lead to actions that are crucial for establishing and delivering effective employment programmes for special needs learners, who represent a large segment of the Malaysian population, and who have the capability to make a huge contribution to the country.

As stated in the Education Development Plan (MECC) 2013-2025, one of the reasons behind the failure to deliver appropriate support to people with disabilities in Malaysia is the lack of specialisation in both subject and background. Another reason is the insufficient facilities in the schools. Further research is needed to discover the hindrances faced in the schools directly from the educators involved in career-experiences programmes. Added to this, areas which need improvement can be identified in order to enable changes in policy at both local and national levels to strengthen special needs learners' experiences in education.

As highlighted in the previous studies by Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) regarding the level of collaboration among the inter-agencies, such collaborative activity has been conducted poorly in the SEIP programmes. Hence, further research is important in order to obtain in-depth perspectives directly from the school educators so as to identify the specific barriers faced in schools. Also, studies are needed to identify the possible solutions to the hindrances for delivering a better service in preparing special needs learners towards employability and social integration in society. This study will contribute to the existing knowledge related to the employment preparation programme for those with disabilities from a qualitative perspective. This current study is significant as there is a lack of understanding of issues related to the special needs vocational training programs in Malaysia. The researcher believes that the findings of this study could provide crucial information to the educational establishment i.e. policymakers, educators, teachers, special needs learners, parents, collaborators, stakeholders and employers. This study could also potentially contribute towards literature in the field of special needs education. Overall, this study will identify the strengths and the weaknesses of EPP in schools in Malaysia and will focus, in particular, on the importance of the roles of the leaders to create the changes to the education system.

### 1.5 Scope of the study

The scope of the study was to investigate the issues involved and to address the research questions during the embryonic stage of EPPs implementation in SEIP. Learners who have visual or hearing impairments would not be selected because it would be beyond the scope of this study. No attempt is made to elicit data beyond answering the research questions. The research studies the population of five integrated secondary schools in the Southwest and Western region of the Malaysian Peninsula.

## 1.6 Research Questions

The following research questions were investigated and directed this study:

- RQ1 How are the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) implemented in secondary school's SEIP for harnessing the potential of special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?
- RQ2 What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?
- RQ3 What are the areas in need of improvement within the Employment Preparation Programmes?

## 1.7 Ethical approach and scope of the study

There was limited or no risk to the researcher as the researcher activities took place only on five Malaysian Government Integrated Secondary School premises. Every effort was made to ensure that a code of ethics was adhered to, thus safeguarding the participants of this study. All relevant experiences shared by these participants were used to reinforce this study. Selection of participants for interview and observation sessions included: Department's head who can influence the management and leadership, programme planning and services within special education provision. Next, Special Education Teachers who were educating the students with disabilities in the employment preparation subject (13 to 15 years old), and the special needs learners aged between 16 and 19 who were undergoing the second stage of Employment Preparation Programme, for input on the successes and difficulties faced throughout the programme.

Conversely, both Heads of Department and Special Education Teachers who have less than 1-year experience in the Field of Special Education are omitted from the study. Special Education teachers who do not teach or are not involved in the Employment Preparation Programme were also excluded from the study. Students with disabilities aged below 16 years old were also excluded.

## 1.8 The researcher's background and interest in conducting this study

The researcher in this study has 15 years work experience in Special Education, commencing in 2003 when she started a career as a Special Education teacher in the Special Education Integrated Programme, Secondary Schools in Malaysia. Within this period the researcher experienced working in total of four schools in Kuala Lumpur, located in Central West of Peninsular Malaysia and Johor Bahru, which is located in the Southern portion of Peninsular Malaysia. The researcher has a wealth of experience educating students with learning difficulties as well as those with visual and hearing impairments. The researcher's Master's Degree focused on inclusive education. The researcher also has years of experience as an inclusive Special Education Teacher as well as being a resource teacher. The researcher also achieved the status of '*Guru Cemerlang*', a recognised excellent teacher, as a coach of both teachers and students with learning difficulties and hearing impairment throughout Malaysia. Currently, the researcher is interested in covering vocational education and training in special education. In Malaysia, the researcher noticed that the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) are being conducted in a non-uniform way in SEIP secondary schools in Malaysia. Some schools conduct this work successfully by collaborating with outside agencies whereas other schools merely offer basic life skills and a transitional programme. Therefore, the researcher intends to investigate how EPP is best implemented from the perspective of several parties who are involved with EPP.

While proceeding on a PhD journey in the United Kingdom, the researcher tried to ascertain if there were any Secondary Schools conducting similar employment preparation activities for special needs learners. At this point, the researcher came to understand that there are currently no secondary schools in the United Kingdom conducting equivalent programmes. However, basic knowledge and vocational preparation were directed as part of life skills education in the secondary schools. Therefore, the researcher was unable to do comparative studies between United Kingdom and Malaysia. However, this research from Malaysia exposes the differences in practices and also promotes the importance of preparing the special needs learners in secondary schools for employment and an independent life. The researcher also undertook additional basic courses related to social care and worked as a bank vocational support worker at Community Integrated Care, Liverpool during

which time the researcher took the opportunity to understand how the support system in United Kingdom prepares people with disabilities to integrate into the labour market.

### 1.9 Definitions of Important Terms and Context

Definition of terms is crucial for the readers from various part of the world since there is an enormous diversity of experiences, viewpoints, professions, backgrounds and cultures in relation to special needs education. It is believed this could guide the reader to understand the context of the terms used in this study to avoid unnecessary confusion or misperception. These key terms used in this study are briefly defined as follows:

Numerous terms are used to define *special needs classifications*. In England, Hodkinson and Vickerman (2009) indicate that special needs are classified into four categories; Cognition and Learning Needs, Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Needs, Communication and Interaction Needs and Sensory or Physical Needs. Whereas in Malaysia the term ‘special needs’ can broadly be classed as Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Speech Delay, Physical Disability, Learning Difficulties, Mental Disabilities and Multiple Disabilities (Education (Special Education) Regulations, 2013).

*Learning difficulties* refers to difficulties that are not consistent with biological age which means categories include Late Global Development, Down Syndrome, Intellectual Disabilities, Autism (Autistic Spectrum Disorder), Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and Specific Learning Difficulties such as Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dysgraphia (Department of Social Welfare, 2018). The term ‘Learning Difficulties’ is relatively similar to the term ‘Learning Disabilities’, where it is commonly used in all national school settings in Malaysia. Oddly, there is no standard definition approved in Malaysia for the term of Learning disabilities.

In the Malaysian Education Act of 1996, ‘*special needs learners*’ are described as those who are certified by a medical doctor, an optometrist, an audiologist or a psychologist as a student having conditions like visual disability, hearing disability, speech disability, physical disability, learning disability or any combination of the

disabilities or difficulties and who are placed in schools or institutions (Alias et al., 2016). In this study, the term ‘special needs learners’ is used in reference to learning disabilities, learning difficulties or any combination of the difficulties addressed by the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) secondary school. Other categories, which are not placed in SEIP, are excluded from the study. Also, this term is chosen for use in this study because of the nature of the students in the selected case study schools, who are undertaking practical training at workplace after school. Those learners are aged 16 and above. However, for this paper, the term ‘special needs students’ is used to refer to any students who are between 13 and 15 years of age, who are enrolled in a SEIP.

*Employment Preparation Programme* in this study refers to intensive instruction and strategies for the special needs learner in Integrated Secondary School in Malaysia with the aim of helping and assisting them with the real-life employment setting for potential future careers. Other terms used globally for employment preparation programmes are Employment Transition Programmes, Entrepreneurship Programmes or Partnership Programmes. The school to work transitional programmes involve collaborators and deliver guidance for students to transition successfully into the career world.

*Special Education Teachers* are teachers who are trained and qualified in the field of special education and who graduated with a degree or Master’s in Special Education from recognised Universities. Special Education teachers in this study refers to teachers who work at the Integrated Secondary Schools and who are involved in special needs employment preparation programmes.

*Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP)* of secondary school in this study refers to schools that have a student population comprised of both mainstream and special needs learners under a single administration (Education (Special Education) Regulations, 2013). In Malaysia, students with disabilities have three possibilities for schooling; special education school, special education integrated programme within mainstream primary, secondary and technical/vocational secondary schools and inclusive education programmes (mainstream schools that integrate special needs into mainstream classes). There are about 781 Special Education Integrated

Programmes in integrated secondary school (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2016, p.19).

The term '*special educators*' in this study is used to refer to both the Head of Department and the special education teachers.

*Collaboration* refers to those whose role in the programme involved reaching mutual agreements based on shared goals and mutual trust (Trach, 2012). In this study, the term 'collaborators' refers to all educational departments, intergovernmental agencies and private sector bodies who approach schools in order to harness employability skills or entrepreneurship programmes in the local secondary schools.

#### 1.10 The Unique contribution of the study

Globally, a number of transitional schools that offer programmes related quantitative studies have come to exist. However, a limited study has been conducted by interviewing the participants to determine the hindrances faced by them during the implementation of EPP building on observational methods which focused on practical tasks adding to the existing literature review. Findings in this study ought to fill this vacuum by sharing the Malaysian EPPs Framework globally, which could provide a vital insight into the hindrances that must be overcome to create a high-achieving and successful programme.

#### 1.11 Outline and organisation of the chapter/study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 sets the background of the study and outlines the features of the research project. It describes the research questions. The perspective underpinning this study is discussed and contextualised. The ensuing chapters broadly cover the following section:

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on policies and legislations, curriculums, relevant theory, employment programmes or models, discusses the previous studies, and highlights several issues related to harnessing special needs learners towards an independent life through employability.

Chapter 3 elaborates on the research design and methodology choices of the study. Key features of the chapter are justification for and discussions of the strengths and

weaknesses of the data collection methods. Interviews, EPP site observation, and document analysis/collection were used in the data gathering process.

Chapter 4 presents key findings and a discussion of the data. The results are analysed according to themes and an interpretation is offered for each theme. Further, all themes discovered in this study are discussed to offer a holistic understanding of the results and findings.

Chapter 5 offers conclusions of all themes, recommendations and implications for all EPP teams, the policymakers, leaders, teachers, collaborators as well as parents. The recommendations are discussed in detail and offer suggestions for improving the implementation of EPP in Malaysia.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.0 Introduction

This chapter looks at what has and has not been done in attempting to harness the potential of special needs learners through the early establishment of Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) involving collaborators in secondary schools. The design and rationale for inclusion in this study is to triangulate between possible themes from the literature review, policies and practices internationally and locally, along with the relevant theory, to critically fill in gaps in order to address research questions outlined in the last chapter

The first section synthesizes relevant special needs policies and practices that are currently in place both abroad and locally. The second section emphasises the importance of periodically updated syllabi, curricula and modules, which impacts the performance of special needs learners. The third section will review the Intervention Employment Preparation Programmes and its practices. The fourth section highlighted the knowledge and skills of the special educators. The fifth investigates the involvement of inter agencies in supporting students with disabilities towards employability. The sixth section identifies the importance of sustainable leadership for special education and includes a discussion of the post-secondary educational activities of the students. The seventh section discusses the teaching and learning environment to support special needs learners. The eighth section is the review of the applications of theory in teaching and learning vocational education for special needs learner. The following sections highlighted several issues and difficulties faced by the special education teachers and special needs learners as well as numerous suggestions for improvement in preparing the learners towards independent work life. The ninth section discusses students' attitude and their capabilities. The tenth section analyses the factors that currently influence the employability of special needs learners, and considers performance and employability outcomes. The final section is narrowed to the gaps identified in the literature.

## 2.1 Special Needs Policies and Practices

In this section, the study will discuss in detail the existing and evolving policies and practices, in Malaysia and other countries. It will also address how these policies and practices can help shape a more defined structure for the policies or practices countries that are yet to implement a developed special needs programme.

Worldwide policies and practices are being shaped and maintained around disabilities to establish transnational continuity regarding the rights of people with disabilities. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD, 2008) fights for the rights of persons with disabilities, so as to allow them to make their own choices. Indeed, research by Doyle and Flynn (2013) regarding the legal capacity of decision-making by a disabled person in Ireland is now being reformed for their benefit. This shows that there are constant changes being made around the world and that international bodies like the UN are playing an important role in bringing about these changes. In 2008, Malaysia adopted and subsequently ratified the CPRD in 2010. This convention served to highlight the importance of the human rights of persons with disabilities globally (Tah and Mokhtar, 2016). Similarly, in the Malaysian context, CPRD affords the opportunity for persons with disabilities to make their own decisions as early as possible (UNCPRD, 2008).

In the United Kingdom, policies exist so that people with disabilities enjoy the same legal status as any other member of society. For instance, every local authority throughout the United Kingdom is now obliged to provide full disability access for both new and old public buildings before they can be granted planning permission. This legislation has been in place for more than ten years. A positive outcome of this has been seen in greater number of disabled people integrating more in society, both in terms of entering the job market and becoming more involved in social activities. Similarly, Malaysia has also increased its provision of disability access as it sets out to broadly increase social integration (UNCPRD, 2008).

In addition, to help disabled people to deal with difficulties in the job market, the Department of Work and Pensions has a programme named Work Choice, which offers specialist support to either the disabled individual who is seeking employment or to provide funding for the disabled individual who wishes to set up their self-

employed business (Department for Work and Pensions, 2001). In the Malaysian context, inter-agencies provide similar opportunities with the aim of producing more entrepreneurs (FAMA, 2010).

The following is an account by Bartlett (2017) which illustrates that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) encouraged people with disabilities to enjoy their full human rights without discrimination. For this, those people with disabilities have to be identified as being disabled in order to benefit from the provisions put in place to support them. Besides that, it acts as an encouragement for disabled people to integrate into society more freely, which would be of huge benefit to both the lives of disabled people and society generally. Unlike previous international laws, which are concerned with specific disabilities, this broader convention has the full force of the law across the countries that have ratified it. Hence, in nearly 80% of the UN members that have ratified this convention, for over 10 years now, people with disabilities, both physical and mental, have been legally supported to enjoy their life without discriminatory practices and attitudes and thus the boost in their rights and the benefits that come with it.

The UNCRPD aims to ensure that persons with disabilities get equal and full enjoyment of human rights. Its purpose is to further promote respect for disabled persons' inherent dignity. UNCRPD aims to achieve all this by including non-discrimination principles, ensure inclusion in society of people with disabilities and eliminate stigmatisation. More powers are vested in a UN body, the CRPD committee, to monitor the implementation in signatory nations, and those signatories are required to establish focal points and coordination mechanisms locally. The monitoring process is also intended to involve people with disabilities and their representative bodies.

Statistical evidence is to be collected nationally to show implementation, progress and compliance with the convention and is to be submitted to the CRPD committee every four years. As these files are public, even the public is allowed to file shadow reports in which an individual can comment on the accuracy and completeness of each government's report. Then, the CRPD committee publishes a public concluding observation for each individual signatory nation.

Policies and their implementations vastly vary across the globe. Not all signatories to the UNCRPD have ensured that they adhere to the policies stated therein. There is convincing evidence from the research report by Durham (2014) that people with disabilities attain lower level of education, employment, health outcomes and even living standards, compared to their non-disabled counterparts. Situations in low and middle-income countries (LMIC) are even worse when it comes to both socioeconomic challenges and health outcomes. However, there is little data about this situation, or what policies can be implemented to improve it, based on research outcomes. According to Article 31 of CRPD, the state parties have a legal obligation to undertake such research. Moreover Article 31 of CRPD highly recommends the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all stages of the research process. (Durham et al., 2014).

It is crucially important to help improve the lives of disabled people from a very young age. Focusing on children with disabilities means that they start on equal footing from an early stage. The Salamanca Statement (1994) and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) revealed that several European countries had implemented policies that encouraged integration of children with disabilities and have been employing several projects that encourage transnational organisations to participate (Blandul, 2010). It is quite a sensitive and controversial topic to discuss about inclusive education within the European Union. Blandul discussed the salient differences between inclusive education and special education and found that despite the various arguments, many European nations favour policies that implement inclusive education and projects promoting cross country partnerships.

For the very first time, the Salamanca Statement underlined the importance of inclusive schooling. The Salamanca statement called for the design of the education system to take into consideration the huge diversity and the uniqueness in each child's interest, ability, learning rate and needs. Inclusive education, according to this statement, is the most effective way of combating discrimination and thus helps in building an inclusive society. The Salamanca Statement encourages countries that have experience with inclusive schools to develop and exchange demonstration projects. The involvement of organisations, communities and parents at the embryonic stage of planning and decision making was seen as essential in nurturing

social integration via community-based rehabilitation, appropriate education, vocational and welfare services. Furthermore, the Salamanca Statement 1994 highlighted that greater efforts were needed in early identification concerning intervention strategies including vocational aspects integrated setting (Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004).

The draft human rights convention for people with disabilities discusses an initiative taken by the United Nations that offered a link to the Biwako Millennium Framework for Action (BMF) for the rights of people with disabilities in the Asia and Pacific region. The convention introduces a comprehensive framework of protection and promotion of the rights of people with disabilities (Nagata, 2004).

In terms of legislation for school leaders, Mohanty and Nanda (2017) indicated that in spite of equal opportunity policies which have been designed specifically for inclusive education, it appears that there is a fundamental lack of faith in the capabilities of disabled learners by school principals.

The Malaysian government has endeavoured to ensure that a minimum of 1% of employment opportunities in the public sector should be earmarked for people with disabilities. Apart from this, a number of other policies have been set up for the benefit of People With Disabilities (PWD), namely; the National Policy for PWD as well as the Code of Practice for employing PWD in the private sector. Although these policies excel in principal, in practice it is incredibly difficult to guarantee implementation. This is a result of a lack of ministry personnel who are available to monitor the setting up of these policies (Wahab, Ayub and Arshad, 2017). Hoffman (2017) demonstrated via the data driven world and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) how employers, lenders, marketers, educators and many organisations are able to gain health information about individuals with disabilities. He argued that legislators should amend the ADA or any other anti-discrimination laws to prohibit discrimination.

Research by Kalef, Barrera and Heyman (2014) showed that there is a lack in government support in preparing special needs learners to obtain job in the government sectors. Following the failure of 'The Open Mind Programme' due to the lack of management in 2007, and the Buying Seats programme in 2012 due to

unavailability of the learners to cope with the instructions independently, leads to the changes in the programme structure.

## 2.2 The suitability of Syllabi, Curricula and Modules for special needs learners

In an attempt to educate and improve the capabilities of students with disabilities, a specific syllabus was formulated which was important to the National Education Philosophy in terms of physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p. E-4). However, the methods and approach used in educating students with disabilities differs from the approach used with communal students. The curriculum was intended to fulfil students' needs and requirements, including teacher training, the syllabus and all necessary equipment provided at the institution (Tahir et al., 2009). Voltz (2010) asserted special education teachers should be able to modify the curriculum to meet alternate needs and to achieve the standards required. In addition, they also must be permitted to adapt the instructions to cater to the learning styles of individual students with disabilities.

Daviso et al. (2016) indicated that Vocational Education, Work Study and School Supervised Community Work amongst the five sub groups (Learning Disabilities, Intellectual Disabilities, Multiple Disabilities, Emotional Disabilities and other health impairments) needs to be included in the secondary school curriculum by integrating the ecological, career and support needs of students with disabilities. Similarly, previous studies have demonstrated that an appropriate vocational training structure for students with disabilities is crucial to create successful employees (Majid and Razzak, 2015). However, Bouck (2014) highlighted that the standard curriculum in school consists of limited lengths of time allocated for vocational skill subjects. Johnson et al. (2003) asserted that schools should be given sufficient time and also afforded additional resources which are required for those engaging in vocational programmes, and for collaboration teams.

The role of vocational rehabilitation professionals in enhancing the potential of the curriculum and its effectiveness is something that should be investigated in more detail. This is mainly because of the vital role that vocational rehabilitation professionals can play during both the transition/planning phase and in delivering these services in a structured way. Vocational rehabilitation counsellors, working in

tandem with other professionals, can ensure that the students' skill sets are well matched with their interests and strengths (Timmons et al., 2011).

An investigative study by Murray and Doren (2013), which was carried out to establish the effect of Working at Gaining Employment Skills (WAGES) curriculum on the social and occupational skills on adolescents with disabilities, shed light on how much can be done to improve their lives in the long run. Even with limited exposure to this curriculum, it was clear there was a stark improvement in the way the students thought about themselves. This was shown in the children's reports about themselves. In addition, there is clear evidence to suggest that WAGES has had a positive impact on the students' occupational and social skills in terms of improved empathy and assertiveness. The researcher found that there remains substantial work to be done in order to accurately track the progress of the study group over a longer period of time, so that we can have a clearer understanding of the long-term impact of this curriculum and its effectiveness in improving the employability of students with disabilities.

### 2.3 Intervention Employment Preparation Programmes and Practices

Murray and Doren (2013) designed an intervention programme named 'Working at Gaining Employment Skills (WAGES)', which is a set of courses for adolescents with disabilities and encompasses strategies that are designed to enhance students' social interaction skills as well as their occupational skills. Adolescents with disabilities were assigned to an intervention programme for 5 months and a control group received "business as usual" within special education. The results indicated that the intervention group had greater vocational outcome expectation, occupational skills and social skills compared to the control condition group, which evidenced the effectiveness of the designed WAGES programmes. The main criticism of this study is that it does not adequately compare the effectiveness of this programme to other equivalent programme, even though it claims to have a positive outcome. Therefore, more studies should be conducted over a longer time frame if this programme is to become fully able to accommodate all adolescents with different abilities.

Lewis, Dobbs and Biddle (2013) explored the ways in which increased employment among disabled people can be achieved through future policy and practice through

the UK's WORKSTEP employment programme. What makes this programme unique is its emphasis on a personalised, one-on-one approach to guiding an individual with disabilities in a direction more suitable to their needs and their job seeking objectives. Despite this, this programme has received negative feedback in some quarters for placing too much emphasis on getting disabled people off benefits rather than putting emphasis on the quality of jobs offered. However, this programme appears to have been a positive development in addressing the issues of getting disabled people into the world of work by, for example, providing support workers. In conclusion, the overall feeling among participants has been positive, especially regarding the growth of self-esteem, which leads to a greater sense of well-being. Finally, this programme reaffirmed the valuable role played by the people most affected by policy decisions i.e. disabled individuals themselves. Their input is therefore crucial in helping to successfully implement such a programme. The overall sample used in this study is exclusively taken from individuals in the age range of 40 and above. This illustrates the need for a further sample study of learners aged 19 to 39. This is vital for effective analysis of their employment or post-secondary education status.

Azlan and Rashid (2013) identified the Employment Core Abilities Skills (ECAS) among trainees with physical disabilities in special vocational training institutions and sheltered workshops in Malaysia. This study evidenced that the trainees with physical disabilities often have the non-technical skills required to work, however this was dependent on the level of their impairment. Therefore, this study failed to differentiate between the varying success rates of individuals with differing abilities at the workplace. Additionally, Azlan and Rashid suggested that purposive cooperation between special vocational institutions and employers was crucial in delivering an appropriate programme for trainees with physical disabilities in real-life settings. Besides that, the research also suggests the use of the term 'People with Different Ability' as opposed to "People with Disability", and then classifying them according to their ability. Jamaliah, Rohana and Aede Hatib (2012) concluded that career development practices should be reflective of the current needs of the labour market. Also, career development practices must support individuals in their efforts to develop the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that will enable them to be successful. However, this study failed to posit how the application of elements in

technical and vocational education such as productivity, complementarities between capital and skills, technological change, and changes in work organisation can be combined to provide better results for individuals with disabilities to allow them to compete in the labour market. Therefore, the researcher believes that a lot more studies should be undertaken to make it clear on how the factors stated in this study can be used to design a career development programme into practice.

Research by Schloss and Gunter (2011) found that a 'hands-on' learning method, using materials presented by Career and Technical Education (CTE) teachers, had a beneficial effect on post-secondary outcomes for students with special needs, which were subsequently enhanced greatly because of enrolment in vocational education. Another significant aspect of the effectiveness of supported employment systems argued by Bond (2014) is generalisation across a wide-range of individuals' skills, which were developed according to their community settings. Fundamentally, they arrange courses and training for special needs students to work towards a successful career. To complement that, they also provide special needs teachers with a brief course and a completed module. Additionally, they provide a conducive vocational school-based employment setting in education (Rincon and Fullan, 2016). However, there is still an absence of adequate analysis to determine the success rate of efforts which are design to increase employability amongst individuals with special needs.

Fabian (2007) presented factors affecting transition employment amongst urban youth with disabilities, who undertook the Marriot Foundation's Bridges School to Work programme between 2000 and 2005 which focused on the fields of retail and sales, food services, technology, amusement facilities and human services. This analysis suggests the importance of implementing vocational intervention during school years and the need to provide greater resources. However, it became clear that factors such as gender as well as previous vocational experience influenced the effectiveness of identifying employment opportunities.

Bowie et al. (2017) also provided evidence that a real-world based cognitive remediation programme for individuals with serious mental illness greatly improved cognitive, functional and vocational outcomes. This was in sharp contrast to computer based traditional cognitive training techniques. There were a total of 50 participants with serious mental illnesses, 24 of which took part in the Action-Based

Cognitive Remediation Programme (ABCR) and 26 of which took part in the Traditional Cognitive Remediation Programme (TCR). Over a 10-week period, each group met two times per week for two-hour sessions. Of the 24 ABCR participants, 19 completed the programme successfully (83%), whereas only 15 participants of TCR were successful in completing the programme (57%) from a total number of 26. Bowie et al. (2017) concluded that ABCR participants had a greater chance of competitive employment and that they experienced lower level of stress related to their work. Added to that, it was found that opportunities for active skill development and techniques supported by therapists should be used in tackling the challenges faced by individuals with serious mental illnesses. These real-life settings are believed to enhance the power of links between improved schools and entire educational systems (Rincon-Gallardo and Fullan, 2016).

In terms of methodology, the benefit of using observation and self-reporting methods allowed the researcher to discover, first hand, issues of “a closure or acute nature”. However, this method has drawn a certain amount of criticism due to the over-dependency on the researcher’s interpretation leading to the potential for bias. In spite of this, it is seen as an effective way of validating the views and experiences of school leaders and teachers directly, which helps to enrich the data (Stokes et al., 2017). Similarly, Brownell (2005) looked into the effectiveness of educational programmes by referring to previous literature reviews. It became clear that there were two methods being adopted by different researchers focusing on the outcomes of each of these methods. Using the technique of direct assessment, the researcher observed the performances of the teacher, whereas the researchers who used indirect assessment focused on a number of different questions. For example, some researchers focused on student satisfaction, while others looked at how faculty members viewed the programme as well as the perception of teachers and administrators involved, including perceptions of the students regarding the overall programme.

Cavendish and Connor (2018) scrutinised the perspectives amongst students and parents, as well as the teachers’ involvement in the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and transition planning of the programme. Data accumulated in this study recommended the meaningful involvement in their IEP as the student’s goal. Opportunities for career preparation was not, however, one of the objectives of the programme. One way of securing learner involvement was by providing a pre-

planned, written document by email or letter, which could help develop a relationship with parents. Documented plans also encouraged students' involvement thus helping to increase students' engagement. Cavendish and Connor (2018) stressed the above approach in order to encourage parental involvement, and also suggested that student participation may improve the level of support felt towards the school's efforts. Secondly, the use of translators for non-English speaking families, who have background knowledge and are aware of the necessary authorisation may contribute a deeper understanding about the planning among the parents and would enable them to feel more comfortable with the procedures. Thirdly, to overcome the barrier of having to attend the IEP meeting during school hours, which may overlap with the parents' work hours, Cavendish and Connor suggested a modification such as organising conference call meetings that might enable the teachers to better reach parents. This would also help to avoid complications and/or delays in the progress of IEP. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) claimed the elements of IEP should represent the individual student's needs, strengths and interests. Additional elements such as instruction, relevant provided services, community experiences, progress of employment details, post-school objectives and the evaluation of daily living skills as well as functional vocational skills should be reported. A system of logging each individual pupils' learning instructions should be included in IEP, as well as the tailored services that are unique to their needs. Additionally, reports should include records of learners' social interaction, an employment plan and monitoring of their progress, a plan for after they have completed school and, if necessary, an assessment of their ability to live independently as well as observing and measuring the learners aptitude during work activity (William et al., 2018). Therefore, the researcher believes that further studies needed to review the contents in IEP or equivalent documentation for individuals who undergo the transitional school to work pathway.

Assessments are critical in helping all special needs learners in vocational settings to work and live independently and succeed in their career (Kellems et al., 2016). Morgan (2011) assessed the "inter-rater reliability" of a job matching assessment instrument, designed to judge individual characteristics and align young adults with intellectual disabilities with a suitable job. A total of 21 participants were rated by post high school teachers and job coaches, based on 106 O\* NET job dimensions.

The rating criteria related to knowledge, skill and ability. Generally, there was a high level of agreement, although for issues such as knowledge of English Language and Safety Awareness, there was a higher level of disagreement. According to Brownell (2005), the accepted national and state standardised assessment instrument is not sensitive enough to truly reflect the performance progress of students with disabilities, especially in terms of grading them. This method of measuring the growth of student with disabilities also has a blind spot towards the many valuable assets students gain through special education, for example development of social integration and independence skills.

Brownell (2005) looked into the effectiveness of educational programmes by referring to previous literature reviews. Using the technique of direct assessment, the researcher observed the performances of the teacher. Whereas, the researchers who used indirect assessment focused on a number of different questions. For example, some researchers focused on student satisfaction, while others looked at how faculty members viewed the programme as well as perception of the teachers and administrators involved, towards both the student teacher and the overall programme.

Cavanagh et al (2017) classifies the evidence-based approach to literature on human resource management (HRM) and management practice that influences employees with physical, mental health and intellectual disabilities in Australia. This study has reviewed the three primary themes that had developed: management and employer support for employees with disabilities, discrimination and attitudes towards employment of people with disabilities, and performance and employment outcomes of people with disabilities. In the case of people with physical disabilities, the literature highlights low management knowledge and support for employees with physical disability, which therefore increased integration issues. In contrast, management knowledge of and experience in working with people with mental health disabilities was found to be a positive contributor towards the employment of people with these disabilities. Also, the employers were more aware of health and safety issues at the workplace due to the sometimes unpredictable nature of the employees with mental health disabilities.

Dymond et al. (2008) believed entrepreneurship education for students with intellectual disabilities could well be a pathway toward rehabilitation via training in

academia, social, vocational skills, personal development and psychology in Oyo State, Nigeria. Instrumental in the development of the Individualised Vocational Programme (IVP) was the consideration given to each student's individual needs by means of coordination between parents, the class teacher and an occupational therapist to focus on work experience with family involvement. Empowering disabled youth with entrepreneurial values such as information seeking, standardising the quality of work, confidence building, determination, commitment to fulfil work contracts, problem solving, creativity, systematic planning, sales and acting on opportunities plus skill reinforcement are all desirable attributes disabled people should gain (Osman et al., 2016). Following the attempt to prepare the students, the network case studies and R&D initiatives were conducted by Rincon and Fullan (2016) in English speaking countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America, as well as Mexico and Columbia. These have shown to have a positive impact on student outcomes. Analysis of research reports produced evidence that discussion sections tend to be particularly rich in eight essential features of effective networking. It is widely believed that effective networks focused on ambitious student learning outcomes helped develop strong relationships of trust and internal accountability. Continuous improvement in practice and systems through cycles of collaborative inquiry is achieved by using deliberate leadership and skilled facilitation within flat power structures. Frequent interaction, learning inwards and connecting outwards in order to learn from others helps in forming new partnership among students, teachers, families and communities and secures adequate resources to sustain the work (Rincon and Fullan, 2016). Alias (2013) established the obstacles encountered by special education teachers in putting into practice transition programmes in Malaysian secondary schools regarding successful planning, teacher training and job market placements of special needs students. This included observations regarding the students' negative attitudes towards training sessions, lack of dedication in attending these sessions and difficulties encountered by students in acclimatising to a real-world job experience. Results from this study showed that those students with disabilities were more than capable of making the adjustments needed to excel in the workplace when given sufficient time to master the skills (Alias, 2013).

Lee (2006) pinpoints the outcome of the education and training programmes by the Grim Institute of Further and Higher Education for special needs, with regard to employment preparation. A case study provided the example of Simon Allison, aged 18, with Asperger's Syndrome, who managed to be independent and successful in the workplace, and thus motivated other special needs students to obtain similar qualifications. In light of these findings, Stonier (2013) commends the employment prospects and the rights of people with learning disabilities to work. Therefore, it is not too late for special needs learners who are aged 16 and above to be introduced to a vocational education setting.

#### 2.4 Knowledge and skills of the special educators

Lee and Laib (2016) developed a new standard model for special vocational education teachers founded on three values, based on classical rhetoric: Ethos, Pathos and Logos. The purpose of this model is to assist special education teachers because it is believed the teachers must acquire the appropriate skills to educate, nurture and guide students in Malaysia. Ethos refers to the three elements of Practical Skills, Welfare and Dedication of the Teachers. Pathos consists of the two elements of Feeling and Visualisation. Logos deals with the elements of Logic and Fact. This model evolved from the student's perspective, which, when applied, demanded a strong teacher identity and personality along with their commitment to the profession. It also required excellent knowledge of the subject matter to deliver a creative teaching session, plus a positive workplace culture, which all leads to a quality education system (Lee and Laib, 2016). Mulvey et al. (2016) supports this approach and further proposes teachers should increase their explicit attention to planning and strategies to help meet specific student needs to improve outcomes.

Also, an initiative by Southeast Asia Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Special Education (SEAMEO SEN) was established to enrich special education teachers' capabilities so as to nurture and therefore maximise the potential within special needs students (Hussain and Maarof, 2017). Another strategy would involve making greater use of technology or by increasing accessibility of teaching aids thus reducing the reliance on SETs (Boe, 2006). However, this differs from the fact that there is a lack of adequate preparation among both general education and

special education teachers to enable the education of special needs students in a vocational setting (Gable et al., 2012). Further, Boe (2006) asserted that there is a lack of research to verify to what extent the teacher preparation programme upgraded their teaching qualifications. Similarly, Nkabinde (2017) highlighted there are teachers who do not know how to deal with special needs students in their schools.

Previous research also does not place enough emphasis on the effect of teacher education and preparation practices. According to Morningstar and Mazzotti (2014), priority should be placed on making sure that teachers have a secure grounding in special education as well as a deep understanding and knowledge of the various aspects of the secondary school to work transition programmes, these being programme structure, student focused planning, student development, family engagement and interagency collaboration. Mamlin (2012) cited 'No Dream Denied' which describes six dimensions in quality teacher preparation. Three of the dimensions relate to the crucial issue of strong academic preparation for teaching. These are: a deep knowledge of subjects to be taught, a careful recruitment and selection of candidates, and with a firm understanding of how students learn.

White and Weiner (2004) found that school-based staff become the conduit to early career experiences that shape the individual's choices and confidence about their future employment after school. Other research similarly indicates that teacher's guidance and advocacy during early career experience correlated positively and significantly with successful integrated employment outcomes for transition-age students. Teachers and supporting staff can be essential in providing such employment experiences and opportunities to their transitioning students. Furthermore, teachers can also lead the students by providing education about the value of integrated employment and the importance of job matching. Also, teachers can guide disabled students to initial career experiences (Timmons et al., 2011).

Research by Holwerda et al. (2014) analysed the expectations of special needs students with intellectual and developmental disabilities, along with their parents and school teachers, regarding future employment, as well as the effect their expectations have on work outcomes. This research highlighted the essential role played by school teachers, complimented by parents, as an indispensable source of information in predicting future employment outcomes.

Morningstar and Clavenna-Deanne (2014) exposed that there is a failure in preparing SETs to meet the transition needs of students with disabilities, which in turn resulted in poor outcomes for students. According to Morningstar and Mazzotti (2014), SETs need to have in-depth knowledge and skills related to core components of secondary transition programmes.

Mamlin (2012) stressed that academic preparation of teachers should be founded on a solid specialist knowledge of the most effective methods by which students learn. An absence of an appropriate teaching certificate and a lack of a proper academic background results in a lowering of the quality of instruction (ibid). Cooper and Alvarado (2006) revealed that the insufficient competence levels of education graduates as well as teachers recruited from different academic backgrounds are contributing factors in reducing students' levels of achievement.

Mamlin (2012) made the point that a predetermined selection process is crucial when recruiting candidates who wish to be educators working in the field of special education. This indicates that an academic background is seen as an essential factor in preparing effective special education teachers. Therefore, Boe (2006) stressed that an educator lacking the required qualifications to work in a particular field or specialised area should not be recruited, or that they should not be retained unless their qualifications or specialisations are upgraded appropriately. Mamlin (2012) also established that it is important to have an academic background in special education to deal with the unique nature of special education's characteristics. It is believed that knowledge gained from an academic background is vital in providing a deep understanding of how special needs students learn. (Mamlin, 2012).

Even though there are a number of benefits gained as a result of the transfer of teachers, such as an improvement of the working environment, orientation and career development, there are also a number of disadvantages. Chief amongst these is the effectiveness of the level of involvement possible within each of the teachers' specialised knowledge areas. Due to the fundamental lack of specialist educators in the special education field, Boe (2006) special education teachers face pressure from schools, universities, state education departments and the public to accomplish tasks requiring a greater number of teachers of a higher standard, and to do so more rapidly. Although the number of special education teachers has correlated with the growing

number of special education students, the demand for fully certified Special Education Teacher's (SET) has yet to be met in each and every classroom as this too has also grown substantially. This scarcity is rarely found outside of special education as this problem does not manifest itself as much as in general education. Therefore, all SEIP in the secondary schools in Malaysia should prepare the special education teachers for this challenging Employment Preparation Programmes environment in all schools before they begin working in the school, as staff training will result in a more efficient employment programme for the students with disabilities (Malle et al., 2015).

Another contributing factor is that special education teaching candidates have often already been accepted and hired temporarily by the school or are recruited from other programmes which, due to train teachers to the best of their ability and therefore act as a source of supply of effective special education teachers (Mamlin, 2012). Mamlin (2012) also posed questions regarding the many hindrances found in the teacher preparation programme. This was particularly noticeable in the programme's inability to recruit and select suitable candidates in the field of special education. As the teacher preparation programme is conducted in small groups, there is often pressure by the ministries to boost teacher enrolment numbers which, consequently, means that the accepted standards of the programme are often ignored. This situation can arise as a result of teacher shortages.

Boe (2006) found that in order to address teacher shortages, systematic strategies need to be considered to reduce teacher demand and/or to increase teacher supply. A number of approaches are suggested in order to reduce teacher demand, including making the teaching of special education a more attractive proposition, which, it is hoped, would lessen the numbers of SETs leaving this specialist field. As the numbers of SETs leaving special education is equal to the number of General Education Teacher's (GET) arriving to teach special needs students, there is no apparent loss in terms of numbers. However, there is a reduced number of fully qualified SETs with the appropriate background in special education. A special incentive was offered to the teachers who wished to teach in special education, which attracted teachers from various backgrounds (Boe, 2006). Added to this, it is believed that the issues of teacher shortage will increase in future. Another strategy that had been identified by Boe (2006) was to increase the supply of SETs by providing

greater opportunity for qualified GETs to transfer to the field of special education. However, this proved to be unbeneficial to special education as the equivalent number of SETs were also transferring to general education. What is evident from this experience is that much more research is needed to scrutinise the effectiveness of cross-field teacher transfers in regard to improving the supply of qualified teachers. Additionally, a closer look at how special education might be made more attractive to GETs needs to be considered. Therefore, Boe (2006) concluded that none of the listed strategies which were suggested above to reduce or to increase the supply of a number of qualified SETs has proven to be certain or effective. Therefore, the shortage of and insufficient qualifications of SETs available to serve the students with disabilities needs to be given extra effort and significant resources.

Another factor in increasing the supply of teachers into special education is by re-entering experienced teachers. By doing this, an improvement is seen in the number of qualified teachers entering from the reserve teaching pool. Boe (2006) stated that the recruitment of re-entering special education and general education experienced teachers showed successful results in regard to recruiting teachers from various sources of supply. A greater incentive is offered to these teacher by introducing a different pay scale based neither on subject matter nor on location of the school.

In contrast to attracting new recruits, one of the more promising strategy which has commenced is upgrading the qualifications of the existing, employed SETs. These efforts enable the increasing of the supply of qualified teachers (Boe, 2006). Added to this, Boe (2006) also suggested the enlargement of the pool of the qualified SET by expanding the production of novice teachers in the special education field. Boe (2006) exposed that the production in preparing a qualified SETs is still insufficient in quantity to satisfy demand for certified SETs.

With respect to teaching qualifications, extensive clinical practice is required to develop effective teaching skills, including an ability to teach specific content effectively, at specific grade levels, to diverse students (Mamlin, 2012). This is crucial, as the strongest foundation that a qualified special education teacher can have is to the ability to identify the needs of disabled learners and tackle their interests in order to choose the most suitable programme (Flexer, 2012).

Another scenario, which is supported by recent research, asserts that the skill of the teacher is critical to the successful delivery of knowledge to people with disabilities. The authors Zuki, Husna, Rahman and Suryani (2016) claim that although mainstream vocational teachers are willing to accept special needs learners in an inclusive setting, because they are without the relevant skills and knowledge, they are unable to do so successfully.

As was pointed out above, Malle et al. (2015) also emphasised the importance of staff training regarding special needs education. This is seen as key to implementing an efficient programme that meets the needs of special needs learners. Similar to Mamlin (2012), Morningstar and Mazzotti (2014) noted that SETs are responsible for understanding the importance of vocational education in designing and delivering an effective transition-focused education. Morningstar and Benitez (2013) proposed the need for improved SETs quality for providing effective evidence based secondary transition programme. Lack of information is a barrier faced by the vocational educators. Training teachers in preparing students with learning disabilities towards employment preparation would help resolve this. (Abdullah et al., 2015). In light of this, Robinson (2018), Pallisera and Fullanav (2012) revealed that knowledge of the demands of the labour market is essential for intelligence gathering. To achieve this, special education teachers were suggested to organise a benchmark tour to the successful secondary schools to gain more information and advice as it may help them to establish career experience programme in their own school (Abdullah et al., (2015).

Brownell (2005), who looked at previous studies, found there is an absence of research that illustrates the impact of teacher education on producing and securing highly skilled special education teachers. To address these concerns, researcher need to focus on the various components that exert an influence on the employability of people with disabilities. Boe (2006) believes that every effort should be made to address the above problems by policy makers and practitioners within special education.

## 2.5 The involvement of inter-agency work in supporting students with disabilities towards employability.

Johnson et al. (2003) have highlighted that inter-agency collaborations have been developed due to the legislative priorities or mandates. By transferring full responsibility for all transitional support needs for young people with disabilities to the local authorities, it enables those authorities to overcome the issues in terms of rules, regulations and policies established, in turn relating to confidentiality, lack of flexibilities, bureaucracy or mismanagement. This legislation was designed to ensure that a holistic and multidisciplinary approach could be implemented for the category of people who are most vulnerable. This approach included the involvement of teachers, families and multi-agency collaborations (Children and Families Act, 2014). Comparably, involvement of teachers, families and multi-agency collaboration are seen as crucial for the complete transition from the academic to the employment experience and are also seen as critical in supporting effective legislation (Davies and Beamish, 2009, Robinson 2018). Johnson et al. (2003) also agreed that one of the main reasons for developing inter-agency collaborations is the needs for an additional service. Suggestions by Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) propose that collaboration between the inter-agencies enables the students to prepare themselves mentally and physically before entering the highly competitive labour market. Similarly, special needs learners experience a range of challenges and disadvantages when they are transitioning into the labour market. (Nag, 2014, Robinson et al., 2018).

Shaw (2016) discovered that collaboration procedures can be used to enrich workforce management in the development of employees with disabilities. Johnson et al. (2003) emphasised that interagency collaboration is defined as multidimensional and interactional with developmental characteristics. Austin (2000) noted that there are three principle stages in collaboration; philanthropic, transactional and integrative. The first stage, philanthropic, is where an organisation or individuals seek to promote the benefit of others. The second stage is to promote transactional interaction between people or bodies. The third stage represents integrating people with similar emotional, cognitive, physiological and socialisation behaviour (Austin, 2000). Johnson et al. (2003) highlighted the level of amenities and support structures, such as facilities, resources and services, which had been

delivered through interagency collaboration to maximise the service delivery system. According to Johnson et al. (2003), interagency support acts as a barrier to the successful collaboration. Such support should include sharing resources, providing technical support, and working cooperatively, instead of competing against each other. In this manner, these authors believed that interagency support could help to reduce the operational costs between programme chiefs and programme specialists. Added to this, Johnson et al. (2003) determined that inter-agency collaborations have been developed due to the shortages of funds or resources faced by each party and this enables them to eliminate the obstacles faced by the teachers in vocational education of students with learning disabilities.

Similarly, Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) agreed that collaboration is proven to show reduce financial problems faced by the schools. Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) found that lack of finances allocated for the employment preparation programmes resulted with the teachers being unable to claim their transportation and other related expenses or involved costs while collaboration activities took place. For example, Johnson et al. (2003) stressed that through inter-agency collaborations, students with disabilities in the schools were able to receive support, guidance, facilities and resources from the particular specialist agencies to learn the skills needed to prepare them for career experiences. Added to this, the dispute over funding or lack thereof causes issues to occur while promoting employment preparations for the students with disabilities. Another research result indicated that teachers and professionals also could gain the funding they need to develop transition activities and programs for students with disabilities in this inclusive, real world setting (Flexer, 2012).

Educational personnel require not just an increased knowledge of providers and the local services but to understand how to connect their students to the Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) that ensures the best support goals for employment. Indeed, ensuring that the optimal connection is made will require that teachers are aware of the differences in philosophies amongst the local CRPs and employers (Timmons et al., 2011).

In terms of commitment issues, Johnson et al. (2003) stated that an inflexible commitment provides adequate resources for collaboration. Johnson et al. (2003)

also suggested behaviour that may help build and maintain all commitments between numerous authorities, such as developing a way to compromise on important differences. Problems encountered, such as a lack of involvement or insufficient planning or poor participation, all contribute to an overall lack of achievement. The only solution identified is perseverance, focused on the vision and goal of the combined team, and on getting the task completed systematically.

Johnson et al. (2003) also highlighted that sufficient time and work is needed to achieve the expected successful outcome by bringing in certain disciplines. Furthermore, insufficient time to meet the deadline or having other commitments was encountered as a hindrance to enhance the level of commitment between parties.

One of the important approaches is to ensure the total commitment amongst the parties by creating understanding, a high level of acceptance of the culture of collaborating agencies, engaging in serious preplanning situations and minimizing turf issues such as not wanting to accept change (Johnson et al, 2003).

Johnson et al. (2003) also suggested good behaviour activities may help to build and maintain commitments between various parties. For instance, developing a way to compromise on important similarities and differences, clarifying issues which cannot be agreed and finally, keeping the goals and vision to ensure the positive outcomes of the mutual collective in mind at all times. Johnson et al. (2003) suggested building and maintaining commitments between collaborators may also help to clarify those issues which cannot be agreed upon. At some stage the change of personnel affects a change of focus of the existing goals and vision. Such a change of focus is due to lack of interest which in turn creates alternative goals. Opposition to such change leads to starting the process over, which demotivates the personnel and undermines their commitment.

Communication is one of the crucial elements to be considered in establishing relationships between multidisciplinary teams. In attempting to recuperate communication between collaborators, Johnson et al. (2003) highlighted developments of proactive interactions in a written form as a tool to avoid unnecessary miscommunication. Apart from that, these help to create frequent opportunities for communication through regular meetings, phone calls, mail and email, plus other methods of delivering information and knowledge. Apart from that,

one can develop personal connections to promote a cohesive working relationship and informal communication links. According to Jamaliah, Rohana and Aede Hatib (2012), collaboration and communication between partnerships of parents, businesses, community organizations, teachers, and other school personnel are a fundamental support element. Johnson et al. (2003) indicated that it was important for each party in collaboration to understand the cultures of others, such as their rules, values, communication patterns, structure, etc. Problems can occur such as not sharing information or either not knowing other programmes within the system or not receiving correct information. The solution to overcoming these barriers is by having conversations focusing on the differences, being straightforward with any issues raised or acknowledging awareness of issues amongst the clients which require solutions to the questions raised.

Individual with intellectual disabilities are known for being restricted in terms of decision-making, or when speaking about their determination and personal issues, often due to poor communication skills as a result of their condition (Timmons et al., 2011). Having said that, developing a relationship between various parties at the state and local level increases the opportunities to widen the lines of communication concerning employment opportunities and also supports availability (Timmons et al., 2011).

On the other hand, lack of parental support and family involvement works as an obstacle to the educators in delivering vocational education and training of students with learning disabilities (Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah, 2015). Similarly, families often face additional difficulties in adjusting their relationships with young people as the latter transition to a more independent life (Burchardt, 2005; Carter et al., 2011, Robinson et al., 2018). One of the forces behind the failure of the collaboration is that the lack of parental support and the parents' involvement in the community, which due to pressure from society, leads to failure of the overall project. These failures indirectly affect their children with disabilities reducing their ability to contribute to employment preparation (Johnson et al., 2003). However, Landmark, Ju and Zhang (2017) indicated that interagency collaboration and family support will improve the capability of young people with disabilities and lead to better employment and support by creating independent living opportunities. Families act

as a role model, most typically their closest relation, as they are often willing to share and speak more openly. In this situation, if one of the siblings relocates to find employment, this in turn pushes the other to be independent (Timmons et al., 2011).

Johnson et al. (2003) further listed activities which may be unfavourable and trust-destroying behaviours, which include developing one's own plan at the expense of other collaborators. Johnson et al. (2003) pinpoints an unwillingness to examine or modify an agency's procedures or bridge the contracts, consequently, this creates barriers to achieving their main purpose of their ideas and projections. In addition to these barriers being constructed, it affects the harmonisation between collaborators. This situation also becomes severe if it does not provide incentives, privileges or consequences for the members involved. These issues occurred due to parties who had a different aim, objective or opinion that led to a different direction of their actions (ibid). On the other hand, there is an advantageous part of this, Johnson et al (2003) stated that inter-agency collaboration will be an achievable mission, which means both parties will have the opportunities to learn from mistakes and put in effort to overcome any barriers that jeopardize a future interagency collaboration by suggesting strategic, purposeful and deliberate actions. One of the best solutions would be to identify and eliminate the member or members from the party who does not collaborate. Also, numerous actions could be implemented, such as withdrawing funding to prevent further failure or potential disaster. Tett et al. (2001) confirmed that in order to build an effective collaboration the organisations should share and have complementary purposes, be clear about their individual tasks, have sufficient time to trust each other's members, complete tasks under similar or complementary conditions which involve many of the shared resources, such as time, money and staffing of personnel.

Johnson et al. (2003) provides an initial platform for educators to effectively collaborate, leading to successful vocational outcomes for people with disabilities. This emphasises that the gap identified for the future research is to gain in-depth understanding of collaboration needs and desires for a consistent outcome that should proceed at various locations globally. In this study, Malaysia has been chosen to fill in the void to study how collaboration contributes to the role of preparing an EPP for those special needs learners in Malaysian secondary schools.

Nevertheless, the research organised by Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) to establish that fundamental collaboration between inter-agencies and the SEIP in secondary schools in Malaysia resulted in a poor acceptance amongst the team involved of the need to conduct the career experience programmes comprehensively. In the case study by Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) it was also found that only one secondary school out of a total of 6 selected secondary schools for the study, implemented collaboration between the government and the private sector, which was initiated by the teachers in that school. Furthermore, as evidence to this fact, collaborations with public institutions only offered short courses for the students with disabilities, which meant that they were unable to pursue extended activities, either in school or post-secondary education, which is due to the learners having insufficient qualifications to enrol. These results indicate that there is a need for further research to fill in the gap of in our knowledge of the fundamental issues or hindrances which lead to the failure of the career experience programme in the secondary schools in Malaysia. Also, further research is needed to identify or suggest the best solution to overcome the issues or hindrances for a successful contribution for the career experience programme to be planned in the secondary schools.

Cheong and Yahya (2013) conducted a case study in Malaysia with 24 participants from various backgrounds to ascertain an effective transitional plan from secondary education to employment for individual with learning disabilities. Cheong and Yahya (2013) revealed that collaborative support system, job coaching, self-advocacy skills training, career guidance and transition assessment, vocational training, trained transition personnel and transition services led to an effective transitional plan for the individual with disabilities as early as age 14. Lindsay (2018) reported there is a need to improve inter-professional collaboration and the partnership between inter-agencies in order to encourage youth with disabilities to experience the transitional process. Lindsay (2018) also discovered that there are several individual skills that youths with disabilities need to master in order to be successful in transitioning to post-secondary education. Furthermore, it was found that family and peer support influenced learners' transition from secondary education to postsecondary education (ibid).

Research has examined the issue of inclusivity from the perspective of students with disabilities who are engaged in the field of health and social care within higher

education. The respondents were students and educators from fifteen health and social care professions from across the United Kingdom. Analysis has proven that irrespective of positive reinforcement on the part of the Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) on the issue of inclusivity, respondents' experiences fell short of their expectations. Malle et al. (2015) in particular has focused on the inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational educational programs in Ethiopia. According to Malle et al. (2015) many physical environments of TVET colleges such as buildings, walkways and other structures hindered the mobility of persons with disabilities. Certainly, this contrasts with the legislation of the Ethiopian government regarding the participation of people with disabilities in vocational education and training institutions. Such barriers could be improved by redesigning the physical structures used to deliver special education. However, Ethiopia has seen a reduction in the number of students with disabilities in education (Boe, 2016). Furthermore, Boe (2006) failed to elaborate specifically on how it would be possible to reduce the categorisation of students with disabilities. Subsequently, reducing the number of SETs has not, to date, proven effective and therefore requires more in-depth research.

## 2.6 The importance of Sustainable leadership for special education needs

Leadership and management in the schools have a significant key role to play in a self-improving school system designing an innovative strategy to achieve success (Middlewood, 2018). Similarly, another study indicated that school management can be varied and will continuously change from school to school as part of a strategy to meet the unique mix of needs, interests, skills, abilities and targets across institutions and departments (Caldwell et al., 2005).

Previously, research by Johnson et al. (2003) recommended that a good leader should be able to identify the issues which act as a hindrance to effectively minimise the barriers, thus enabling educators to successfully provide learners with adequate facilities and guidance. Johnson et al. (2003) also suggested leadership in an organisation should recognise the difficulty of the collaborative process and should be able to provide individuals with adequate resources and the support needed to be successful. This supports the work of Bouck (2014) whereby the standard curriculum in school consists of limited length of times allocated for vocational skill subjects.

Johnson et al. (2003) asserted that it is necessary to provide sufficient time and resources for those engaging collaboratively.

Johnson et al. (2003) underlined that strong leadership is important for a successful project, as leadership plays an integral part of the responsibility of key decision-makers who direct their teams. One of the hindrances found is the system of unnecessary bureaucracy for delivering instructions, which leads to further complication amongst the members. In addition, mismanagement of the parties caused problems during the collaboration process. One of the solutions identified is the involvement of key persons or decision makers in the initial planning stages and analysing key problems which might occur for the actions undertaken before implementing them. In reality, apart from that, a good leader should never hurt anyone by being insensitive to other's needs (Johnson et al. (2003).

In addition, the three required stages in the relationship between networks and central leadership are from supply driven to demand driven, from compliance oriented to learning oriented and from bureaucracy to movement (Rincon and Fullan, 2016). The results deliberately framed an action-oriented set of guidelines to develop effective networks. In terms of the social power of networks, they dramatically improve schools and entire educational systems (Rincon and Fullan, 2016).

Teachers play a very important role as planner, developer and evaluator in this particular education (Taylor, 2012) and thus these teachers need to equip themselves with knowledge and skills needed to teach vocational education to students with learning disabilities (ibid).

In terms of pre-service teacher training, career development is a very limited aspect of the special education curriculum. Very limited or almost no effort had been put in to integrate the needs of transition activity into the vocational development program for teachers, counsellors and administrative staff (Agran et al., 2002).

Roberts and Guerra (2017) proposed stronger ties between local education authorities and schools to help better prepare principals by raising awareness of special education. They also suggest that the principals take on the responsibility of implementing a suitable, current curriculum and also oversee all of the programmes

in school. Similarly, research by Maich, Sider and Morvan (2017) presents an opportunity to consider how principals support special education needs. However, it is currently very difficult to gauge the level of support of principals in terms of their participation in special education from the perspective of SETs. Nkabinde (2017) also claimed that principals lacked sufficient awareness regarding special needs learners progress and that they are seen as rather uninformed among the IEP team. In line with this, Kalef, Barrera and Heyman (2014) suggested to explore the level of support provided by government and management teams which influenced the failure of upcoming employment preparation programmes.

## 2.7 Teaching and Learning Environment to support special needs learners

Thornton (2018) stated that schools that are located in rural areas often face greater challenges compared to schools in urban areas. The geographical location of a school can greatly influence educational outcomes for students. For example, if the school is not easily accessible, this can have a negative impact in terms of the development of the surroundings, which in turn can influence the quality of education that students receive. As a result, Thornton (2018) found that Schools in these areas subsequently faced the added challenge of poverty due to the low status of rural areas that lack any strong economic structure. This affects the available resources, including funding for schools.

A career plan can help students make strong connections between their work in high school and their later lives. Through two-level propensity score matching analyses, using data from the High School Longitudinal Study of 2009, this study explores the direct relationship of completing such a plan and student engagement late in high school. It was found that completion of a plan had a significant positive relationship with student engagement. These results held true for the entire high school sample and for the public-school sample. This information adds to the growing research on career and college readiness and to the more limited literature on the role of education planning in high schools (Camara, 2013). Lombardi (2018) found that all students do not receive adequate preparation for college and careers. Students without disabilities are on average more confident in their abilities to prepare for their future careers. However, students with disabilities in secondary special education schools

are unable to do so, which in turn is a critical issue for students with disabilities for future planning and independent life (Plasman, 2018).

Student engagement in education is key to ensuring successful learning. Engagement becomes crucial as students' progress through high school and transition into young adulthood; however, engaging them in high school can be an arduous task. By engaging people with disabilities in the field of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), it is possible to enhance social and psychological dimensions and strengthen a positive sense of a disabled person through participation in community development. This can indirectly help remove the sense of inferiority, inefficiency and dependency among people with disabilities Osman (2016).

Having considered opportunities and intervention strategies, King et al. (2016) has conducted a pilot study to assess youth experiences using the Residential Immersive Life Skills programmes (RILS) in 18 sites over a 21-day period. The initial research showed the reliability and the feasibility of using the programme to provide constructive surroundings for developmental experiences concerning social interaction, autonomy and personal growth.

Santuzzi and Waltz (2016) indicates that the responsibility to reveal a disability lies solely with the employee, thus ensuring protections from the employer. Nevertheless, this issue can be complicated by the employee either refusing to accept they have a disability or by them simply failing to realise that their impairment qualifies as a disability. In addition, it is believed that a major factor in the equation of a person's disability identity is social interaction with peers. The workplace can be seen as a microcosm of society. How the law, medicine and society at large define disability acts as an important social construct within which a disability identity is formed. This, coupled with contributing factors of social interactions, has been shown to influence a disability identity. Once an individual disability identity has been established, this can subsequently manifest itself at an organisational level. The manifold benefits of this can be seen in the development of a process of disclosure, health and safety awareness for disabled individuals and, more broadly, an increase in work opportunities.

With respect to discrimination and attitudes, Cavanagh et al. (2017) evidenced that stigmatisation negatively impacts the acceptance of people with varying types of disabilities in workplace surroundings. However, the experiences of employers and employees in interacting with people with disabilities stimulates helpful approaches. Paetzold et al. (2008) agreed that stigmatisation has been shown to negatively impact a disabled individual's hiring chances. To reinforce this, there is also evidence that when people with disabilities are hired, they still face barriers in terms of expectations of their ability to perform their tasks.

Hussey et al. (2017) engaged with recent discourses regarding the barriers to the execution of health and rehabilitation in the aspects of politics, finances, the health system, physical surroundings, communication, and highlighting the attitudinal issues that stigmatise and indirectly omit people with disabilities. Kanter (2014) argues that the CRPD is attempting to change the way society views people with disabilities who are not protected against stigma and discrimination by society and its institutions.

Despite this, Hoffman (2017) summarised by saying that a worker's decision to disclose their disability is most likely influenced by the assumption of stigma and that a greater awareness of disability identity would help researchers and practitioners further examine this expectation. The established research has succeeded only in skimming the surface of this complex issue and has so far failed to offer a broader picture due to the inconsistent nature of research methodology. The distinction is between individuals with a visible disability which develop an early formation of a disability identity and those whose disability is less obvious. The latter of these tends to be under represented in research results.

Correspondingly, Ngo et al. (2012) focused on stigmatisation of children with developmental disabilities in their mixed method research, where it is proven that embarrassment, shame, guilt and other negative feelings are very common among caretakers in social activities in Vietnam. The families hiding their disabled children from society do so because their children are often discredited and suffer the distress of humiliation, criticism and rejection in Asian society. For this reason, stigmatisation is significantly induced by culturally specific values in Asia. There,

the researcher suggested an increase in awareness through education among caretakers to reduce the impact of discrimination in society.

It is however important to note the limitations listed by Ngo et al. (2012) due to the elimination of the most cognitively disabled or severely behaviourally disordered from this research. This indicates that the research in question held an important bias, as it appears to have discriminated against certain levels of disability.

Lindsay (2018) also finds that the attitudes of society such as discrimination and labelling of youth with disabilities influences the period of transition to work life. Individuals should be offered more than one job to choose from, although this is not always possible, even for people without disabilities. Individuals need to have multiple opportunities to try out non-stereotypical jobs to determine what roles and responsibilities they enjoy and should have the opportunity to try out a potential job for a short period of time before formally accepting it (Timmons et al., 2011).

Shier, Graham and Jones (2009) dealt with factors which acted as barriers for people in the Canadian labour market who are broadly classed as disabled; those with learning, cognitive, mental and physical disabilities. From the disabled persons' perspective, the most commonly identified issues in securing employment were Employer Discrimination, Labelling and Negation of Human Capital. Therefore, an area where improvement is needed is the education of employers to nurture a greater awareness of the needs of disabled people in the workplace. With regards to employees, and what they have done to alleviate discrimination and stigmatisation, it was found that participants in this study would often modify their behaviour by either hiding their reliance on medical aids, such as walkers, or by using humour to deflect negative perspectives.

In light of these arguments, Pinkney et al. (2012) assert that adolescents with disabilities should be treated with interventions similar to those used for the general population, as they feel that providing these persons with different interventions than those that are used for the general population would only serve to further marginalise them. They further argue that through vigorous interventions, adolescents with disabilities can be helped to a great degree. In contrast, Stancliffe, R., Larson, S., Auerbach, Engler, Taub and Lakin (2010) state against Pinkney et al.'s arguments that usage of interventions such as aided Augmentative and Alternative Communication

(AAC) may reduce the loneliness of individuals with disabilities. Everyone, regardless of their needs, deserves to be treated with dignity and equality, and one of the fundamental measures of equality is empowering people to select their chosen professions (Morgan and Morgan, 2006). However, Morgan and Morgan (2006) reveal the stark reality of the situation, whereby the highly competitive work environment offers very limited job opportunities. These issues are further magnified when the realization of how much worse it would be for persons with disabilities dawns, particularly when it comes to those who are also engulfed in poverty and are effectively illiterate.

Hoque et al. (2014) found that equal opportunity practices are virtually identical in both public and private workplaces. Results specify that there is a limited adherence to the Positive About Disabled People 'Two Ticks' scheme's five commitments; employment, recruitment, retention, training and career development of disabled employees compared to non-Two Ticks workplaces in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, there is lack of employer support for and dialogue with Disability Champions.

Lindsay (2011) looked at the issues of discrimination and employment barriers for teens and young adults with disabilities aged 15 to 24. There was shown to be a significant increase in the barrier for teens with communication disabilities aged between 15 and 19. Generally, barriers existed for a number of reasons including level of education, gender, low wages, level of disability, age and geographic location. All of these influences were factors in creating barriers.

Similar to the above viewpoint, McLean et al. (2017) argued that a major drawback within local communities was disrespect, which led to barriers being formed, preventing equality for people with disabilities, especially in education and employment in Moldova. According to McLean et al. (2017) a possible explanation for this problem is inadequacy in terms of culture, policy and physical barriers in Moldova. Some communities are not familiar with people with disabilities and lack of exposure consequently raised many negative thoughts about these people. People with physical disabilities faced mobility difficulties as they were unable to be independent and become fully involved with social activities. Added to that, a lack of standard policy, financial issues and insufficient public services offered to people

with disabilities all contributed to the problem of discrimination from societal integration (McLean et al., 2017)

## 2.8 Review of the applications of theory in teaching and learning vocational education and training for special needs learner

The application of five steps of Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1977-2010) seems to be the ideal theory to guide in teaching and learning special needs learners. Students with special needs learn through observing other individuals. The first step begins with observational learning/modelling (Bandura, 1977). Individuals are encouraged to pay attention in order to learn ideas such as distinctiveness, affective valence, prevalence, complexity and functional value. One's characteristics refers to sensory capabilities, arousal level, perceptual set, and previous reinforcement. Next, retention is where individuals need to remember what they have learnt with tools such as symbolic coding, mental images, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal and motor rehearsal. Then, reproduction is where individuals are able to reproduce what they have learnt, which includes physical capabilities and self-observation of reproduction. Finally, motivation is crucial since individuals must have motivations to be able to learn meaningfully which refers traditional behaviourism, guaranteed (imagine incentives) and vicarious incentives. The second step is outcome expectation, where individuals forecast the consequences of a given action to make better decisions about which choices to make, and which should be avoided. The third step is perceived self-efficacy where individuals believe whether they can achieve the task (Bandura, 1997; Bandura, 2006). The fourth step are goal setting, where goals reflect cognitive representatives of expected anticipated outcomes. Goal setting is essential to achieve precise outcomes The final step is self-regulation; this includes biased self-monitoring, self-blaming judgement and defensive self-reactions. The researcher believes that more studies should be undertaken to look at the findings of this particular study to establish the suitability of this theory in guiding special education teachers towards harnessing the potential of special needs learners to live an independent life.

Corson (1985) acknowledged the practical strategies of school to work transition programmes for learners. According to Corson (1985) vocational preparation programme may shift their prominence away from the narrow constraints of job skills and instead, emphasise work skills. This broadening of focus will help define the true

concept of work. Corson (1985) asserted that the orientation of programmes should be focused on the individuality of the learners. An analysis of the context of work should help dissect the various factors involved regarding people's views and attitudes towards work. Counselling and group dialogue should be included as a way of measuring levels of reward and achievement of participants. Work experience based programmes should offer examples of the practical application of learned skills and crafts. Further, the way in which work experience courses that incorporate social studies are implemented may point to a guiding principle of how a particular society functions. The level of contentment and fulfilment of participants of work experience programmes may be measured questionnaires. Studies that link work experience with culture and language will seek to broaden and develop the communicative skill set of learners. Overall, the practical strategies of these vocational preparation programmes may be more suitable to mainstream learners, than to special needs learners. Therefore, more studies are needed to identify the practicalities of EPP.

## 2.9 Hindrances faced by special educators

### 2.9.1 Student's attitudes and their capabilities

Turning now to students, Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) indicate that students with a reluctant attitude towards employment preparation are one of the main obstacles faced by the teachers in vocational education of students with learning disabilities. Students attitudes such as low self-esteem and lack of confidence resulted in more difficulties in adapting and interacting with society (Safani, Mohd Salleh and Arief, 2000; Sarimah, Norsharil and Rohana, 2012). Consequently, Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) exposed the reason why most schools do not implement inter agency collaboration: It is due to the attitude amongst the students with disabilities and their lack of confidence and difficulty in integrating in society (ibid).

The weakness seen in many educational institutions lies in the weak preparation of pupils with special needs, which includes the inability to provide them with the essential employability skills to suit the needs of employers (Jackson et al., 2009). Indeed, the proficiency level of pupils with special needs is low, those who have completed their basic education in schools are not skilful enough to work, and as a

result, they are not absorbed into the work force (Ju et al., 2014). Research by Abdullah et al. (2015) showed that students with learning disabilities do not continue their studies because they could not cope with the tough vocational courses offered, such as air conditioning maintenance, electrical wiring and automotive maintenance. In addition to this, Mamlin (2012) also criticised another flaw related to disabled individuals' capabilities: That is, some students are inadequately identified in regard to their particular disability group. This leads to a situation where special education teachers are not equipped to deal with individual students with differing needs. Subsequently, teachers are faced with difficulties in addressing the requirements of each student, thus undermining their ability to maximise the assistance of special needs learners as they are not appropriately certified (Mamlin, 2012).

Osman (2016) described several obstacles faced by people with disabilities. These have been seen in the case of involvement of people with disabilities in Information and Communication Technology Skills (ICT), where Osman (2016) holds the view that information and communication technology skills (ICT) are necessary to thrive in the labour market. Osman has used mixed methods as a way to undertake this research and he found that people with disabilities were struggling to fulfil this demand. Basic education is a crucial factor in learning from the training quickly, especially if that training involves ICT. Failure to master the basic skills may weaken their job opportunities. Another problem that lessens the possibility of gaining ICT skills is the design of the building for disabled access, followed by lack of transportation (ibid). In addition, results evidenced that the vast majority of people with disabilities are in a state of poverty. It is a barrier that obstructs their access to sources of education and training, which are necessary to be able to gain employment. Moreover, according to Osman (2016), the Malaysian government's efforts towards the empowerment of people with disabilities in the field of ICT was hindered by the limited number of specialized centres. This has meant that some people have been forced to acquire technology skills from private training centres (Osman, 2016). Likewise, Lindsay (2018) also highlights several barriers faced by young people with disabilities such as coping, self-caring, disclosure of their condition, and difficulty in managing accommodation by themselves without support. In attempt to survey the reason behind the failure, Lindsay (2018) identified that there are several skills that young people need to master to successfully transition to post-secondary education.

However, research to date, which tends to focus on students' attitudes, highlighted that these conditions have changed due to high prejudice, expectations and standards required by the employers who are hiring people with disabilities (Nag, 2014, Robinson et al., 2018).

Those with disabilities are not only concerned with the lack of current occupational opportunities but also with their retirement years. A study conducted by Dykema-Engblade and Stawiski (2008) revealed that it is generally a struggle for people with disabilities to be self-sufficient. Dykema-Engblade and Stawiski (2008) further state that compared to around 90% of normal people being employed, only approximately 50% of those with disabilities have jobs. As people with developmental disabilities are faced with such challenges, their retirement worries are further increased. Those with developmental disabilities often face daunting challenges in competing with normal people for limited job openings (Dykema-Engblade and Stawiski, 2008).

Research by Lee et al. (2016) showed that students who undertook career and technical education (CTE) in high school had a greater likelihood of gaining full-time employment as a result. However, Herbert, Lorenz and Trusty (2010) identify that there are numerous people still facing quality of life challenges such as joblessness, underemployment, frequent job changes and lack of social interfacing. Webb et al (2014) noted in his studies that disabled students were less likely to successfully transition from schools to job roles. Both Herbert et al. and Kristine et al studies urge professionals to play an important role in assisting the disabled to build confidence, adapt to the environment and to excel in career development opportunities. Although widely recognised as an area of concern, the performance of special needs learners within the workplace remains poor due to improper foundations, lack of guidance, and a lack of preparations. Bell (2010) suggests that the employment of people with dyslexia is not proceeding well in the workplace for many reasons. Bell (2010) further suggests that a special course is needed for all stakeholders, including individuals with dyslexia, family members, employers, colleagues, specialists, educational providers and sponsors to bridge knowledge gaps and overcome the stress levels in both parties and provide a successful, inclusive workplace.

### 2.9.2 Employability of special needs learners

Research carried out between 1993 and 2013 by Ellenkamp et al. (2016) documented that the percentage of individuals with Intellectual Disability (ID) who are in paid employment was very low (9 to 40%). This is in spite of government legislation across different countries. The aim of this research was to identify contributing environmental factors which affect competitive employment for people with ID. The researchers extracted, screened and then grouped 26 articles out of an initial 1932, which were based on their relevance and merit. These were then categorised into four main themes accordingly; employers' decisions and opinions, job content and performance, workplace interaction and culture and the remainder was support given by job coaches. These factors were shown to be of great significance in an individual's ability to obtain and maintain paid work. In spite of ongoing law-making efforts to stimulate higher participation of people with ID in paid employment, research remains alarmingly rare.

Simonsen et al. (2015) stated that the three factors in an employer's decision to hire a young person with a disability were the following; their readiness for the job interview, the job candidate's professional attitude and their ability to carry out the required tasks. The importance of customising the job for each individual student was also established. This research was found to benefit employment specialists and also improved employment outcomes for young people with disabilities (Simonsen et al., 2015).

Whereas in the case of intellectual disability, most of those employed are assigned menial and repetitive job roles. Employers are less likely to employ these people because they may require major adjustments at the work premises. However, employers are more likely to employ people with intellectual disabilities if they have had experience interacting with them through job placement. The authors clearly indicate that there was a positive correlation between employers who had greater knowledge and experience with various people with disabilities and positive job outcomes.

Huang et al. (2015) interviewed 12 Taiwanese employers to establish their four main considerations in hiring people with disabilities. These were employer's personal experience of disabled people, financial considerations, charitable concerns and

policy implications. By far, the greatest concern employers had was at the enrolment and applicant selection process stage. This, however, was not such an issue once this stage had been passed. To address this issue, this study suggested that employment models which emphasised demand-driven strategies could help better connect employers with suitable employees. Nevertheless, barriers still remain in terms of employees' opportunities to advance their careers due to an apparent lack of support in the workplace generally. Therefore, more effort is needed to improve equality of employees with disabilities. Results from Abdullah Yasin and Abdullah (2015) indicate that several employers have negative attitudes toward allowing students with disabilities to work, and this in turn leads to difficulties in finding a collaborator committed to deliver work experience and training to the student with disabilities.

Jasper and Waldhart (2013) analysed factors such as employee abilities and workplace accommodations that act as challenges to the employers when considering the hiring of people with disabilities in the leisure and hospitality industry. Jasper and Waldhart (2013) also stressed that even 20 years after the passing of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) the employers felt they had insufficient resources to accommodate and provide sufficient training to employees with disabilities. Employee and manager attitudes, job mentoring, and financial incentives were the well-regarded practices that lead to positive outcomes of employee with disabilities. Similarly, Kaye et al. (2011) agreed that barriers to hiring employees with disabilities are a lack of awareness of disability, accommodation issues, fear of legal liability and concern over costs. These findings suggest straightforward approaches that employers might take. Sezgin and Esin (2016) revealed that those with mental-emotional disability are the most disadvantaged when it comes to employment preferences followed by those with physical disability. Even though there is appropriate legislation, studies showed that disabled individuals still face many problems in the sphere of unemployment, different payment policies due to their specific area of capability, inappropriate physical and environmental conditions, negative attitudes of managers and different work tasks for their capabilities and qualifications (Sezgin and Esin, 2016).

Hussain and Maarof (2017) analyse the vital role employability plays for students with special needs. They identify that by changing the overall education system from academia to a vocational self-reliance setting, one can build on the students'

experiences and living skills and enable them to fully participate in the competitive labour market. To do this, a concerted effort needs to be made to enhance employability numbers through training programmes which include transition focused education programmes, technical and vocational education and job coaching.

Returning to the subject of employability of vocational school leavers with disabilities, Yusof, Ali and Salleh (2014) acknowledged that those leavers are not employed accordingly to the skills they learnt in secondary school, even though there is an increased rate of employment among people with disabilities. However, results indicate that employers have faith in student's capabilities, so much so that they're willing to hire them. This, in turn, leads to the success of the vocational education programme. Also, Yusof et al. (2014) encouraged schools to review the skills and training provided for future successful implementation of vocational education and training programmes.

Another study has been done by Yusof, Ali and Salleh (2015) which drew our attention to the employers' perspective towards the strengths and weaknesses of the employees' personalities and their abilities. This pilot study found that employees with disability, even though they are hardworking, responsible, compliant, honest and able to socialise among colleagues, still also had very low self-esteem, and high sensitivity to negative influences. Apart from that, they need a supporter to encourage, monitor and guide them at workplace especially when they are introduced to a new task.

Stonier (2013) proposes that the employment prospects of people with learning disabilities, as well as their inherent right to work, are crucial to successful participation in the workplace. Therefore, Stoner suggests an implementation of vocational education programmes for special needs learners aged 16 and above. In a review opinion by Domzal, Houtenville, and Sharma (2008), employers were found to be less interested in hiring people with disabilities due to their lack of employable skills.

Clayton reviewed a government programme which looked at ways of altering the perceptions and behaviour of employers towards hiring people with disabilities (Clayton et al., 2011). Clayton's research team also identified the scarcity of research that looked at the varying effectiveness of these intervention programmes on different

socio-economic groups. Interpreting this data was problematic due to the selection of individuals who may have been more highly motivated or more capable of entering employment (Clayton et al., 2011).

Buntat et al. (2013) recognised the difference in viewpoint between large groups of teaching staff from vocational agricultural institutions and industrial employers in terms of employability skills in Malaysia. In this study, both teaching staff and employers utilise similar elements such 'cooperating with others', 'possessing honesty', 'managing times' and 'work in a team'. However, an element which differs between teaching staff and employers is the emphasis on 'following instructions given', which teaching staff believed to be of critical important. In contrast, employers actually placed more emphasis on 'using technology and information systems effectively' and 'making decisions'. Also, this study stated three major hindrances faced by the teaching staff which consist of "unclear about the phrase 'employability skills', 'curriculum designed not focused on employability skills' and 'no evaluation of employability'. In addition, another challenge was the difficulty found in pursuing the teachers' initiative to negotiate with employers to encourage them to accept disabled students (Alias, 2013).

With this in mind, Osman (2016) recommend a model that has been drawn from the theory of empowerment which could benefit the policy-makers, stakeholders and employers, as he believed this model is suitable for a joint project or networking between government agencies, NGOs and employers to serve people with disabilities as they lead an independent and dignified life.

Taylor and Seltzer (2011) investigated employment and post-secondary educational activities for people with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), both with and without an intellectual disability, as they grow and develop into independent adults. Taylor and Selzer conducted a larger longitudinal study between 1998 to 2008 of 66 young adults with ASD. In this study, data was collected every 18 months up to 2003. The next phase was collected from 2008, straddling a 4 to 5-year period. The samples are itemised into 5 different group; college, university, competitive employment, supported employment, adult day services and no regular activities. They found that school leavers with ASD but without an intellectual disability were three times less likely to be engaged with daily activities than those school leavers with ASD who

had an intellectual disability. In direct correlation to Taylor and Seltzer (2011), Shattuck et al. (2012), found similar results, the longitudinal study showed that youth with ASD had greater odds of detachment from post-secondary education or employment. Also, studies indicated that people with ASD struggle to socialise. Added to this, household income, which is measured in this study, shows that household incomes have significant effect on the level of behavioural outcomes. Putting it differently, lower socioeconomic statuses results poorer behavioural consequences, as this becomes one of the primary barriers to acquire services to help the individuals to engage in society.

A detailed survey carried out by Daviso on the various predictors of post-school employment outcomes, as identified by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Centre (NSTTAC, 2013), investigated vocational education, work-study and school-supervised community work (Daviso et al., 2016). Daviso et al. (2016) surveyed the three predictors of post-school employment outcomes. These included vocational education, work-study and school-supervised community work that are identified by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Centre (NSTTAC, 2013). These remained significant for five subgroups of students with learning disabilities, intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities, emotional disabilities and other health impairments. This study certified that transition from school to work programs are available to all people with disabilities. The results indicate competitive employment after graduation predicted by vocational education and work-study for students with other health impairments and learning disabilities and by school-supervised work experiences for students with multiple disabilities.

Turning now to the performance and employment outcomes of workers with disabilities. The results showed people with mental health disabilities were the most challenging to support compared to intellectual and physical disabilities. Nonetheless, the result illustrated low employment rates and the expectation of poor outcomes for all people with disabilities, the reason being lack of employer knowledge and support as well as negative attitudes (Cavanagh et al., 2017). To conclude this section, the literature identifies that the key to improving the support for people with disabilities is coordination between government, schools, business, disability advocate groups, academia and the workers themselves (Cavanagh et al,

2017). These results however do not address the influence of other factors such as worker disability identity.

A little progress has been made in empirical research by Santuzzi and Waltz (2016) that showed a lack of awareness of the intricacy of disability identity, suggesting that an employee's decision to take on a disability identity in the work environment depends on various functions such as intra-individual, interpersonal, organisational and societal levels that impact employment opportunities.

However, other factors determining work outcomes that were not included, but were recommended by this study, were socio-economic status, type of school and vocational programmes provided, partnerships with employers, employment agencies and education institutions incorporating students and parents with the intention of maximising effective employment outcomes (Holwerda et al., 2015). The twofold encounters with the challenges posed by a world market plus swift technological developments have demanded the restructuring of the workplace into an inventive work environment. This environment requires familiarity whereby employees' proficiency in problem solving and engaging with colleagues is achieved (Overtoom, 2000).

## 2.10 Gaps in the literature

This study aimed to explore the hindrances faced by the special educators during the early establishment and implementation of EPP, with the aim of harnessing the potential of special needs learners to lead an independent work life in Malaysia.

Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) are not part of the Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) curriculum in Malaysia, and there is no specific operational guidance provided to schools. In line with this, concerns have arisen regarding how the current Malaysian education plan is put into practice. This finding may fill in the gap left by previous literature by contributing to the exploration of the quality and outcomes of the policies. This study could serve as an important addition to the limited research in Malaysian context.

Previous literature reported on transitional school to work programmes that involved only one collaborator. The results of this literature concluded that the programmes

were not effective enough. However, this study failed to address why this was the case. Therefore, this researcher attempts to fill the gap by discovering how EPP is implemented, the factors affecting EPP progress from the participant's perspective and the hindrances faced by the special educators. This research also hopes to establish reasons why it was not efficient yet (Abdullah et al., 2015). This research also focuses on schools which were involved with intergovernmental agencies. This way, the core problems could be rectified.

It is not a widely known fact that universities lack dedicated special education modules. As a result, there is a tendency to compress as much information as possible into a limited number of credit hours. Due to this limitation, Morningstar and Benitez (2013) highlight the importance of gathering the maximum amount of data related to vocational related content at university.

Additionally, the gap identified by Barrera and Heyman (2014) suggested an exploration of how the level of support provided by leadership and management teams, which influence the failure or success of upcoming employment preparation programmes, inspired the researcher to undertake this research.

To date, apart from interviews and a variety of quantitative approaches, the researcher has not come across Malaysian studies that have adopted an observational method in determining learners' practical tasks and performance in actual skills attainment. The researcher intends to address these gaps and believes that these aspects provide a strong rationale for the current study.

From all of the available resources to date, there is an absence of sufficient research related to special education approaches and there is still an over reliance upon western models due to an absence of any alternative framework unique to a Malaysian context.

## 2.11 Summary

This chapter underlined the relevant policies and educational approaches which were put into practice. Also highlighted the importance of syllabi, curricula and modules for special needs learners. Further, the Intervention Employment Preparation Programmes or equivalent programmes are being increasingly adopted worldwide as the perception about people with disabilities and their capabilities has been reviewed. It has been suggested, therefore, that such programmes be implemented as early as possible. This chapter also highlights the initiatives made by the educational system, which are designed to improve the quality of special education. Also, to investigate the level of contribution provided by the collaborators. Furthermore, this section critically analyses the hindrances faced by the teachers to provide vocational work skills to special education learners. This chapter also discussed several issues and their causes, along with numerous suggestions for improvement in harnessing the potential of special needs learners to allow them to have an independent future. The next chapter explicates the methodology and research methods used in this study.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

### 3.0 Introduction

This study aims to delineate the hindrances faced by special educators in the delivery of EPPs, which are a relatively recent introduction to the Special Education Integrated Programme in Malaysia. It will also seek to explore the areas which hinder the effectiveness of EPP delivery and identify where improvements can be made from the perspective of the Heads of Departments and the Special Education teachers interviewed for the study. As a way of illustrating the research process undertaken in this study, this chapter aims to clarify and validate the methods applied by the researcher. Therefore, the chapter begins by defining the research paradigm and outlines the various approaches which inform the selection of the research paradigm.

In the second section, the researcher outlines and explains the research approach undertaken in this study. The research design of this study, which is based on the case study approach, is discussed in section three and the use of case study design is rationalised in the third section.

The fourth section discusses the role of the researcher in the study. In the fifth section, the method by which participants for the study were chosen is detailed, followed by the location of data collection in Malaysia. Having previously discussed the selection of participants and location of study, the sixth section contains a discussion of the methods of data collection, which include interviews, observations and document analyses. In the seventh section, the provisions employed to ensure trustworthiness are stated and justified. The eighth section will look at the data collection procedures in Malaysia. The processes used to analyse the data are discussed in section nine. In section ten, the ethical considerations of the study are discussed and, in section eleven, the model of the operational framework is presented. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented.

### 3.1 Research Paradigms

The initial stage of this study set out to review the paradigms associated with educational research, with the goal of choosing an appropriate method which was both rational and suitable (Silverman, 2013). Burns (1997) defined research as a systematic investigation, and Kuhn (1970) illustrated a research paradigm as one's beliefs, assumptions, values and practices shared among the research community. Mertens (2014) described a paradigm as a survey on how data is collected and analysed and how that data is then interpreted in order to determine, comprehend, and describe an educational or psychological phenomenon. Cohen et al. (2013) described a paradigm as a philosophical or theoretical approach to resolve a study. Whereas Hughes (2010) described a paradigm as a belief about the nature of knowledge and a methodology and criteria for validity in research. In this study, the definition of a paradigm approximates that of Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 18) as belief, ideas and assumptions that the researcher brings to the process undertaken.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) a research paradigm includes the ontology, epistemology and methodology that contribute to the development of the research. Ontology refers to the nature of reality, which may be affected by different perspectives (Creswell, 2013). Whereas epistemology describes how the researchers understand the case from the perspectives of the participants. In addition, the researcher relies on evidence and collaboration in the setting and the amount of time spent with participants (ibid).

Theoretical paradigms relate to genres in education. The major philosophical traditions or research paradigm in education are positivist and post-positivist, interpretivist, constructivist, pragmatism, advocacy and participatory, transformative and emancipatory.

Those interested in theoretical positivist paradigms conduct their research scientifically by testing a theory or assumption through measurement (O'Leary, 2017). Similarly, Mertens (2014) describes positivist paradigms as part of the rationalistic scientific method. Positivism indicates that the social world and reality can be studied using the same approach (ibid). However, Schunk (2008) argued that

the positivist paradigm forms the ontological assumption only in the social reality world. In epistemology paradigm, how these realities are being observed is an objective approach. In other words, the positivist paradigm claims that knowledge can be measured objectively in a universal manner which can be generalized (i.e. correlation). Chronologically, positivism has been substituted by post-positivism, which also uses a quantitative approach for data collection. Meanwhile, the post-positivist method asserts that the assumptions of any piece of research work is influenced by a number of well-developed theories and therefore can be measured (Cook and Campbell, 1979, p.24). More recently, post-positivism has focused on determinism, reductionism, empirical observation, measurement and theory verification (Creswell, 2007). As this approach is widely employed in social science research, the outcome of the research is highly objective and is used as a way of understanding the relationship between causes and effects.

In the context of the interpretivist paradigm, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) argued, in contrast to positivist paradigm, that the researcher interprets knowledge, and this defines reality. Blaikie (2000) also noted that research is value-bound. Thus, interpretivists have argued that the crucial intention in a study is mainly about understanding the world as a human experience (Cohen and Manion, 2013). Additionally, Mertens (2005) stated that reality refers to a social construct whilst Creswell (2003) suggests that the interpretivist paradigm is dependent upon a participant's perspective of the case studied. Burton et al. (2008, p.60) noted the differing insights into ontology or how reality is defined and also noted how knowledge is built epistemologically. In addition, we must note that it has been suggested that the researcher must consider a wide range of experiences and opinions to derive depth and understanding about the context of the research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, p.4).

In terms of tools used as instruments for data collection, these may vary for both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) noted that the positivist paradigm uses quantitative methods of data collection as well as analysing the data using quantitative instrument tools (e.g. experiments, quasi-experiments, tests and scales). On the other hand, Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) also suggested that the interpretivist paradigm uses qualitative methods of data collection as well as analysing the data using qualitative instruments tools (e.g. interviews, observation, document

analysis). A combination of both qualitative and quantitative research, which is termed mixed-method may also contribute to the nature of the research.

According to Creswell (2003) the constructivists' paradigm generates data inductively and develops a theory in order to explain the meaning of the study. Generally, constructivists may use a variety of methods to describe the study effectively (e.g., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods).

Advocacy and participatory approaches became popular in the 1980s. This approach believes in the political view and is best known as critical paradigm. Advocacy and participatory research emphasises collaborative research and believes in social justice. These paradigms however, became less popular after the feminist approach gained greater acceptance in the field (Creswell, 2007).

Pragmatism is a practical multi-method approach that focuses on real work-oriented research (Creswell, 2007). Commonly, this is pluralism research, which uses either a qualitative approach and/or a quantitative approach, the aims of which are to identify the consequences of actions. Therefore, this approach is problem centred. In this context, pragmatism is best suited to establish what the problem is and what can be done to solve it.

In this section the researcher will explain the rationality of choosing the research approach used in this study. Silverman (2013) revealed that qualitative research is predicated on the deep meaning parallel of assumptions, significance or experiments, which means the data collection techniques used resemble real life and natural settings. Lewis and Ritchie (2003, p. 3) also agreed that qualitative research is truthful and informational where the researcher investigates intricate subject matter and intends to understand in-depth meaning in terms of actions, decisions, beliefs and values. Contrasting this notion, in the pragmatist paradigm the researcher has the freedom to choose whatever methods best suit the research as long as it obtains the solution for the problem identified. In this study, the researcher's belief is that the qualitative approach will help to clarify the query. Brundrett and Rhodes (2014) emphasised that there are many things such as development in socialisation skills, behaviours, attitudes and motivation in reality that are difficult to measure using a quantitative approach. In this study, EPP is being conducted at its pioneering stage and it does not form a part of a standardised curriculum in Malaysia. Therefore, the

researcher intends to investigate in depth the issues pertaining to the limited settings. Hence, it is pointless distributing large amounts of structured questionnaires to investigate the experience faced by the participants in these settings (i.e. quantitative). Also, it is not possible to achieve the objective through other paradigm (e.g., positivism, critical paradigm). The researcher believed that engaging more closely in the cross-case settings will help to determine the context of the study. Therefore, qualitative approach was chosen for this study.

### 3.2 Research Approach used in this study

The researcher found that the interpretivism paradigm best fit the context of the research. Interpretivism are subjectively observed and can never be objective. (Mack, 2010; Creswell, and Poth 2018, p. 24). Criticism of interpretivism is that interpretivist's method is not sufficiently concerned with numbers or degrees of estimation scientifically through objective measurement (Arghode, 2010). To justify this paradigm, the researcher considered the most crucial reasons for conducting the research, research questions and the objectives of the study. As this research attempted to explain and understand the multiple meaning and knowledge derived from multiple EPP settings from the perspective of the educators interviewed, it also sought to identify the hindrances faced by such educators and explore the field settings directly thus contributing to and enhancing the quality of the education system (Mack, 2010; Cresswell and Poth ,2018). Therefore, the researcher considered the criteria which meets the aims of the study using multi-source to validate the findings.

Ontologically, the researcher believed how we see reality in context is very important since everyone has different belief systems and views (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 20). The researcher also believed that as an individual, one's interpretation of reality cannot be entirely separate from one's experiences. Therefore, it is safe to assume that in spite of our best efforts to be objective, our experiences will always influence our interpretations. This leads to a more subjective understanding, regardless of whether or not we teach in the same phenomenon. To avoid criticism, interpretivists will use the real context of the study to analyse the given data in pursuance of the outcome, rather than to impose presumptions (Burton et al. (2008, p.60; Mack, 2010).

Epistemologically, knowledge can only be revealed through deep interpretation of subject matter that requires more investigation by asking people directly as it is very subjective (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 21). It is vitally important to be able to draw a clear distinction between participant’s opinions based on their experiences and establishing the truth. Therefore, the researcher depended on the data derived from the responses of the interviewees, who were involved in the settings, as well as observing the setting itself. An understanding of the nature of things helped the researcher to differentiate between justifiable beliefs and mere opinions, and how these things can be shared or understood by others.

### Forging Association between Research Methodology and Research Questions

The following table represents the research questions:

Qualitative Research Question	Tool/ Instrument utilised
<p>Research Question 1: How is EPP implemented in the secondary school’s SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interview with HoD/SET</li> <li>2. Observation in the real simulation setting</li> <li>3. Document analysis</li> </ol>
<p>Research Question 2: What are the hindrances faced by special educators while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interview with HoD/SET</li> <li>2. Document analysis</li> </ol>
<p>Research Question 3: What are the areas in need of improvement within Employment Preparation Programmes?</p>	<p>Researcher’s recommendation based on research findings</p>

Table 1: Research questions and the methods as well as instruments used to answer the questions

### 3.3 Research Design

A qualitative case study design was adopted to best serve the purpose of this study. It is proposed that the nature of the data collected is exploration and recorded in a naturalistic setting (Creswell and Poth, 2018: 96). Qualitative case studies are used to describe a phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred. Hancock and Algozzine (2016), indicated that case studies are different from other sorts of qualitative research where case studies intensively scrutinise and describe a particular element circumscribed by time and segment. In addition, a case study is undertaken as it allows the researcher to diligently explore the complexities of individuality and singularity of the settings (Yin, 2017). On the other hand, the researcher conducted interviews with participants to achieve triangulation of data and ensure the validity of the result (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2011). In this study, the researcher believes that case study design is suitable because it allows the researcher to discover differences within and between the five cases selected. Silverman (2013) suggested each case study has its own boundaries or restrictions that should be acknowledged at the earliest phase. In addition, Silverman (2013) also noted that each case is something which the researcher is interested in conducting an inquiry into. Case study design usually perceives the truthfulness and integrity of the case which in turn requires the researcher to establish the research problem so that the research focus is specific.

In contrast, Neuman (2013) defined fieldwork as a qualitative research whereby the researcher will observe and record the participant directly in their natural environment for a length of time. Patton (2002) argues that measuring the quality of data rather than mere quantity is a more effective method of evaluation. This should be applied directly to fieldwork observation, along with interviews and written documents in order to engender broad in-depth accounts and results. Patton (2002) also specified that qualitative approaches evaluate data from the following: direct fieldwork observations, in-depth open-ended interviews and documents, including written and visual materials to generate rich narrative descriptions and outcomes. In this study, fieldwork is not suitable when considering the resource limitation such as time constraints and financial issues (Cresswell and Poth, 2018, p. 102).

Research derived from a qualitative approach such as Narrative, Phenomenology, Grounded Theory and Ethnography were not chosen for the following reason

(Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 121,135, 150). Although a narrative study also uses open-ended questions, this approach is not suitable for inclusion in this research as there is more emphasis on a chronological and biographical account of individuals' or group's experiences.

Phenomenology focuses on an individual's personal experience in-depth and is therefore totally reliant on subjectivity in a particular situation. Although there are similarities in terms of investigating the experiences of the participants of EPP at its pioneering stage, it is still not the best approach to understand the essence of the phenomenon without participating in it or exploring it.

Another example of an unsuitable qualitative approach is ethnography, which concentrates on cultural behaviour and customs, as well as language amongst particular communities, groups and/or organisations. As this study focused on a particular programme, the researcher acted as an observer in order to explore the general environment as a whole rather than participating as a school member to study the school's culture in-depth.

As Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) notes, qualitative researchers in special education use three main methods for collecting data: observation, interviews and document and records review. Therefore, a qualitative case study was best suited for this study, considering the methods undertaken within this timeframe.

According to Creswell and Poth (2018, p. 100) the major challenge in developing a qualitative case study is in identifying the issues which need to be investigated in order to provide a meaningful understanding of the issue in question. Although this study focused on hindrances of implementing EPP, it did so whilst never losing sight of its primary purpose of harnessing the potential of special needs learners through multiple case studies. The researcher was therefore able to draw comparisons as well as pinpointing differences amongst the various settings. The rationale behind Allen, and Wiles, 2016. choosing this approach was to focus on individual's problems unique to each setting, rather than seeking to make generalisations amongst the wider population. However, as this research focused on multiple settings, this allowed the researcher the opportunity to make a generalisation based on these case studies.

This case study design is the best fit in this instance as not all schools conducting EPP look into the implementation of the programme. This case study is also suitable as it

allows the researcher to approach, in person, each EPP special educator in order to discover the hindrances they face. From these findings, areas in need of improvement can be identified. Also, as a practical researcher, an individual case should be highlighted as a way of enhancing the special educational system.

A case study can be defined in one of two ways. Either by the adoption of previous theoretical outlooks to inform a researcher's own study or by excluding the accepted theory of the day in an attempt to uncover new issues. By using multiple methods, qualitative case studies offer a greater opportunity for broader and more in-depth interpretations (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 96). The precision and comprehensiveness of case studies help to reinforce and validate the findings of the research (Cronin, 2014; Yin, 2014).

By using the method of observation, researchers can witness first-hand what is actually taking place rather than relying on anecdotal evidence (Caldwell & Atwal, 2005; Mulhall, 2003; Walshe et al., 2012). In qualitative studies, data must be expounded in such a way as to make the finding of the research equally applicable across all of the information gathered from every participant of the study (Ayres, Kavanaugh and Knafl, 2003).

#### 3.4 The role of the researcher

Patton (2002) has debated that in qualitative studies, the researcher plays a crucial role as an instrument in the research process. Other researchers make similar judgements since they argue that in qualitative studies data is arbitrated through human intervention instead of through more objective means where tools such as questionnaires, laboratory experiments and other measuring equipment are employed (Denzin and Lincoln (2003), Creswell (2012). In this study, the researcher's standpoint as an insider is based on the rationale outlined below.

The researcher has a grounding in special education as the researcher's background is as a mathematics special education teacher. This leads to a greater understanding of how to approach special needs learners. The advantage being that a researcher with this background will possess a greater understanding of the teaching and learning techniques performed in EPP settings. This is useful to the researcher, especially when taking field notes in EPP settings.

Although the researcher did not have experience of conducting EPP and the schools that the researcher worked at also had not previously operated EPP programmes, the researcher was familiar with the culture of working in the Special Education Integrated Programme. Even though the schools and the participants for this study were unknown to the researcher, this experience was especially helpful when socially interacting with other people involved with special education. This background was also beneficial because of her awareness of the protocols within special education departments, thus helping enabling her to create a pleasant atmosphere with the EPP team.

It is crucial to note, however, that the researcher was vigilant against the prospect that this relaxed environment could lead to the possibility of losing objectivity (Unluer, 2012). Therefore, as an insider, the researcher was careful to make the participants aware of the purposes of the research through clear briefing and she took care to reassure respondents that they could withdraw at any point throughout the process of data gathering. The researcher also reassured the participants that all responses would be entirely confidential and that personal identifiable data would be retained in a secure place. Following good ethical practice, consonant with the requirements of Liverpool John Moores University ethical guidelines, consent and assent forms were used as part of the study. All of these steps ensured the research process was designed to put the participants at their ease so that they could respond without fear that this study would influence their future career or have a deleterious impact on their current roles.

As an insider who can generally gain access to sensitive information about confidential issues (for example special needs learners' medical records and other personal files), for the purposes of this study the researcher was not granted such access. The reason the researcher attempted to access this information was to establish their level of capability and independence. However from this point on, the researcher was treated as an outsider. This had the positive effect of assisting in objectivity during observations and also avoided influencing the session itself by averting preconceived ideas of an individual's capability because of their medical impairment.

The researcher commenced the study in Malaysia as a Liverpool John Moores University Researcher. Despite the fact that the researcher was based at a UK

university, the researcher represented the Economic Policy and Regional Development Malaysia (EPRDM) division of the Ministry of Education, whose aim is to provide support for the planning and execution of innovative public related policies on a regional, national and international level. EPRDM issued a research permit. This meant the researcher's identity was confidential, thus allowing the researcher to be introduced as a general researcher, the advantage of this being that this helped to avert any potential influence on participant responses as they were unaware that the researcher was herself a teacher. As consequence of this, the researcher asked questions and recorded participants' responses in objective manner without betraying her own background experiences or personal perspectives.

Overall, in this study, the role of the researcher was to inform and improve practice through an objective research process that sought to gain the views of professional practitioner respondents without seeking to influence their responses (Brundrett, 2014).

### 3.5 Population and Sample

This study aimed to explore the implementation of the Employment Preparation Programme by identifying the hindrances in conducting the programme effectively in Malaysia.

Research participants are currently involved in the employment preparation programmes in Five Integrated Secondary School that covers two states in Malaysia and were selected based on Ministry of Education statistics. The research participants are the Heads of Special Education Departments, Special education teachers and special needs learners, all of whom are currently involved in employment preparation programmes. The Heads of Department were selected as they carry the most responsibility in terms of programme leadership in the department of special education. Consequently, they are able to conduct and control the entire employment preparation programme in the school, maximising opportunities and garnering support of both the public and private sector. Additionally, special education teachers who underwent the employment preparation programmes were chosen, as they have the necessary experience and appropriate knowledge that will enable them to answer the research questions. The key focus of this research was on the experiences of Heads

of Special Education Departments and teachers who work in the selected list of schools, as well as determining the quality of employment preparation programmes in preparing special need learners for work life.

The selection of schools was based on various dimensions and criteria. According to Robson (2002), the norm used for selecting sampling is based upon the researcher's judgement of typicality and related subject interest. A sample built up enables the researcher to satisfy specific needs in the project. Robson added that the rationale of such an approach sample of the wider population differs from that of a quantitative approach. A purposive sampling technique was adopted for this study because of the limited number of special education teachers and learners involved in employment preparation programmes in Malaysia. Criteria for inclusion in this is based only on those participants who have been directly involved in EPP for at least two years. No evidence was taken from those samples with less than two years' working experience.

According to Ritchie (2013), participants were chosen with the 'purpose' of making certain that all members of the population that are significant to the study were represented. In addition, there was sufficient diversity amongst the inclusion criteria of the sample covered. Purposive sampling method was used to choose participants. (Silverman, 2013). Employment preparation programmes in some of the selected schools were more established in comparison to other states in Malaysia. The schools covered two States in Malaysia and were selected using purposive sampling. These included urban and rural area schools which had conducted Employment Preparation Programmes for at least 2 years.

The researcher has working experience as a Special Education Teacher since 2003, working in the fastest growing metropolitan region of Malaysia. This region however was excluded from this study. This is because the researcher, having a background knowledge about the system conducted in this location, and wished to avoid bias in the study. Moreover, within the 16 years of experience, the researcher preferred to conduct the investigation as an unknown to the participants and the schools. The selected schools were overall a mix of multi-cultural pupils. The Special Education Programme was selected as it was the most well-known Employment Preparation Programme in Malaysia. All of the schools were selected from a diverse range of schools, classified as both rural and urban. However, the details of the State and the

names of the selected schools will remain confidential.

Overall, a total of five Secondary School's Special Education Integrated Programme were selected as the site sample to conduct this study. A pilot study was conducted in two schools to gauge achievability and time duration in an attempt to predict the suitability of the research design (Teijlingen, 2001).

In order to answer the research questions, the most suitable methods chosen were observation, interviews document and records reviews. The semi-structured interview method used open-ended questions to elicit data from five Heads of Special Education (HoD) and ten Special Education Teachers (SET) individually. The observation method was used to collect data regarding employment preparation programmes in the EPP classroom or field setting. The total number of learners who registered in each of the selected schools range between 100 to 125, with an average of 15 learners in each classroom/ EPP setting. Relevant documents of the learners' practical task--related performances were collected from the respective schools. This was then used to investigate the effectiveness of the employment preparation programme provided by the school. These approaches were chosen because the list of Employment Preparation Programmes in Integrated Secondary Schools is very limited in Malaysia and it provides a systematic approach and inductive process. (Creswell, 2012).

### 3.6 Methods of Data collection and Trustworthiness

Miles and Huberman 1984, have a range of options regarding how far they use methods and measures, and suggest the researcher should consider prior instrumentation to avoid gathering superfluous data. For the purposes of this study, data is collected using three main methods (e.g., face to face interview, observation and document review). These methods will be explained in detail, and the rationale for choosing these methods is discussed, as follows.

#### 3.6.1 Observation

Observation is commonly used as a method to observe behaviour in a particular setting without the intervention or interference of the researcher. Observation is defined as "the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artifacts in the social setting

chosen for study” (Marshall and Rossman, 1989). Further, through this method one can observe what an individual or group of people actually do rather than what they claim to do. This is useful in settings where other methods may not yield valuable insights such as focus groups or questionnaires. Observations allow for gaining understanding of behaviour or actions during activities. In studies related to vulnerable people such as people with disabilities, observation as a method yields valuable insights as vulnerable people would usually refuse to talk to adults or strangers like researchers or might not have developed rich vocabulary to express their thoughts or feelings.

In addition, observation allows for exploration of real life settings or activities. Robson (2011, p. 316) regarded observation as the most appropriate method for ‘getting at ‘real life setting’ in the real world’ (ibid). Though observation can be done in laboratories or a clinic, or any other artificial setting, Robson (2011) asserted that ‘direct observation in the field permits a lack of artificiality which is all too rare with other techniques’ (ibid). Hence, observations in natural settings in real life situations allow the researcher to develop a holistic understanding of the behaviour or activity in its context (Kawulich, 2005). Furthermore, observation yields in-depth understanding of the phenomena observed, facilitating in-depth analysis of the phenomena (DeWalt and DeWalt, 2002).

Whilst observation as a method is useful in gaining rich insights of events in natural settings, it has its limitations. One of the criticisms of this method is that it is too subjective (Angrosino, and Mays dePerez, 2000) thus, it has the tendency to be biased (Kawulich, 2005). Since observation data is purely based on what the researchers see or what they think they see, it may be questioned if what is noted by the researcher is opposed incorrect, or atypical. Hence, the objectivity of the researcher is questioned in participant observations, and consequently the validity of the data affected. Further, the effects of the presence of a researcher in a setting may also affect the behaviour of those in the setting (Kawulich, 2005). If the researcher’s presence is made unknown to those being observed, then ethical dilemmas of lack of informed consent, assent and invasion of privacy emerge. Observations do not yield information about what the individuals observed think or feel. In terms of timeframe, conducting an observation is time consuming as researchers take time to immerse in a settings or situation. However, the time frame may be limited if observations are conducted in controlled

conditions due to time limitation to access the setting or the classroom to be observed which is similar to laboratory as in experimental studies.

Within observations, there are variations. Robson (2011) suggested five different types of observation: participant observation, complete participant, participant as observer, marginal participant and observer as participant. Participant observation calls for full immersion of the researcher in the phenomenon observed (i.e. ethnographers observing a culture or tribe) (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Similar to participant observation, in the complete participant observation, the researcher seeks to become a full member of the group but by concealing one's role as a researcher (Robson, 2011). On the other hand, in the participant as observer role, the researcher makes known one's role as a researcher and then tries to get close with members of a group (Gold, 1958). In this role, the researcher takes part in the routines of the members of the group in order to establish a closer relationship with them. The marginal participant role is similar to that of the complete observer. The only difference is that the researcher's role is made known in the former and unknown in the later (ibid). In both these roles, the researcher is largely a passive participant who does not interfere in the activity or ask questions during the activity for clarifications. The observer-as-participant or non-participant observation is conducted by observing an individual or group of individuals passively from a distance without participating in the activity of the individual or group. This means the researcher having limited interaction with those being observed (Ostrower, 1998), and the role of the researcher is known to the participants.

In conducting observations, it is important that a researcher decides on what type of observation will be conducted. This decision is very much dependent on the purpose of the study conducted, the research questions, the role of the researcher and sometimes the time available to conduct observation as in this study. Based on the role as an outsider with knowledge of the context of this study and for investigating the implementation of EPP and identify areas to improve for enhancement of EPP, the researcher has chosen to conduct non-participant observation.

In exploring the ways EPPs are conducted in classrooms or real stimulation settings in secondary school, the researcher sought to gain an insight into various contents of the EPP settings, notably: the physical setting, social interaction, practical task and

teaching techniques. Previously, EPPs were not a compulsory programme in secondary schools. Hence, observation of the participation in a real work setting is crucial as is the teacher's self-initiated pioneer stage: practice is important in providing insights to the activities involved in EPP. It also helps the researcher to identify the areas which need improvement. Therefore, in this study, the researcher chose to conduct non-participant observation.

One of the reasons for this choice of the non-participant observation method is time constraints. In terms of the pragmatics of data collection, which observation is a part of, the researcher has to acknowledge the limitations. Whilst participant observation might be the preferred method, the limited timeframe (three months) for data collection by the sponsor strongly influences the method of observation chosen for this study. Having experienced the culture of secondary education in Malaysia but having had no direct involvement with EPP, the researcher chose the method of non-participant observation. As an outsider, the researcher intended to witness first-hand, rather than relying upon anecdotal evidence from programme participants or previously written documentation. As the special needs learners were accustomed to regular visits from outsiders e.g. collaborators and school inspectors, the presence of the researcher had a negligible effect on the learners. In contrast, being an insider, the presence of the researcher could have direct influence on the behaviour and performance of the learners in EPP. This knowledge comes from the researcher's experience of working as a secondary school teacher in Malaysia for 16 years. However, none of the schools the researcher served has record of conducted EPP.

Whilst non-participant observations may not present the opportunity to interact with the participants during the activities and learn the significance of the activities in the way that participant observation would allow, the researcher gained understanding of the activities through the interview sessions with the participants (HoD/SET). Further, it regarded that being a participant observant would generally make it easier to ask for clarifications of actions during an activity rather than before or after it. This is where the video recording and photographing of the activity becomes essential for this method. The researcher's presence during the observations will help to formulate questions for seeking clarifications of actions. However, the researcher's presence during the activity may affect the participants. Thus, during the interviews, the

recorded activity becomes a point of reference for both the researcher and the participant.

It is argued that in participant observation, the researcher gains better understanding of the participants' feeling that might not be possible in non-participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). For example, a study on people living in slum area requires the researcher to conduct participant observation in order to enable the researcher to understand the participants' feelings and hardship. In such a case, participant observation may be appropriate as the researcher may not have experienced slum life previously nor has any or limited knowledge of such hardships. In the case of this study, the researcher's previous experience of teaching in secondary school becomes relevant for understanding the participants' feelings as well as remaining an outsider without losing the objectivity and neutrality of the study.

One of the limitations of the non-participant observation method is the effect of the researcher's presence on the behaviours of those observed or also known as the Hawthorne effect (Caldwell and Atwal, 2005) or the 'guinea pig effect' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In other words, the participants may change their actions or behaviour because they know that they are being observed. Though this effect may reduce over a longer period of observation, it still poses risks to the validity of the data. Pettigrew (1999) suggested ways to minimize this effect on those observed of which some are applicable in this study. One of the ways is to use an unobtrusive recording device and refrain from excessive note taking (*ibid*). Similarly, in this study, the camera is positioned away from the participants' line of sight but is made known to the participants. However, in this study, non-participant observation is ideal thus, the researcher will not divert their focus, as the classroom or real-life setting involves special needs learners with learning difficulties. Also, in general it is the norm in any secondary school in Malaysia to receive visitors (e.g., outsiders from Ministry of Education, State Education Department or district level, intergovernmental or sponsors, benchmark groups, etc.). In addition, the school management enforces a buddy-system and peer observations which provides help to reflect on an individual's strengths and weaknesses, to ultimately enhance the quality of teaching.

The researcher's position during the observation is also away from the activity and the participants so that minimal eye contact is possible. This position also ensures that the note taking is not largely visible for the participants. Another way suggested by Pettigrew (1999) is that the researcher should not make a grand entrance at the beginning of the observation or be intrusive by entering in the middle of the activity. Keeping this in mind, the researcher made a point to be at the venue where the activity is scheduled and wait for the participants arrive. In this way, the researcher can become part of the environment of the activity.

Having attempted to minimise the effects the researcher might have on the participants during the observation and discussed the reasons for choosing non-participant observation method, the researcher had to decide on what is it that the researcher would observe and take notes on. Indeed, the researcher began to wonder if the researcher had to note everything that goes on or focus on specific actions.

Observations can be structured or unstructured depending on the purpose of the study. The question of structure of observation arises when a researcher determines what is observed. A structured observation will involve a checklist of elements observed and noted in the checklist (Robson, 2011). Such observations are normally conducted in experimental research (i.e. in laboratory), and sometimes in non-experimental research (i.e. quantitative studies). On the other hand, unstructured observation would require the researcher to observe everything that is happening in detail. Such observations are common in ethnographic studies whereby anything and everything about the culture or community observed is recorded (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995).

In terms of the process of conducting observations, Werner and Schoepfle (1987, cited in Angrosino and Mays dePerez, 2000) described three types: descriptive, focused and selective. Descriptive observation is similar to an unstructured observation where the researcher observes everything without eliminating anything as irrelevant to the study. That is, the researcher will conclude with a collection of minutiae and have no preconceived ideas of the case (i.e. community, individual, event) being observed (i.e. in ethnography). In a focused observation, on the other hand, interviews with participants guide the researcher on what to observe. That is, the researcher uses insights gained from the interview with participants when conducting observations

specifically looking for certain elements. This type of observation has some structure, which is informed by the type of interview conducted. The third type is selective observation whereby the researcher focuses on various activities which help to describe the differences in those activities. That is, the researcher deliberately chooses different types of activities to observe with the intention of drawing differences among the activities.

In this study, focused observation is appropriate as the researcher conducted interviews with participants prior to conducting observation of the EPP activities. The interview sessions of this study formed the basis of observation. That is, contradictions emerging in the EPP activities emerging from the interview focused on during the observation as well as other issues that may arise during the observation of the activity. Hence, the field notes would be in two parts: description content and reflection content. The description content will include descriptions of the physical setting, social interaction (i.e. communication, interaction with the customer), teaching approach and practical task.

In terms of the reflection content, reflection on the activity observed will be noted. A preliminary analysis during observation promotes self-reflection which is crucial in understanding and meaning-making in any research study (Emerson, 1987). In addition, preliminary analysis helps identify emergent themes during observation which then facilitates a more developed exploration (ibid). Hence, during the observation, it is important that the researcher note down the ideas and thoughts on the activity observed. This would include questions or points for further clarification and speculations of reasons which led to specific actions such as arising conflicts during the activity. Apart from that, the researcher would have to include a note on elements to consider with regard to future observations.

Having decided on the focus of the observation and how the note taking would be conducted, the researcher had to consider supplementary tools, which could help in the observation. Whilst the field notes would have details of the activity observed, the researcher would not be able to capture simultaneous actions or comments by the participants during the activity. Hence, the researcher has chosen to record the EPP activity.

The EPP activities of the participants were video-recorded using camera. The use of camera/video is argued (Caldwell and Atwal, 2005) to enhance the credibility of the non-participant observation method. This is due to the minimisation of selectivity and bias, which serves as a basis for ensuring reliability. In addition, video recordings afford the researcher the opportunity to transcribe what occurs in an activity without losing simultaneous actions taking place and play it repeatedly to check if anything missed.

In this study, one static camera was positioned at an angle comfortable to the participants (e.g. away from the participants line of sight) and able to capture the whole activity. Dry runs (camera in position but no recording) were conducted with the participants in order to make the participants to become accustomed to the camera. The researcher's position during the activity will be away from the participants' sight and away from the location of the camera. That is, for example, if the activity is conducted in a classroom or field setting (closed setting in a school), the camera will be positioned at the back of the room the researcher will sit at the back of the class or, in a real-life setting, the researcher will be sitting outside of the from the participant's sight. The purpose of this positioning of the researcher is to observe actions that may fall in the static camera's blind spot. Whilst using this tool would help immensely in capturing the activity, to strengthen the observation data the researcher scheduled the observation for two times in total from each special education teacher, which means they were videotaped only once and the remaining set of observation done without videotape.

The non-participant observation method employed by the researcher involved the video recording of the various EPP activities. This enabled the researcher to observe fully without interrupting the teacher, the learners and the classroom activities generally. The only direct communication between the researcher and the teacher took place after the lesson. This was merely for clarification purposes.

### 3.6.2 Interviews

A structured interview refers to a research method where the questions are devised prior to the interview, have limited sets of options or categories to select one's responses from, and the same questions are presented when interviewing each

participant (Robson, 2011). Doody and Noonan (2013), claim that structured interviews are more suitable in assessments or types of research within certain professions, such as nursing, and where these individuals are familiar with established data collection procedures within their fixed routines (e.g. collecting socio-demographic information). This is not the case within the field of education. Further, Berg (2009) agreed that in structured interviews, the participant is unable to expand upon details given, and that the researcher is unable to elaborate on the information collected. Berg (2009) also asserted that structured interviews are predetermined, standardised, offer no clarification about the interview content and allow for no deviations from the question pattern. Similarly, Robson (2010), Holloway and Wheeler (2010) also noted that when using the structured interview method, the researchers typically design the subject and contents of the study. However, in this study the researcher did not design the contents nor the subject matter. The data garnered from structured interviews is relatively easy to analyse in terms of coding and comparing similarities and/or differences and presenting findings. Usually this method is applied in descriptive types of research as it enables the researcher to construct the questions where each question represents the variables, and where it is appropriate to find the relationship between variables in the research. Considering the above criteria, the researcher found that a structured interview method does not match the contextual requirements of this study.

Conversely, unstructured interviews are very flexible as there are no specific criteria to meet when answer and/or clarifying questions; some questions may even be deleted between interviews (Berg, 2009, p. 105). Holloway and Wheeler (2010) depicted an unstructured interview method as one that uses broad and open-ended questions, often followed by successive questions based on the participant's response. Britten (1995) defined unstructured interviews as in-depth interviews, which may cover only one or two issues in detail. In addition, when using unstructured interviews, it is not possible to narrow down and focus on answering specific research questions, as the study is usually too broad (ibid). Further, Doody and Noonan (2013) highlighted that unstructured interviews are not suitable for the novice researcher as this might be liable to bias, leading to incongruous questions and responses that are not relevant to the subject studied. This, in turn, makes it much more difficult to analyse the data and to focus on the subject being studied.

On the other hand, unstructured interviews are most suitable in exploratory research where it enables the researcher to explore new phenomena in-depth, particularly when the researcher does not have expertise in the subject matter. Moreover, by using unstructured interviews, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to carry out two interviews with the same participant. The purpose of the first interview being to learn about the phenomena and the second interview is for further clarification about the subject. Indirectly, the unstructured interview method consumes more time when trying to understand and learn about the phenomena. In addition, this method helps the researcher to learn about the new phenomena and singularities. Overall, unstructured interviews are classified as an informal method as they are based more on casual dialogue about a chosen subject with the purpose of learning and understanding it. Thus, unstructured interviews are not appropriate for this study.

Semi-structured interviews are a type of interview that fall between structured and unstructured interviews. Barriball and While (1994) suggested that semi-structured interviews are beneficial when exploring participants' perceptions or opinions, as this method enables the researcher to gather more information when seeking further clarification. Added to this, this method uses a wide-ranging sample group, from various professions, educational backgrounds and other personnel who are typically excluded when using a structured interview design. Similarly, Holloway and Wheeler (2010) concluded that semi-structured interviews use predetermined questions where the researcher can pursue further explication in person. On the other hand, semi-structured interviews are used in the general practice of qualitative research where the researcher has not anticipated or made any assumptions regarding the outcome. Questions may be reordered during the interview and clarifications made (ibid). Berg (2009) specified that semi-structured interview methods are very flexible as they use open-ended questions where there are opportunities to make more in-depth discoveries about the subject matter. On the other hand, the researcher can change the order of the questions and be flexible with the way the questions are worded (Longhurst, 2010). By doing this, the researcher can build an effective conversation while focussing on the issues in question (Patton, 2002). Doody and Noonan (2013) stressed the downside of this method, stating that the researcher is unable to identify consequences and relevant questions accurately in the topic being focussed on. According to Creswell (2013), a few open-ended questions can be prepared for

specific participants to further understand the subject matter by investigating their individual points of view and beliefs.

This study is primarily explanatory research, designed to provide an in-depth exploration of the pioneering EPP project in Malaysia. Creswell (2013) believed that the semi-structured interview method was best suited to this type of study as there is very little new research performed in this field. The moment the researcher commenced this study in 2014, it became apparent that there was very limited previous research coming from Malaysia which had explored this field qualitatively.

All things considered, it was seen as more advantageous to select the semi-structured interview method for an exploration of this case study. This approach is comparatively new in the Special Education Integrated Programme in Malaysian Secondary School for Special Needs Learners. Furthermore, this method of study has the potential to enhance the reliability of the findings by drawing comparisons with previous literature reviews. Hence, the researcher found that semi-structured interviews best matched the objectives of the study, which sought to establish how effective the initial implementation of EPP was from the perspectives of department heads and special education teachers involved. It would also aid in the identification of the challenges faced by educators, finding out which areas require improvement for future enhancement of the programme in secondary schools. In another words, semi-structured interviews can be used to establish a form of communication between participants (Departments Head, Special Education Teacher) and the researcher (interviewer) using open-ended questions.

Wildemuth (2016, p. 248) suggested a range of ways of conducting semi-structured interviews. One way is to prepare a specific question that is vital to the subject. An advantage to this being that the researcher can then ask additional questions, should further clarification be required. During the interview session, the researcher may skip certain questions if they are not deemed relevant. If the participant already provides the answer for the upcoming question, the researcher may skip that question to avoid any repetition in asking a similar question. However, probing questions should be included when seeking further elaboration (*ibid*). On the other hand, Wildemuth (2016) also emphasised the point that researchers should remove any unfavourable questions to avoid any inappropriate emotional responses from participants. Every

effort should be made to avoid asking questions that touch on more than one subject, contained within that same question. This should prevent participants becoming confused. Researchers should ensure questions are simple, succinct and brief. (ibid).

From the outset, the researcher approached the interviews without any preconceived notion of the possible outcome. Following on from this, the researcher then explained how the semi-structured interview method was to be used throughout this study by adopting Creswell (2009, p. 183), Creswell (2013, p. 166) and Wildemuth (2016) guidelines. The researcher prepared the interviews using a variety of documents. The first paper contained headings showing the date, venue, time, interviewee name (pseudonym), a list of semi-structured questions, space between the questions to record additional notes, an additional blank sheet of paper and a conclusion statement for when the session has finished along with thanks given to the participant for their contribution. The second document was a participant information sheet, attached to which was a consent form. The researcher, in coordination with the interviewee, then organised a convenient time and location for the session to take place, a priority being to ensure that the interview setting was in a comfortable and quiet environment to avoid any disruption during the session. The researcher also made sure the equipment used for the session (audiotape recorder and mobile device for redundancy) was in good working order. Once on the school premises, the researcher first went to the Principal's office to gain acknowledgement of her presence in the school. Following this, the researcher met the participant: the formalities of seeking gatekeeper permission and a briefing about the nature and scope of the research had been completed at early stage. Here, the researcher introduced herself, verified her identity with her I.D. card and research pass from Malaysian Ministry of Education, followed by undertaking the research formalities which included seeking written permission (consent form) from the participant, and obtaining permission to record the interview session. Before officially starting the interview, the researcher spoke with the participant and make sure he or she is ready and comfortable. The researcher gradually introduced the subject matter and follow up with extra clarification questions. By the end of the session, all the important questions had been answered received, save for cases where the participant had no response and thus no clarification was needed, the researcher concluded the session with closing statement. At this stage, the researcher provided a souvenir for allocating the time and willingness to be part of the research.

Overall, the researcher very flexible and intend not to strictly follow the interview guide prepared before the interview session for each participant.

Bariball (1993) identified the advantage of the semi-structured method as being particularly suitable where the participants spoke English as a second language. The flexibility of this method ensured that valid and reliable data was obtained. In this study, semi-structured interviews helped to overcome language barriers, as all of the participants are Malaysian, with English as their second language. This enabled the researcher to be flexible, speaking in Malay where clarification was required.

### 3.6.3 Document Collection

Generally, document collection is another method in qualitative research where there is minimal interface between the researcher and the participants or the setting. Basit (2010, p. 138) listed existing documents for relevant research (e.g., attendance records, biographies, calendars, meeting minutes, curricula, evaluation reports, progress reports, examination results, organisational contracts, letters, policy papers, audit records, photographs, videos, diagrams, shopping lists, advertisements). Moreover, the documents enable the researcher to compare his or her own observations with that in the documentary record (Basit, 2010). Others might also review these items for a variety of purposes. Yin (2009) underlined the disadvantages of collecting documents, such as the documents presenting a bias because they only include those selected by researcher; furthermore, some documents are inevitably going to be confidential or sensitive, making them more difficult to collect (ibid). Thus, to ensure the study presents a true depiction of the setting, photography can be used to accurately portray the scenario. However, the researcher must carefully select each photograph to avoid any harm resulting from the exposure of the identity of the participants. While the documents gathered will almost certainly have been written for operational purposes, they do evidence the implementation of EPPs because the person who conducts the EPP must be part of the programme staff, and in fact, many of the events which occur in schools are documented on a routine basis. Hence, in this study the researcher collected module, certificates, photograph, letters, and annual documentation of the EPP. The researcher believes the documents are valid evidence of the programme's history at the school. Manson (2002) highlighted that documents

provide essential evidence compared to verbal utterances (e.g., interview). However, documents serve as an additional method to verify the context, following an interview and the observational method, as it exists (ibid), especially since participants may forget the previous history and background of EPP during interview, as is often human nature.

Several official documents along with the documents related to EPPs were collected for analysis purpose. Below is the list of documents used in this study (Table 2).

Documents collected	Type of document	Purpose of documents
Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025	Policy document	Offering guidance
Global Education annual report	Annual Report	To update information
Official government document	Service circular	Updated information about the special education teacher's role
Basic principal of quality State education department	Online official website	To illustrate guidelines
Acts related policies and practice in Special Education	Policy document	To illustrate guidelines
Individual Education Plan	Written document	Individual learners report
EPP's Module	Written document	To offer guidance
Special Education Curriculum	Written document	To offer guidance

EPP's Annual Report	Written document	To chart the progress of EPP
Minutes of the Meeting	Written document	Record of the meeting
Photograph	Image	To provide evidence

Table 2: List of documents reviewed

The above documents were collected because they are the official published items containing the most up-to-date data and information about issues pertinent to this study (i.e. concerning the opportunities provided for students with learning difficulties.) The researcher also collected documents regarding special needs learners and their readiness for employment. The school documents mainly represented the activities undertaken by the case study schools in the implementation and establishment of EPPs.

### 3.7 Provisions for trustworthiness

In this section, the researcher will primarily discuss trustworthiness and the potential for research bias to occur in this study. Validity is contingent on the researcher's relationship to the purpose and circumstances of the research. In a qualitative study, trustworthiness - including credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability - is essential to value its potential (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Thus, the following will justify the researcher's strategy in embarking on this study.

A level of credibility can be achieved by triangulating the sources obtained from observations, interviews and documents (Denzin, 1978 and Patton, 1999). In this study, the researcher compared the elements and opinions derived from fifteen different participants (departments head: 5, and special education teacher: 10). In addition, it includes two separate observation periods in each setting to identify any changes between visits. By analysing the data from multiple sources, (interview and observation) plus the evidence from document reviews, the researcher can determine multiple ways of interpreting the data or deriving the themes. For example, during the interview sessions, the researcher might unintentionally allow the participants to share experiences about subject which does not support the motive of the study. Using a negative case analysis, the researcher has managed to overcome this problem by

filtering through the themes which support the objective of the study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

In this study, the researcher gave priority to learner participant responses. The member check technique also helped the researcher to eliminate any possibility of bias. Member checking procedure is used as a way of improving the rigour and credibility in qualitative study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The researcher confirmed exactly what the participants were trying to express by asking them to describe, in depth, the subject and to then cross check this information to ensure that the researcher had interpreted their responses correctly. The researcher also discussed directly with the participant after the observation session about the process they followed to assess their actions. At the same time, the researcher also was flexible by offering more space and opportunity to be truthful and to correct any errors in their statement or change their mind later about the subject matter had been discussed. In addition, an English teacher who was fluent in both the Malay and English language helped to make sure the translation of the transcript had been written accurately. Other qualitative researchers from the LJMU PhD team were requested to identify and/or check the accuracy of the coding used and to clarify similar word meanings during the process of deriving the themes. Finally, a lecturer from Malaysia who is the specialist in qualitative data analysis verified and finalised the coding and the themes.

In terms of transferability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicated that thick description is a way of justifying and defending the external validity. In this study, the selected sample and location of the study might not cover overall Malaysia, but the findings can be referred to as a platform to begin a similar programme at secondary school level. The findings in this study may enable academics to make a generalisation within the five case studies.

Another technique used for dependability was to use an inquiry audit. By attending conferences and presenting or publishing papers, other researchers from different backgrounds and experience are able to evaluate the interpretation and might question the initial findings. This is where the researcher refined the strategy of analysing the data and correcting the errors. In turn this also established another criteria: confirmability.

The final technique the researcher used in the audit trail was to establish the level of confirmability in qualitative studies. The researcher kept all the report precisely and systematically from day one of the research. The researcher also included the rationale of each step taken in the research. Document collection has the potential to undermine validity, however, as the written document may not intersect with the researcher's objectives. However, by using triangulation, which helps the researcher to expose any errors in data, it sanctions to corroborate the inferences that elicit from data (Basit, 2010) and achieve the desired level of confirmability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). The confirmability of the findings is based on the perspective of the participants' first-hand experiences, secondary sources (such as written documents and photographs) and eye-witness accounts.

### 3.8 Data collection Procedures

Several procedures were undertaken to conduct this research. A primary proposal enclosed with an RD9R form were submitted to the JMU Research Degree Committee and an Ethical approval form sent to Research Committee of the University. Once the Research Committee of the University granted the ethical approval for this study, the researcher can commence their study.

Firstly, as a Malaysian Researcher from a foreign University (Liverpool John Moores) is undertaking the study, an online application form from the Economic Planning Unit database via <http://www.epu.gov.my/en/undertasking-research-in-malaysia> is required. Once the application has been accepted, an approval letter is granted to commence research in Malaysia.

Secondly, a formal letter seeking permission to conduct research in Malaysian Integrated Secondary Schools is required, derived from the Education Ministry of Malaysia, followed by Western and Southwest State Education Department. In the letter the researcher must state the criteria or type of the participant, and the number of Integrated Secondary Schools needed, which must have at least undergone three years of Employment Preparation Program in Western and Southwest State to be considered a match, and therefore to be recommended for research. Five Integrated Secondary Schools, which are conducting special needs employment preparation programmes in two states that includes Western and Southwest State in Malaysia, are

finalised for the research population.

Thirdly, the researcher met the Principals of the schools suggested by Western and Southwest State Education Department, along with the above approval letters to establish permission. Principals were given an information sheet and a gatekeeper's consent form, which would be signed as evidence.

Finally, a formal letter of permission from the Economic Planning Unit, Ministry of Education, Western and Southwest State Education Department and Integrated Secondary School, as well as the Gatekeepers consent letter, is kept in file and carried as evidence before participants in the School were approached.

The Head of Special Education Field is selected to participate because the researcher believes that they exert the most influence the management, planning and services within the special education field. Special Education Teachers are considered the best to be interviewed, as they personally conduct the employment preparation programmes for students with disabilities.

In advance of this study, the researcher has conducted a pilot study in one of the Integrated Secondary School in both the West and Southwestern parts of Malaysia. The pilot study has helped the researcher to organise and estimate a realistic timeframe for all the interview and observation sessions which this study required, at the five research sites.

Mertens and McLaughlin's research correspond in terms of methods and techniques used in the process of data collection (Mertens and McLaughlin, 2004). The interview method, using open-ended questions, should be used to elicit data from Heads of Special Education and teachers. The observation method will be used to collect data regarding special needs learners' activities in the classroom. Relevant documents regarding the learners' practical task related performances and after school employment records will be collected from the respective schools.

Additional special education teachers who participate in the employment preparation programmes were chosen based on their experience and knowledge, which made them highly suitable to answer the research questions. Special needs learners aged 16 years and above who undergo the employment preparation programmes in these selected

schools are the subject of the researcher's observations. However, those students who were under-16 and who were involved in the same setting were excluded as these students were in the trial period, and in the midst of making their decisions to choose their particular EPP.

Open-ended questions can be used for seeking the views, opinions and perceptions of the participants, based on their professional experiences and related to their job or field, and this enabled in-depth information to be collected (Kumar, 2011). Data was collected from Heads of Special Education Department (HoD) and special education teachers (SET). the data was collected individually and across a period, through various interview sessions. All interview sessions were tape-recorded and was transcribed in NVIVO using the QSR NVivo10 software.

The data collection instruments used during the observation sessions with special needs learners involved a camera for taking photographs and video recordings. These were used to explore special needs learners task-related performance in employment preparation settings in the five Special Education Integrated Programme in Secondary Schools in Western and Southwest in Malaysia.

According to DePoy and Gitlin (2015), consent is not required for every type of study. However, for this study, the researcher decided to prepare a written consent form for all participants. Permission was attained from the special needs learners with the active consent of their parent(s) or guardian(s). An assent form collected from each special needs student involved in the research signalled that they are comfortable and willing to participate in the research.

Before conducting the study, the researcher outlined the purpose of the research and the involvement of the special needs students in the research. Special needs students were informed that the study would take place alongside their usual activities, so that they could be observed in the classroom or in a field setting. The researcher also informed the participants about the risks, benefits, efforts to ensure anonymity and confidentiality, and their freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any reason.

### 3.9 Data Analysis

One of the most crucial parts of qualitative research is data analysis since this can determine the quality of the final conclusions of the study. This process can, however, consume vast amounts of time. For these reasons, the researcher needed to organise the analytic framework for analysing and interpreting the data systematically. According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), qualitative analysis needs to be well documented as a process to help the reader understand the study more clearly. When analysing the data, it helps if the data is ordered in such a way as to facilitate the methods of analysis that will be employed. In this qualitative case study approach, it is especially important that the process of data analysis needs to be clearly written and evidenced and to use many sources of evidence to reinforce the findings (Yin, 2003, p. 85).

In this study, the researcher employed multiple sources of evidence to improve the validity and reliability of the findings. With this in mind, the researcher analysed data from the semi-structured interviews, observations (e.g., non-participant observation using description content and field notes) and document analysis to support the arguments made. This case study utilised the EPP documentation by exploring the hindrances and challenges faced by the participants (e.g., Head of Department and Special Education Teacher) which was used to establish the areas which needed to be enhanced in EPP in Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia. For these purposes, the researcher collected data in the form of audio recordings of interviews, video recordings of non-participant observations, and document collection (e.g., official documents, modules, annual reports, certificates and photographs).

The collected data was analysed with the aid of the thematic framework approach and methods of triangulation. Thematic analysis provides a flexible method of data analysis and allows various methodological approaches to be engaged in data analysis. Reliability is a concern, however, due to the varied potential interpretations inherent in gathering such a wide range of data and employing a variety of methods (Braun & Clark, 2006). Therefore, it is important that methods of triangulation should be used whenever possible to increase the credibility and validity of the results (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Data were analysed using an inductive approach, as in this way the data can be analysed clearly in order to address the research objective and the summary derived from the results (Thomas, 2006).

In this study it is especially important for, the researcher to explain how audio from the interviews was analysed using the six steps suggested by Braun and Clark (2006). After each interview session, the researcher listened to the recordings many times in order to become familiar with the transcripts while typing-up each interview. According to Ryan (2003), the researcher must decide whether to transcribe quotes completely word for word, or merely capture the main keywords. In this study, the researcher transcribed completely. Details about each participant (e.g., school and name) were recorded and pseudonyms were used to protect their identity and maintain the integrity of the data (Allen and Wiles, 2016). By interacting directly with the interviewee, the researcher gained prior knowledge of the data to be considered. In order to fully comprehend the content of the data, it was vital that the researcher became fully immersed in all of the gathered information. Approaches, such as reading and re-reading, note-taking and highlighting ideas, were all crucial when seeking to recognise emerging patterns contained within this data in order to begin coding. This process evolved throughout the whole process of analysis.

The second step the researcher took was to generate codes from all interview transcripts and to try to identify recurring themes, making sure to retain as much information as possible which, as the analytical process develops, may become relevant at a later date. Once collated, the researcher had amassed a long list of codes which were identifiable across the entire data set. For example;

*Data extract:*

*“Usually the teacher doesn’t waste time with low function learners... difficult to achieve their set target but we never neglect anyone, regardless of their function category... we try one to one coaching and encourage them to integrate by giving them a simple task”*

*Coded for:*

- *Teacher doesn’t waste time with low function learners*
- *Never neglect anyone*
- *One to one coaching*
- *Integrate learners via setting of simple tasks*

The third step involved searching for potential themes at the broader level through collation and analysis of patterned responses, therefore offering the possibility of answering the research question. To achieve this, the researcher used tables to search for connections between different codes and subthemes and also to look for the relationship between the different levels of themes. Once this was done, the codes were then assigned to each applicable theme as follows:

Codes	Subthemes
<i>teacher doesn't waste time with low function learners</i>	Unwillingness of teachers to include learner's in difficult activities
<i>we never neglect anyone</i>	Encourage inclusion
<i>One to one coaching</i>	Teaching approach
<i>Integrate learners via setting of simple tasks</i>	Teaching technique

Table 3: Searching for themes (Assigned coded and subthemes)

The fourth step taken was to review the coded data excerpts with a view to developing the extracts into potential themes in order to establish patterns within this information. Once the coded data had been found to be coherently linked and subsequently assigned a theme a process of refinement was then undertaken by the researcher. As part of this process of refinement, the data which was deemed to be irrelevant / beyond the scope of this study was simply discarded from the analysis. This process was then extended across the data-set in its entirety in order to establish a thematic map, the connections of which formed the basis of new knowledge.

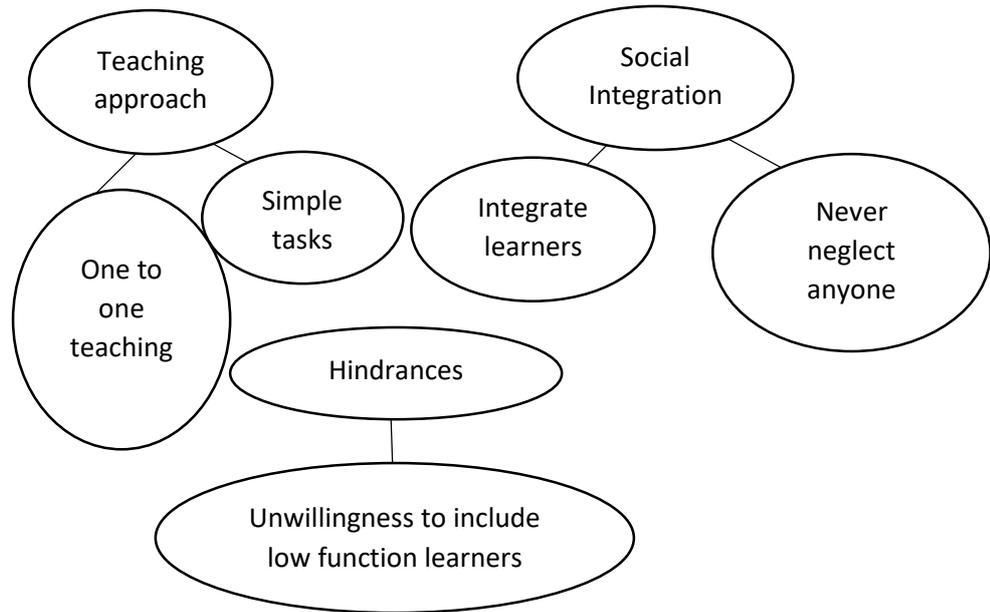


Figure 2: Reviewing themes (generating thematic map)

The fifth step succinctly defines the essence of each theme whereby an overall bigger picture of the analysis could be established. This is achieved by returning to the collated data within each theme and ensuring that there is both coherence and consistency and by carrying out a detailed written analysis. Through this procedure, the potential existence of themes, sub-themes and themes within a theme should, and did, become apparent and it became possible to identify hierarchical meaning contained within the data.

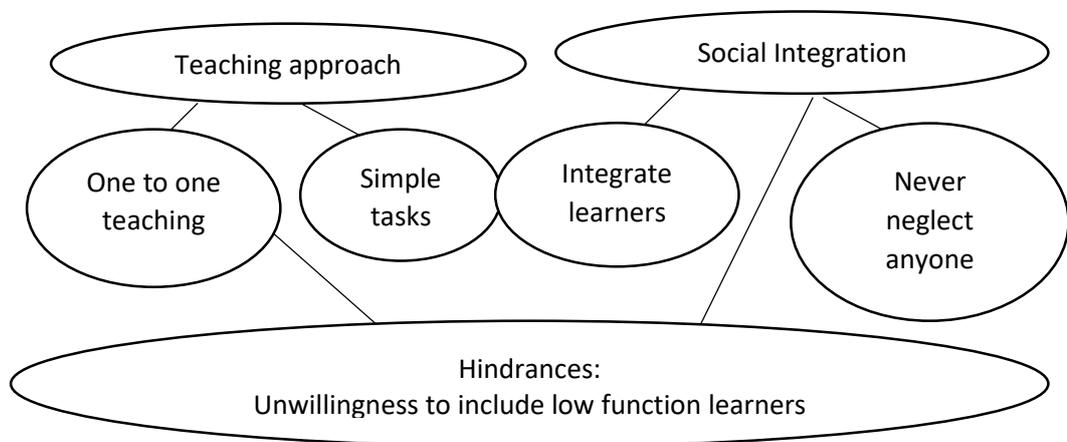


Figure 3: Defining and naming themes

The findings were recorded in a memo, and the elements derived from this process were used to verify the subthemes with other methods (observation field notes reports and evidence from the documents collected) before finalising the themes identified from the literature review (Edhlund and McDougall, 2017).

The sixth and final step is undertaken when the researcher has a completed set of analysed themes in order to compile a final report. Additionally, the researcher ensures that all extracts of data are rational, succinct and non-repetitive and also display the prevalence of the theme. This final report contains extracts which link to the research question.

### Document

The document analysis in this study is used to increase the credibility of the results obtained from both interview and observation data. This study of the official documents, which can be found online and collected from the schools, includes statistics and information related to opportunities offered to the special needs learners.

### 3.10 Ethical Considerations

According to Gibbs (2008), ethics should be given prime importance before commencing research as it can affect the stages of planning and data collection. As a Liverpool John Moores University researcher it is compulsory to obtain ethical approval from the Research Committee of the University followed by other related authorities. The authorities in this case are the Economic Planning Unit Malaysia, the Educational Planning and Research Division, the Ministry of Education Malaysia, the Special Education Division Putrajaya, the Special Education Department State (Perak and Melaka), and the Secondary School's Special Education Integrated Programme. Additionally, participant information sheets for gatekeepers and educators (e.g. Heads of Department and Special Education Teachers), parents, special needs learners were provided along with a briefing. The briefing was carried out verbally and provided details regarding what participants would be required to do, and what the aims of the study were. Also, it was made clear what would happen to them during the research period, and what would happen to the data they provided after research was completed. All parties were made aware of the purposes of the research and would be

given the opportunity to withdraw at any point throughout the research (Robson, 2002). The various parties were also informed that all the essential information and the collected data were kept safely, and their identities/pseudonyms and integrity maintained. Gibbs (2008) stressed amongst that the common issues raised regarding ethics was that qualitative data can be very personal. In the case of qualitative approach, the usage of direct quotes generally could identify the specific participant or settings. To deal with this situation, the researcher in this study will not expose direct details about individual participants. Also, every effort was made to ensure no psychological harm came to the parties and, to do so, individual interviews and observation sessions which had been scheduled in advance were sent to the respective Principals for approval. The rationale behind selecting multiple cases is to generalise findings, in comparison to adopting a bounded system which concentrates on one specific case only. The first step towards embarking upon the research is by gaining access through the gatekeeper (Principal), followed by gaining the confidence of research participants and collecting and/or recording all relevant information in the form of documentation, interviews and records of observations from all five schools' EPP (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 150).

#### Justification of using Multiple Case Study

The researcher chose not to incorporate the single-case study method as this approach only serves to establish and interpret unique cases (Stake, 1995). The benefits of using a general case study are that the findings obtained within can be adopted and put into practice. As EPPs fall under general cases, multiple cases are the most suitable way to make generalisations across the researcher's case studies, which can then be adopted and put into practice. To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher used methodological triangulation by reviewing previous literature, policy or other relevant document analysis along with data generated inductively from the interviews and observation (Denzin, 1978).

### 3.11 Model of the Data Collection Process

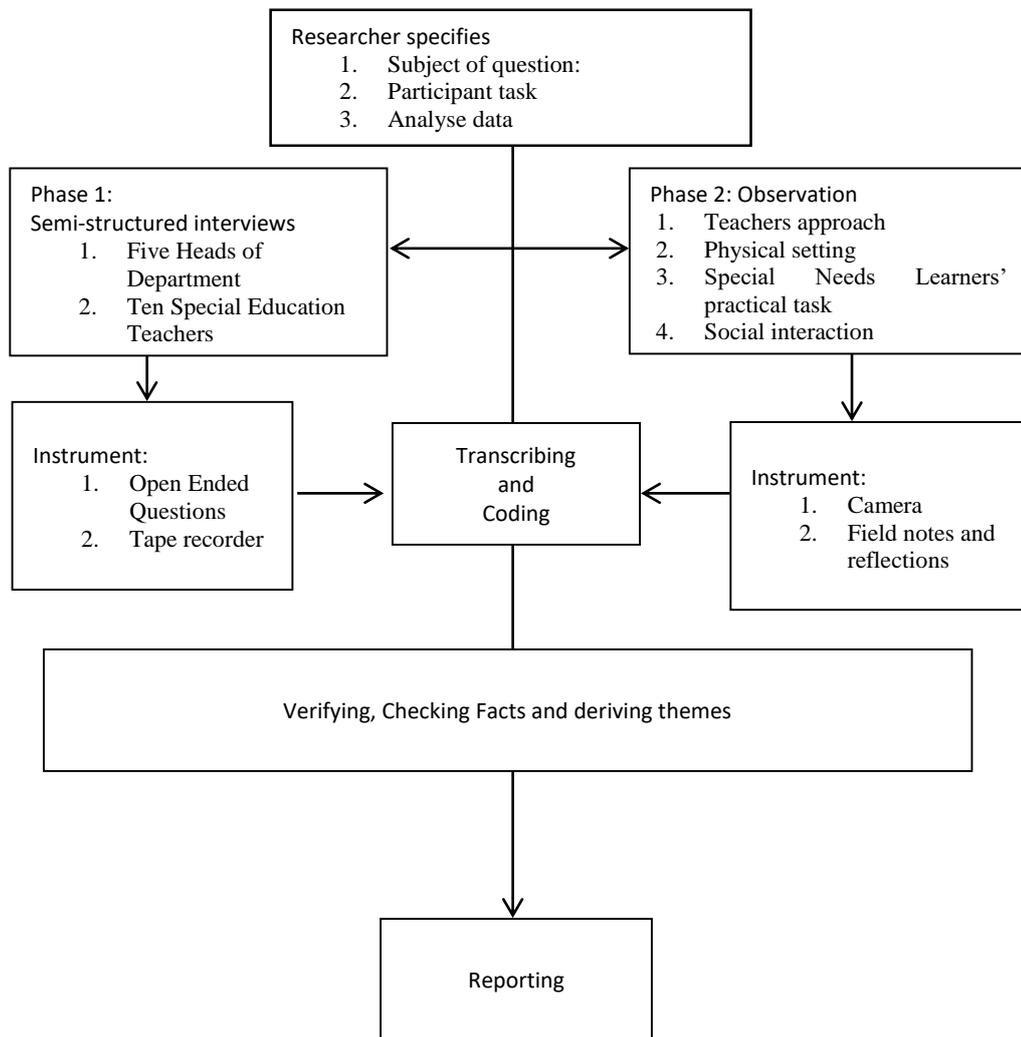


Figure 4: Model of the Data Collection Process

### 3.12 Summary

This chapter has presented the relevance of qualitative research in studying the participation of individuals and the implementation of EPPs. Different approaches were discussed and justified to determine the most appropriate approach by which to assess the implementation of EPPs, and to gain insights of the hindrances faced by the EPP educators and discover the areas of improvement. Finally, this chapter addressed the methods used in each phase, including sampling, recruitment of participants, data collection procedures and techniques, data analysis, ethical consideration, provision for trustworthiness and the model of the data collection process. The next chapter explicates the findings and discussions of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.0 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how schools implement the Employment Preparation Programme (EPP) and, in doing so, describe how this education and skills programme is serving special needs learners from the educator's perspective along using an eye witnessed method. Every effort has been made to understand the hindrances faced by educators to enhance the quality of EPP for special needs learners in secondary schools' Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP). All the themes discovered in this study will be presented and how these themes contributed to the implementation of EPP will be discussed. The evidence collected is discussed from the perspective of the participants and includes the researchers' reflections based on the observation in the field setting along with the relevant documentation and other artefacts in place at the schools from the point at which the SEIP began to deliver EPP. Next, the researcher will describe how these themes relate to previous literature. At this juncture, the researcher will seek to determine similarities, differences or new findings to current literature and, in doing so, will help to relate this information to answer the research questions in this study thematically. Finally, this study will propose a framework of Employment Preparation Programme as an outline for the EPP team.

School (SEIP)	State	Location	Participant/ Role	Qualification	Years of experience		EPP
					<i>Mainstream</i>	<i>Special</i>	
SEIP1	West	Rural	HoD1	BSc Mathematics, 3-day Special Ed. Course	5	10	-
-	-	-	SET1	M.Ed. (Special Education)	0	7	Livestock (quail) A
-	-	-	SET2	BA History, 1-week Special Ed. Course	12	6	Livestock (fish) B
SEIP2	South West	Urban	HoD2	BA Malay Language, 3-day Special Ed. Course, M Ed	8	16	-
-	-	-	SET3	BA Household Mgmt., 3-day Special Ed. Course	8	6	Bakery operation A
-	-	-	SET4	B.Ed. (Special Education)	0	7	Agriculture (mangos) B
SEIP3	South West	Rural	HoD3	B.Ed. (Special Education)	0	10	-
-	-	-	SET5	B.Ed. (Accounting), 1-week Special Ed Course	0	6	Agriculture (mushrooms) A
-	-	-	SET6	BA Business Administration, Dip. Special Ed.	0	8	Agriculture (chillies) B
SEIP4	West	Urban	HoD4	B.Ed. (Special Education)	0	16	-
-	-	-	SET7	BA Malay Language, 2-week Special Ed. Course	4	6	Restaurant operation A
-	-	-	SET8	MA Early Childhood, BA Linguistics	7	15	Needlework B
SEIP5	South West	Urban	HoD5	B.Ed. (Life Skills), 3-day Special Ed. Course	13	14	-
-	-	-	SET9	B.Ed. (Special Education), Dip. English	3	5	Hydroponics A
-	-	-	SET10	B.Ed. (Special Education)	0	10	Bakery operation B

Note: School and participant names are coded/pseudonyms

HoD: Head of Department  
SET: Special Education Teacher

Table 4: Demography of Participant

## 4.1 Theme 1: Leadership and Management

### 4.1.1 The implementation of EPP

- a) The importance of local State Education Department support
- b) Schools support of Special Education through Leadership and Management
  - i) Principal's supervision
- c) Roles of Head of Department as leader of SEIP
  - i) Casual supervision
- d) Special Education Teacher as leader of EPP: A nuanced EPP approach
  - i) Strategic Plan: Individualised Target based Approach
- e) Learner as Leader

### 4.1.2 Hindrances faced by the special educator

Hindrances 1: Lack of Authority of given to Head of Department in comparison to other Department Heads within the same school

Hindrances 2: High level of bureaucracy system weakening the EPP progression

Hindrances 3: Principal's lack of appreciation demotivates special educators

Hindrances 4: Mainstream colleagues undermining special educators

Hindrances 5: Absence of thorough supervision and joined-up thinking amongst educational ministries and between higher educational ministries

### 4.1.3 Overview

#### 4.1.1 The implementation of EPP

In this section, an explanation of how the leadership and management contribute to the EPP's implementation in the selected SEIPs in Malaysia, as it relates to the harnessing of the special needs learners' capacities for an independent work life is discussed.

##### a) The importance of local State Education Department support

In investigating the idea behind the design of EPPs at the selected case study SEIP schools, the researcher came to understand that EPPs were a concept encouraged by as part of one of the State Education Department's policies, which began a joint effort employment programme in every school in Malaysia starting in 2011. Participant HoD5, from SEIP5, which is located in the Southwest of Peninsular Malaysia, highlighted the encouragement and approval given by the local State Departments of Special Education to demonstrate leadership, which optimised the relationship between governmental organisations to promote a quality Employment Preparations Programme for special needs learners in every secondary school.

*'Encouragement from the state department of the relationship with supplier since 2012 (HoD5).'*

According to participant HoD1 from SEIP1, in the West of Peninsular Malaysia, relationships can be built through a joint effort with various organisations that are either government or private sector based and individual suppliers that results in benefits to both parties that can be embedded in their mutual missions and visions. Similarly, participant HoD2, referring to one of the strategic plans of the state department in the southwest region of the Peninsular Malaysia, underlined the encouragement given by the state department to all other government sectors in approaching schools in order to harness employability skilled practice or entrepreneurship programmes in the nearby secondary schools. This statement is substantiated by the following quotes.

*'As per refer to state education department mission and vision is to build a collaboration relationship between organisation and supplier for mutual benefit (HoD1)'*

*'A joint effort approach is encouraged for all so that governmental sectors can join the secondary school to practice and promote skilled or entrepreneurship programme (HoD2)'*

The above statements are representative of all the selected five secondary SEIP schools that have begun the EPP in Malaysia. However, as stated previously, the implementation of EPP can vary according to the schools' leadership and management strategic mission and vision.

The local state departments joined forces with leadership and management teams in the selected five case study SEIPs to outline a set of structures using their own initiative and resources, which can be accumulated to implement EPP in their own schools. Another aspect of EPP's success lies in the ability of the programme to incorporate non-academic outside bodies with structured, flexible agreements.

The State Education Department, through their online portals, has started to expand employment and entrepreneurship preparation programmes through inter-government and industry partnerships (Malaysia Education For All, 2000, p. 60). Therefore, most EPPs in this study are attempting to undertake the challenge in special education that began in 2011. The findings from the interviews, and the official policies reviewed, emphasise the strategy adopted by SEIP schools in Malaysia. These findings were reinforced by the level of encouragement and involvement shown by the state education department in response to proposals to implement joint employment programmes in secondary schools. In addition, this study identifies how best the leadership and management of the schools can join forces with the local State Education Department within the five selected schools in the case study. Furthermore, this underscores the responsibility of the government for implementation of effective EPPs in Malaysian secondary schools. Subsequently, partnership between alumni groups and non-government sectors and secondary schools to develop vocational programmes were established (Malaysian Education Plan, 2013, p. E-22). In spite of these efforts, the Malaysian Special Education Curriculum was only upgraded in 2017, thus illustrating the cumbersome process of application from the planning stage. Similarly, previous research states that special education leaders should ensure the planning and implementation of an innovative transition plan for EPP involving

personnel from outside groups (Petchu et al., 2014). This in turn contributes to answering ‘Research Question 1’ in this study.

#### b) Schools support of Special Education through Leadership and Management

It was the intention of the researcher to ascertain the level of support given by the school itself (The school’s special education leadership and management) which also included the involvement of the Principal and the Head of the Department of Special Education. All of these people worked together to provide support for Special Education Teachers in the form of training and resources, one of the aims being to help develop confident and independent special needs learners, thus enabling them to engage in society. To achieve this goal, these five selected case study schools took a step further by implementing EPP to prepare their learners for employability as well as providing entrepreneurship training. For example, participant HoD4 underscored the importance of the obligation of special education department’s leadership and management in supporting the special educators to design innovative programmes to meet the special needs learners’ criteria. In light of this, participant HoD5 stressed that each SEIP secondary school’s planning and design can be varied in order to prepare the special needs learners towards employability and an independent life. This is illustrated by the following quotes.

*‘Special education department’s leadership and management role is vital in planning and designing an innovative programme to meet the students’ needs’ (HoD4).*

*‘Every school does not necessarily need to follow the same employment programme as long as authorised by me and supported by the principals’ (HoD5).*

The above quotations demonstrated that the overall innovative education and training plans, including EPP, are designed for special needs learners in school and are authorised by the Department Heads and the principal. This includes the programmes and activities which are created and innovated by special education educators (HoD/SET). This is evidence that the EPP programme is implemented with the authorisation and support of the schools’ leaders, even though, according to the participants, EPP is still not clearly defined as part of the special education curriculum.

The successful transition from school to adult life of the learners with disabilities ought to be the main priority of school leaders (Petcu et al., 2014). Likewise, schools' leadership and management have fundamental commitment in leading continuous improvement amongst special needs learners (DiPaola and Thomas, 2003).

Schools' leadership and management also has a significant, indeed, a key role in influencing and enhancing the quality of the school's strategic plan. The performance of students may be positively impacted by the implementation of a carefully indicated leadership (Bush et al., 2018). Therefore, more studies should be undertaken to clarify how the factors identified can best be used to design a career development pathway that can be put into practice (ibid). This applies in particular to the Special Education Department which decides the annual strategic plan (short term) and five-yearly plan (long term). For instance, participant HoD1, representing SEIP1 from the Western Peninsular of Malaysia, indicated that the special education department's role in leadership and management makes them accountable for any failure of the programme designed in school. Likewise, participant HoD3 from SEIP3 from the Western Peninsular of Malaysia also highlighted the fact that the department's Head, as leader of the Special Education Programme, is responsible for the quality of the programme. This is evident by the following quotes.

*'If any problem occurred in EPP the special education management is to be blamed' (HoD1).*

*'The strategic plan for annual and long-term between 5 years is crucial, as I have to answer for any failure of the programme' (HoD3).*

From the above explanation, it is apparent that the leader is crucial in managing the special education programme in schools. Therefore, the design of the strategic plan for both short-term and long-term programmes, ranging between one year and five years respectively, should be planned and analysed thoroughly before being implemented in the schools. This is because it involves the schools' reputations, as well as parents' expectations for positive outcomes, as it is anticipated that there will be an improvement in the learner's performance (Emery et. al., 2018; Ma, Siu and Tse, 2018; Riddell and Brown (2018).

Generally, not all SEIPs are conducting EPP in Malaysia, as it does not provide sufficient support for this effort from the school's leadership and management team.

Special education management in the secondary schools is especially challenging to establish and to it is also challenging to organise systematic and effective programmes to prepare the learners for future work and independent life. Participant HoD4 stated that in order to achieve the current mission and vision, academic knowledge alone is insufficient. The special education curriculum should include employment practice and training so that special needs learners are exposed to work-life environments from the very start of secondary school. Participant SET1 underlined the importance of school's leadership and management support in conducting programmes, as teacher's efforts and initiative alone are insufficient for a positive outcome. Therefore, it can be concluded that implementation of EPP in the SEIP schools, along with the impact from leadership and management support, will increase the effectiveness of EPP and thus positively influence learners' prospects. The following quote supports the statement expressed.

*'Before, we only focused academic but now we focus both academic and the employment programme because academic alone is not enough' (HoD4).*

*'We need to conduct EPP to meet the current needs and requirements. However, teachers' efforts need to be incorporated with the school's leadership and management support' (SET1).b*

#### b (i) Principal's supervision

A cross analysis was carried out in the observation session to discover principal supervision. As part of the principal's duty, he/she casually observes all activities within the school grounds by touring the entire site. What can be gathered from this is that there is a clear level of support from the principal regarding the ensuring of safe implementation and operation of all programmes within the school, including EPP.

*'The Principal touring the school ground, including the chilli plantation settings, at 11:25am can be interpreted as principal awareness of the activities or programmes carried out by SEIP3.'*

*(Excerpt from researcher's reflection)*

From the observation carried out by the researcher, the findings show that the school principal toured the school ground including EPP site to be made aware of all activities on display and that the principal showed some initiative to participate and support the

SEIP programmes. This can also be interpreted to mean that the principal was equally concerned about EPP programmes.

From the document review of the EPP proposals and annual report from all five schools, it is acknowledged that the principals approve all of the proposals and documents related to EPP in their own school, such as approval letters and annual reports. However, it is notable from the minutes of the meetings which refer to EPPs, that in most instances the school's principal was not in attendance. This strongly suggests a lack of involvement and participation in the EPPs at the most senior level.

The leadership role played by the principal should illustrate the level to which responsibility and support influences the quality of the programme as well as the level to which it improves learners' outcomes. Similarly, research by Middlewood (2018) indicated schools' leadership has a significant role to play in a self-improving school system. That study also highlighted the important role of the principal in planning the best strategy for a successful outcome (ibid).

As the number of special needs learners' increases, the department's head needs to clarify the importance of planning the employability programme for the learner's improvement. According to the Malaysian Blueprint, 2013-2025, only 6% of students are enrolled in inclusive education in Malaysia, whereas 89% of students with disabilities were in the SEIP, which shows the importance of focusing on how these learners will lead their lives after they complete secondary education (Ministry of Education, 2012). This is a question which needs to be addressed. Similarly, research by Roberts and Guerra (2017) indicated that even though principals' understanding and knowledge about special education legislation are moderate, the study suggests there is a real need for in-depth consideration of IDEA legislation. The above findings are evidence that there is a requirement for the principal to understand the field of special education in depth in order to support the needs of implementing EPP.

Principal participation is very crucial in leading the programme and supporting special education teachers in their efforts to successfully establish the employment programme in the SEIPs secondary school. All this effort provides opportunities to special needs learners to achieve their aspirations, such as becoming an entrepreneur or gaining employment close to the place they live. Research by Al Mahdy, Mahmoud and Hallinger (2018) emphasised that principal's participation and support enabled

the strengthening of the capacity of teachers to contribute effective teaching, which leads to more productive learners. The principal's participation in supporting EPP staff greatly influences the schools rate of improvement and consequently increases the reputation amongst outsiders. These outsiders include intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies, parents and others. Findings in this study concluded that there is a difference between the rhetoric and the reality in the school.

c) Roles of Head of Department as leader of Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP)

In attempt to conduct an effective EPP, the heads of department have a major responsibility to manage the programme. Participant HoD2 stated that the Head of Department's role is to administrate all aspects of the programme systematically and effectively. Participant HoD2 added the Head of Department also has the responsibility to pass all the information to their school and staff and update where necessary. Participant HoD4 states that the Head of Department is responsible for more than just the implementation of the EPP, as their duties encompass more than just one programme. Participant HoD3 and HoD1 are both in agreement with this from their point of view, and evidence of this is in their quotes below

*'My main role as a head of department is to administrate all of the special education programmes and to ensure that they run smoothly, systematically and effectively. Challenging as holding the main position managing all activities, advising and delivering the updated information' (HoD2).*

*'I am responsible for everything. I deal with the special education department, including administration, management, financial, curriculum, co-curriculum, and student affairs' (HoD4).*

*'I'm responsible for everything that involves special education' (HoD3).*

*'As a Head of department, I am more into management of the overall EPP programme' (HoD1).*

HoD3 claimed, between the age of 13 to 19, the HoDs role is to identify the interests of learners and proceed to encourage involvement in the school's EPPs. Those who do not express an interest will instead follow the general special education curriculum, or will

join the inclusive education classes, where they will be able to sit a general national examination. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*'Between the ages of 13 and 19, we identify the characteristics of each individual learner and their needs and interests. From there we provoke their interest and encourage their participation in either our mushroom cultivation programme, or our chilli plantation programme. For those who are categorised as low-function, or for those who are disinterested in the programmes, we engage them in wide variety of basic skilled work related to both EPPs to enhance their confidence, motivation and interest'(HoD3).*

From the above listed roles, we may note the amount of responsibilities to be carried out by the Department Heads, which means Department Heads have a role to act as a main leader for all the EPP activities.

On the other hand, introducing pre-vocational preparation/EPP in secondary schools, especially for the junior special needs learners, (13 to 15 years of age) and full EPP for ages 16 and above, helps them to be confident participants in society and the labour market (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 7-8). That, in turn, reduces the unemployment rate amongst youths with disabilities.

#### i) Casual supervision

From the observation carried out in the field, HoD5 from SEIP5 had monitored the field/lesson for about 15 minutes. He also had a short conversation within this period. Below is the excerpt of conversation from the video recording in SEIP5.

*HoD : Hello. You ok?*

*Learner : Hello. I'm good. Thank you. (Learner immediately bowing low with the palm of the HoD's right hand placed on the forehead)*

*HoD : How do you feel about this project? Do you like it?*

*Learner : Happy (with smiling face)*

*HoD : Can you do this task without your teacher's help?*

*Learner : Yes, I can.*

*HoD : Well done.'*

*(Excerpt from video conversation)*

Based on the above excerpt, the heads of department from SEIP5 monitored the lesson for about 15 minutes and had a casual conversation with the learners from time to time confirmed that HoD makes sure that the planned programme was implemented as it was designed to be. By ensuring that these learners are satisfied with his choice of EPP programme, the HoD provided support to these learners by talking with them and gaining feedback regarding any difficulties and/or dissatisfaction they may have with the programme. However, it remains unclear to what degree casual supervision have contributed to support EPP implementation. Harris (2004) has claimed that certain tasks have to be retained by those in formal leadership, such as Department Heads collectively leading and managing the Special Education Department.

#### d) Special Education Teacher as leader of EPP: A nuanced EPP approach

Next, the researcher's intention was to discover why EPP was conducted with various individual targets in a non-uniform fashion, and why it is not necessarily the same amongst different schools. In some instances, some of the SEIPs had not even started EPP or any partnership vocational programmes at all, whilst some SEIPs used a basic transitional school-to-work programme to expose the special needs learners to basic vocational skills and training. This involved carrying out activities such as baking pastries and selling produce within the school. Participant HoD2 stated that as each special needs learner has a unique ability, combined with the fact that they are at different stages of achievement, EPP is most effective when using an individualised, target-based approach. Therefore, it is not appropriate to conduct all EPPs in a standard form in all schools.

The most efficient implementation of this programme has been achieved via an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with a transition meeting for each special education learner. According to participant HoD5 from SEIP5, the way his school conducts EPP is by focusing the programme on a target-based approach, with the aim of reaching set goals within a particular period before the learners leave school. A record is kept of each learner's progress, which is then revised and updated. Their standards of performance, as well as each individual's achievements, are logged. All of this is

discussed with the parents of the learners every three months. This is verified by the following quotes:

*'Each special needs student has a unique talent and capability. They're also at different stages of achievement so EPP does not need to be standardised. This is why, in my school, we focus on each of the learners individually, which is why they all have their own education and transition plan' (HoD2).*

*'Although the EPP is one major programme, we set up an individual target, which can be achieved within a set period of time and record every stage of their progress and performance or achievement in their individual education plan. It's revised and discussed with their parents every three months' (HoD5).*

Whereas, participant HoD4, from SEIP4, also emphasised that an individually targeted approach is the most efficient method of implementing EPP if one is to maximise the learner's individual potential. Therefore, the programme in her school is not purely exam-based but uses the IEP as a foundation as well, as quoted below.

*'For us the learners' performance are not totally based on exams. We practice an Individual Education Plan. That's why it is not necessary to conduct the same employment preparation programme for all' (HoD4).*

(i) Strategic Plan: Individualised Target based approach

In the restaurant operation programme, each learner's task is clearly set out within a particular time-period and once they reach the target which has been set, a new target, in the form of a new task to be mastered, is written out in their IEP. Based on the observation that was carried out in the restaurant operation, below is the evidence observed in the setting along with the researcher's reflection.

*'Venue : SEIP2: Restaurant operation*

*Specialist : Inter-government's specialist supervisor*

*Date and time : 7th September 2015 (7:30-8:30 am)*

*Learner A in charge of cooking fried noodles for customer independently.*

*Learner B in charge of making drinks for the customer independently.*

*Learner C in charge of taking orders from the customer.*

*Learner D in charge of cleaning and wiping the customer's table.'*

*(Researcher's description content: Evidence)*

*Each special needs learner was trained according to their capabilities or the level at which given tasks were achievable. In this way, those who are very active, displayed a natural aptitude and who easily understood the skill requirements without any support are given a more challenging task in the restaurant operation. Whereas the special needs learners with less aptitude, who need additional support, are given further guidance along with more flexibility regarding time limits set for each task to master the particular skills.'*

*(Researcher's reflection)*

The above explanation indicates the role of a special education teacher acting as a leader of the individual target-based programme to teach the special needs learners to master the tasks in their own EPP within this case study SEIPs school. Learners' progression is monitored on a daily basis and reported in their Individualised Education Plan (IEP). This is a similar approach to those found in the other four selected schools in this study.

Based on the information observed on the IEPs, which are concerned with target-setting and achievement on an individual basis, it is evident that it is not appropriate to set a single standardised target to be applied to all learners on EPPs in all SEIPs. This information adds value to the recent literature by Cavendish and Connor (2018) which triangulates information concerning teachers' efforts, parental involvement and students' participation, focusing on students' individual goal plans for career preparation and job opportunities. All of this also added to the insight offered by the Department Heads in the five selected SEIP and acts as an instructional resource in careful planning of a target-based approach to meet the needs and interests of special needs learners as well as in fulfilling parents' expectations. At the same time, it has helped to tailor Special Education Teachers to design the best solution and lead the learners to progress well. Principal's participation and support is crucial to enhance

teacher effectiveness through self-efficacy by providing an environment for collaboration among teachers (Sehgal, 2017; Bandura, 1977). In addition, it is clear that the special education teacher takes the lead in ensuring that the learners in their care achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of both academic and vocational programme performance and that they are prepared in the best way possible for future employment. Similarly, leaders carry the responsibility of ensuring that future employment prospects are maximised to the fullest extent (Blanton and Perez, 2011). This answered the 'Research Question 1' in terms of leadership and management: How is EPP implemented in the secondary school's SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?

#### e) Learner as Leader

The teachers' role is crucial in developing the learner into a leader. The special education teacher provides an opportunity for the special needs learner to take on leadership roles whenever possible (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p. E-10). The following quotes represent the approach the special education teacher used in the field setting.

*'I prefer to instil the leadership ability amongst the learners. This approach is designed for high capable learners to lead and include the less capable members in a team' (SET1).*

Furthermore, SET5 insists by the age of 16, those learners who have shown an interest in participating will be fully committed to one of the EPPs at the school.

*'By the time the learners reach 16 years of age, they are able to choose either to continue with one of our EPPs until they are of school-leaving age, or to join the inclusive classroom and study towards the general examination with the mainstream students' (SET5).*

From the above statement from SET5 showed the learners are encouraged in decision-making, allowing them to be responsible and helping lead towards their independent life.

*From the researcher, reflection based on the observation it is noticeable that students were tailored to lead the activities in a team. This way there is a belief*

*that it could enhance and instil leadership characteristics in the students' development. This would enable greater responsibility to make sure all team members are able to complete the task. At the same time the leader of the team helps the less capable colleagues to learn the task. This will enable the student to work in a team more efficiently.*

*(Excerpt from the observation)*

From the IEP document review, SET1 attempted to encourage leadership skills amongst the learners. From the researcher's findings based on the interview, observation within the field, and the IEP report, it is proven that what the teacher planned is mirrored in the real working environment. This promotes self-help groups amongst special needs learners, while the team leader learns by helping others within the team. These findings are similar in concept to those indicated in Social Banduras Theory, where the learner perceives self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006). Therefore, it can be concluded that EPPs provides a successful platform through which learners can believe that they can achieve, and subsequently perform, a given task.

#### 4.1.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: Lack of Authority of given to Heads of Department in comparison to other Department Heads within the same school

Based on the interviews held with all Heads of Departments in this study, it becomes apparent that the level of authority amongst Department Heads in special education is far less than that of other Department Heads within the schools. Participant HoD3 pointed out the disparity between mainstream Department Heads and special education Department Heads. Whereas mainstream heads of department receive a Head of Department Allowance, Heads of Departments within special education receive no such allowance.

*'Other Department Heads receive an allowance. Heads of Department in special education get nothing' (HoD3).*

HoD4 argued that this inconsistency essentially reaffirms the notion that there is an absence of equal rights between mainstream and special education Department Heads.

*'By rights, HoDs in special education should have the same equal rights as HoDs in mainstream education' (HoD4).*

The above statement reflects the department head's dissatisfaction about the differences in allowance even though their job burdens are similar, regardless of their academic background and experiences. This often creates internal comparison among leaders working at the same workplace. The inequality of pay will have detrimental effects on the leaders' commitment level within the same workplace (Cai et al., 2018).

Subsequently, participants HoD1 and HoD5 argued that the inconsistency in allocating the allowance to Heads of Department in special education also impacts the level of their authority within the SEIP school. This is particularly demoralising given that the workload of HoDs in special education is just as demanding as that of mainstream education HoDs. Special education's departments head responsibilities include all in one department; management, curriculum, co-curriculum and student affairs. Departments Heads, HoD2's statement explains, believe that the inequality of receiving an allowance gives a different perception about the authority of HoDs in special education. Added to this, it was notable that since all of the principals always came from non-special needs academic backgrounds, there was often a lack of understanding of the specific needs and requirements of special education practitioners. This is reinforced by list of departments head's statement.

*'The HoDs in special education are not given the same amount of authority as other mainstream HoDs. This affects my ability to implement any new innovative programme towards employability such as EPP at secondary school level' (HoD1).*

*'Other departments head received their HoD allowance, even a principal obtaining their additional principal allowance of administration. However, Head of Department in the special education are in charge of all the duties including management, curriculum, co-curriculum and student affairs. This inequality affects my level of authority as a Head of Department in the school to speak out Thus, the principal is not so supportive to my decision making about EPP' (HoD5).*

*'Although special education is carried out under the same roof, the principals in various schools are mostly from different academic backgrounds and often find it difficult to understand the needs and the requirements of special education. I feel principal reluctant to take risk for EPP and ignore our efforts' (HoD2).*

The lack of authority afforded special education HoDs stems from the fact that there is clearly a complete lack of awareness of this field on the part of the principals. This undermining of special education HoD's authority is preventing them from speaking out in support of their vocational activities, which the principals often do not appreciate. This prevents special education HoDs implementing EPP, as well as innovating new ways of preparing special needs learners for employability, which are not always classroom based. Thus, the above statements are hindrances to HoDs to play their part as a leader in special education efficiently. Ngotngamwong (2012) has indicated one of the major factors that has underpinned job dissatisfaction amongst the educators has been the lack of authorisation and participation in making school decisions. Likewise, the unbalanced scale in salaries amongst colleagues who hold the same position has raised major concerns regarding the level of stress, which has a knock-on effect that affects the leadership, empowerment and decision-making processes (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2018). On the other hand, according to Alleson (2017) leaders at schools in Singapore are not paid an additional allowance as their salary itself are very high resulting no effect to their level of authority or decision making privileges. Similarly, Betoret (2006) also stressed that the overall lack of involvement in decision making plays a fundamental role in the absence of personal fulfilment. Consequently, this leads to negative outcomes. This contributes to answering Research Question 2; What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?

Hindrance 2: High level of bureaucracy system weakening the EPP progression

The numerous hindrances faced by educators (HoD, SET) are evident in the quotes below. A major hindrance appears to be caused by the protocol which has to be

followed regarding granting permission to allow organisations and/or individual suppliers to merge with our EPP. When setting up any programme in school, a protocol needs to be followed initially because detailed proposals need to be submitted. Participant SET4 claims that there is too much admin work involved due to the large amount of bureaucracy, which can prove to be off-putting for outside collaborators.

*'There's too much paperwork and this, in turn, can discourage potential collaborators' (SET4).*

Participant SET7 complained that as his particular EPP activity involved the students working outside of both school premises and outside of school hours, an obstacle that had been created due to the high level of bureaucracy required by the school principal as teachers are not allowed to leave the school during school hours. This means that SET7 finds it difficult to monitor the progress of his special needs learner, which makes the compiling of accurate progress reports virtually impossible.

*'I couldn't monitor my students' performance much in the restaurant as they, more often than not, would work after school hours. Even during school hours teachers are not allowed to visit their pupils. This, in turn, makes it hard to write accurate progress reports plus there is a need for the teacher to be with the students as the collaborative trainers in the restaurant are not from a special education background. That's why I always receive phone calls from the trainers if they find it difficult to handle the learners (SET7)'*

In participant SET2's case, although he can accompany his students when leaving the school for marketing purposes, he does encounter a similar problem with another aspect of red tape. That is, he is unable to leave the school premises regularly. Due to the unique nature of this particular EPP, there is an absence of any standard protocol regarding health and safety of students as EPP is not yet incorporated into the core subjects in special education.

*'It's hard to give the students the necessary assistance, especially escorting and*

*supervising them when they need to go to Tesco to sell their produce. This is due to the red tape. For example, paperwork and protocols due to health and safety issues. That's understandable but because of the special requirements of EPP which involves outsiders, there's no formal school protocol for dealing with these circumstances' (SET2).*

This is also the situation participant HoD4 experienced, as a Head of Department she is bound by the regulations, and the subsequent levels of restrictions for the educators. HoD3 also pinpointed the fact that these rules have the effect of creating an unnecessary barrier and consequently result in delaying the overall progress of the programme.

*'Principals restrict the movement of both special education teachers and their students when they have to go out from the school premises. It's not easy for the either the teacher nor the student to go out from the school grounds for training' (HoD4).*

*'Bringing the students in and out of school for the purpose of EPP is delaying our programmes' (HoD3).*

Participant HoD2 identified the root cause of the issues of excessive paperwork by placing the responsibility squarely at the door of the principal. This could be because the principal does not yet possess enough information about this programme. Alternatively, it could be that the principal does not understand the needs of EPP.

*'Principals do not understand that it is necessary to train the special needs learners towards employability. It's very difficult to arrange employment programmes, especially when it involves dealing with outsiders' (HoD2).*

Participant HoD1's opinion is that the principal may be just doing his or her job and just making sure that all of the health and safety protocols are being adhered to. However, Participant HoD1 also believes there is indeed too much paperwork involved in running an EPP.

*'I think that the principal is just doing his job. Too much paperwork is needed in order to submit to the principal for the programme to be arranged for health and safety requirements' (HoD1).*

The starting point for this bureaucracy begins, according to SEIP5, at the proposal stage and does not lessen throughout the entire process of carrying out activities and financial bookkeeping.

*'The bureaucracy starts from the proposal and continues throughout all of the activities. Also, we have to keep a record of our financial accounts (HoD5)'.*

As a result of this high volume of paperwork, participant SET6 pointed out that in her experience, outside investors were reluctant to take on the burdensome bureaucratic workload and have, therefore, in some cases, withdrawn their investment in EPP.

*'Sponsors will not like to invest in our programme as they will have to double their workload due to added red tape' (SET6).*

From the above statements, it is clear that there are time-consuming levels of bureaucracy within the educational program, and this has a consequential effect of weakening the EPP progression (Nassir and Hashim, 2017). Likewise, schools' leadership still treat the community partners as client instead of a member of the team for a mutual mission (Valli et al, 2018). Thus, this in turn creates a barrier amongst the external partners to the school, due to the greater level of bureaucratic requirements that are implemented by the educational system, resulting in greater distance and association with schools (ibid).

### Hindrance 3: Principal's lack of appreciation demotivates special educators

Another challenge, which is identified by numerous special educators, is the general lack of appreciation by school leadership and the management team for the efforts made in special education. SET1 reinforced this very point, as he felt there was an absence of gratitude on the part of the principal towards his special education work in

the school. He believed that this, along with a lack of moral support, is a minor contributing factor as to why many other schools do not yet conduct EPP.

*'The principal did not appreciate our EPP from the start. Just after 2014, he began allowing us to renovate school premises in order to expand EPP in school. I'm sure this lack of appreciation of special educators is one of the main reasons why other schools don't conduct such challenging EPP instead will just remain within their comfort zone of working life' (SET1).*

Similarly, both SET4 and SET5 found a lack of acknowledgement for their work. As they pointed out, one of the ways this manifests itself within the school is that it is highly unusual for special education teachers to be given any education awards for their work compared to mainstream educators, regardless of the success of their programmes.

*'Regardless of how much work we do, there is still a lack of recognition from principals. It's quite unusual for special education teachers to be given any awards for their efforts or positive feedback in spite of our successful EPP because EPP is not classroom based nor is it exam based'(SET4).*

*'Compared to mainstream teachers, it's quite rare for special educators to gain any awards in spite of there being a lot of successful programmes and events which we conduct in school. The way the leadership team evaluate us is unfair' (SET5).*

Furthermore, participant (SET4) believed this is in large part since EPPs are neither exam nor classroom based. There is a danger that this can have a demoralizing effect on special education teachers. This is illustrated perfectly by participant (SET8), from SEIP4 in West of Peninsular Malaysia, who stated that she felt so under-valued in her school that she became disillusioned with her profession and actually considered discontinuing EPP. However, her concern for her students was such that she decided to continue for their sake. All of the above is illustrated by the following quotes.

*Lack of appreciation demotivated me, which made me want to discontinue EPP but, for the sake of the student's future and well-being, I'm continuing to do this for them. (SET8).'*

From the above statements, it can be concluded that this is a lack of appreciation among the schools' leadership and management bodies that influences teacher motivation and improvement to the application of the innovative programme (Boyd et al., 2018). Similarly, leadership and management should ensure they treat and evaluate all teachers with equality, no matter what they are specialised in teaching. That is required to assure and enforce effective teaching practice in school (Firestone, 2014).

#### Hindrance 4: Mainstream colleagues undermining special educators

However, based on the interviews of fifteen educators from the five selected case study schools, it is apparent that the level of respect amongst fellow teachers in mainstream education is far less than that shown to other educators within the school. Participant HoD2 argued that special education teachers, including the Department Head were underestimated or looked down upon by the other mainstream teachers.

*'Special education always seems to be under-estimated by general mainstream education staff.... they probably don't have faith in special needs learners. So, our initiative has very less support from colleagues and school management' (HoD2).*

Participant HoD1 talked about the way mainstream teachers are often in doubt about the special education teacher's job description. This is due to the fact that special educators tend to spend less time teaching in the classroom and more time engaged in outdoor activities. This leads to a negative perception and lack of understanding on the part of mainstream teachers towards special educators.

*'Some mainstream teachers say special education teachers don't teach in the classroom and are therefore not proper teachers as they just carry out activities in the kitchen and/or garden' (HoD1).*

That is to say special educators are seen as not working as hard nor as having the same demands placed upon them compared to mainstream educators who are responsible

for teaching more complex teaching subjects. This very point was illustrated by SET10 and SET4. They both found that a lot of general school activities and events were often given to or pushed upon the special educators.

*'Mainstream teachers always think we are not working hard' (SET10).*

*'Mainstream teachers say that our job is not very complex as we are not always teaching in the classroom' (SET4).*

The logic behind this stems from the fact that special educators do not work to general national examination deadlines, therefore they are often viewed as less capable by some of the mainstream teachers. Added to this, special education teachers are not permitted to relieve mainstream teachers' classes to teach mainstream students, which would include teaching other activities in schools (Ministry of Education, 2014). Therefore, since special educators will fully focus at EPP field settings, thus this leads to negative perspective SET teachers are not doing heavy or exam-based tasks.

The above view also seems to be that because special educators do not hold national examination classes, there is an assumption that they have extra time for other mainstream duties. There is clearly a certain amount of stereotyping towards the role of special educators as opposed to that of their mainstream colleagues. This has the adverse effect of creating a prejudice towards those charged with the responsibility of educating students with special needs. This negativity impacts the ability of special education teachers to efficiently perform their primary role, which is to enhance the quality of life and independence of special needs learners. This is achieved by improving the students' daily life skills which ultimately improves their employability via EPP in the Special Education Integrated Programme in the secondary schools in both West and Southwest states in Peninsular Malaysia. However, such negativity is difficult and acts as a hindrance, preventing the fulfilment of an EPP's full potential. This in turn answered research question 2; What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?

Hindrance 5: Absence of thorough supervision and joined-up thinking amongst educational ministries and between higher educational ministries.

Encouragement from the leadership team alone is not enough to establish EPP in the secondary schools. One of the departments head noted that although teachers are able to follow the instructions to conduct EPP involving non-educational agencies there still remains a question over the apparent absence of supervision and joined-up thinking from and between the Ministry of Education, State Department or District Education Offices. Appropriate leadership capabilities operating laterally within the framework is crucial to building an effective employment programme.

*'The State Department of Education and Ministry of Education put the pressure upon teachers and expect the best outcome. However, they do not commit with schools for these programme' (HoD3).*

Having previously merged, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education in Malaysia have been split into two separate entities since 2015. This means that the Ministry of Higher Education predominately deals with employment preparation and vocational training, whereas the Ministry of Education focused on academics; therefore, creating an absence of joined-up thinking between the two ministries. It may be of limited consequence to mainstream learners, but for special needs learners this exacerbates an already difficult situation. Evidenced as below;

*'Since the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education split, it's had the adverse effect of increasing the workload. There's a lot more paperwork as we now have to seek help from organisations and colleges which fall under the Ministry of Higher Education e.g. community colleges, to learn the skills via training courses' (HoD2).*

Ostensibly, there is no joint programme between individual schools, nor any attempt made to set up inter-school EPPs. Even though teachers attend courses conducted at state or district level under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, they are only encouraged to establish their EPPs within their own schools, rather than pursue a coordinated inter-school programme. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

*'Where is the commitment from within the Ministry of Education? Moe does not know how difficult is to conduct and maintain EPP. Department of Vocational Education and Training doesn't involve special education teachers for training' (HoD4).*

*Even between schools, there is no effort made to share or joint-up thinking to start an employment programme. We teachers attend the meeting under the state department or district department and are only encouraged to conduct the programme in our own school. (SET1)*

The above revealed the findings about the hindrances faced by the special educators, highlighting the absence of quality leadership and management to supervise the implementation of the EPP in the secondary schools. This result ties well with previous studies wherein leaders, teachers, Department Heads, Principals, governmental and non-governmental departments, agencies, specialists, parents and the private sector must operate as part of the multidisciplinary team and work together to form an interlinked support network if an EPP is to operate successfully (Johnson et al., 2003). Similarly, there are well-established and strong relationships between leaders that facilitate joint working and a shared vision to improve outcomes for children and young people in people in United Kingdom (Department for Education and Department of Health and Social Care, 2015). However, there is no formalised agreement as to how leaders in education, health and social care will work together.

#### 4.1.3 Overview

This theme analyses the interview findings of fifteen special educators, linked to observations carried out directly in the field settings, and documents to answer the central question of how EPP is implemented by leadership and management. Several inferences can be gained from this theme. First, the idea of encouraging the special educators to start EPP originated from the State Education Department and Malaysian Blueprint documentation. However, there is a lack of appropriate guidance compared to the mainstream teaching. This results in many conflicts between the mainstream teachers and the special educators, with the mainstream teachers believing they take a bigger initiative in conducting the programmes in schools.

Lack of trust about the students' capabilities leads to this ignorance. All this contributes to the lack of motivation about the efforts special educators are making for the EPPs. Furthermore, their voice has no power to make major decisions for the benefits of learners. Along with the high level of bureaucracy, this causes the system to slow down the movement and partnership activities with non-academic bodies and sponsors. In addition, a lack of understanding about special education needs amongst the school principal and mainstream teachers undermines the special educators' efforts. All of these factors become hindrances to the HoD and special education teachers, who plays a strong and fundamental role in preparing the learners for independent work and life-styles after leaving school.

The benefits of a nuanced EPP is having a partnership with non-academic inter-government bodies. The central aim is to focus on an individual target achievement and the length of time they master this task.

In spite of all this, at the early stage of starting EPP, educators revealed there was a lack in principal support, but the current situation suggests this perception is changing as EPP becomes more successful and is recognised by the tremendous changes that can be seen amongst the learners' performance.

Overall, the implementation of EPP is not yet complete. The quality of EPP can be maintained only with the support of all levels of the Education department, schools' leadership and management teams, work colleagues and colleagues from mainstream education. Thus, this section answered Research Question 1 and 2; 'How is EPP implemented in the secondary school's SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?' and 'What are the hindrances faced by special educators while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) from the perspective of special educators?' Next the research will present and discuss the next theme which emerged in this study.

## 4.2 Theme 2: Academic Background Knowledge and Mastering Vocational Skills

### 4.2.1 Implementation of EPP

- a) The importance of recruiting special educators with an appropriate academic background knowledge
- b) Teaching Approach:
  - i) Use of local accent during lessons
  - ii) Teaching aids
- c) Motivation behind teachers switching their area of specialisation in mainstream education to special education, influencing the approach to teaching on an EPP
- d) The importance of periodically updating a relevant curriculum
- e) Designing own module and teaching environment
- f) A well designed practical task

### 4.2.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: Time constraints exacerbate the problems faced by EPP educators

Hindrances 2: Lack of Vocational Skills Development of EPP Special Educators

### 4.2.3 Overview

#### 4.2.1 Implementation of EPP

In this section, an explanation of how the academic background knowledge and the mastering of vocational skills contribute to the EPP's implementation by harnessing the special needs learners for an independent work life from the selected SEIPs in Malaysia is discussed.

One of the fundamental attributes in enhancing a successful EPP is in improving the academic background, knowledge and skills of the educators. To substantiate this, this section will look to the educators' academic background (refer to Table 3).

a) The importance of recruiting special Educators with an appropriate academic background knowledge

Amongst the five Heads of Departments, three are from mainstream education: Degree in Mathematics with 3-day Special Education course (HoD1), Degree in Malay with 3-day Special Education course (HoD2) and a Bachelor in Life Skills with 3-day Special Education course (HoD5). HoD2 which was recruited from the mainstream education background with only 3-day special education course, then later undertook a Master's in Special Education. Comparatively, out of ten special education teachers, half-originated in mainstream education. Some of their background include: Degree in History with 1-week special education course (SET2), Degree in Household Management with 3-day Special Education course (SET3), Degree in Accounting with 1 week Special Education Course (SET5), Degree in Malay with 2-week special education course (SET7) and Degree in Linguistics with MA Early childhood (SET8). Before entering special education, both Department Heads and special education teachers had between four and thirteen years in mainstream education collectively. Both SET5 and SET6 who are from non-education or teaching background were recruited directly to special education. However special education teacher (SET6) had a degree in business administration and, although that was not related to education, she later obtained a diploma in Special Education.

While interviewing the educators (Head of Department and Special Education Teachers) the researcher in this study found that as a minimum requirement to teach

special education, apart from a degree in other fields, they had only received basic special education courses lasting three days, one week and two weeks respectively (refer Table 1). This begs the following question: is this an adequate preparation or training for the task? Having established the academic background knowledge of the educators, one of the SET6 proceeded to express her first impressions of working in special education. She was shocked to find that the level of learning was substandard.

*'I have a non-educational background academically. I did a one-year diploma in Special Education. Initially, I was shocked to see that the level at which secondary school student's special needs learners were at was below that of ordinary primary school standard (SET6).'*

This surprising reaction from participant SET6 prompted further investigation into the experiences/first impressions of the other educators, who are also from mainstream education. Although participant HoD1 had five years working experience in mainstream education before becoming involved in special education, he understood that the mental age of special education learners was below that of their physical age. He then needed to find out for himself about how best to approach teaching these pupils. The following is evidence of how participant HoD1 felt when he initially joined special education:

*'From the courses I attended, I understood their mental age was not the same as their physical age. I then set about exploring the characteristics of special needs learners by reading books on how to teach them (HoD1).'*

What is quite telling from participant HoD1's account of his initial experiences of teaching special needs learners was there was a complete absence of any significant foundation requirement of adequate academic background knowledge for the role he was entrusted to perform. HoD2 expressed how difficult he found the transition from mainstream education to special education:

*'Initially, I found it difficult to simplify my teaching method to fit their level of understanding as my academic background is rooted in mainstream subjects. However, after a few years of working in special education, and having attained a Master's in Special Education, I gained a much better understanding of the field (HoD2).'*

Research by Williams, Billingsley and Banks (2018) reported that a lack of special education background amongst the teacher who were recruited into the special education field from a different area of specialisation caused them to be threatened and physically attacked more than any other teachers due to a lack of awareness of how to deal with special needs learners. Similarly, in this study, another Department's Head from SEIP5 recalled his experience. After thirteen years of teaching Life Skills in mainstream education, he enrolled on a three-day special education introductory course before starting teaching in this special education field. He was shocked by the disruptive behaviour of some of the special needs learners:

*'Whilst I was in the staff room, I heard a disturbance coming from the next classroom where a cooking class was taking place. I rushed to the scene and was shocked when I saw one of the special needs learners threatening a male teacher with a knife. However, I looked upon this kind of behaviour as a challenge (HoD5).'*

Reflecting upon all of the above evidence, the period between three days and two weeks introductory course is an inadequate amount of time to gain sufficient academic background knowledge to cope with the switch from mainstream education to special education. As we can see, participant HoD5, with nineteen years' experience, entered special education having only attended a three-day course compared to newcomer SET7 with six years special education experience who attended a week-long course, thus illustrating that the traditional recruiting methods of attending short courses continues to this day. According to participant, HoD4, there needs to be a fresh approach to replenishing the teaching stock. This would be preferable to the continued random approach of recruiting teachers without any prior academic background and knowledge of special education. She added that schools should not be places for teachers to learn new skills, rather they are meant to be places where teachers pass on their already acquired skills and knowledge. It should be the role of short courses to upgrade already existing academic background, knowledge and skills rather than act as a foundation for a broad field of expertise. Her argument is evidenced by the following quotes:

*'I notice there still exists the practice of recruiting new educators from different academic fields/backgrounds. This needs to stop as the role of the special*

*education teacher is meant to be that of contributing knowledge rather than what appears to be happening, which is more a case of learning HOW to educate special needs learners. We should be expecting fresh graduates to have new ideas, not newcomers who are just starting to learn about special education (HoD4).'*

It is apparent through the study that one of the factors in a teacher's ability to teach in special education seems to be the relevance of their academic background knowledge and how it relates to this field. Where there is a strong foundation of special education in their academic background, the educators are likely to be more aware of how best to deliver their knowledge. Spooner (2005), cited in Mamlin (2012), highlighted the crucial importance a carefully thought-out selection process when recruiting candidates who wish to teach in special education. A strong, subject-specific academic background is seen as an essential preparation for entering the world of special needs education with its unique characteristics. This should provide a deeper understanding of how special needs students learn. In the next section, in order to establish whether or not there is a significant difference between the teaching techniques employed by educators from a special education academic background and those recruited from a mainstream educational background, the researcher observed teachers from both of these backgrounds.

b) Teaching Approach: (i) Use of local accent during lessons

In this section, an observational method is used to identify in what way the participant special education teachers handled the special needs learners during the simulation learning session. The researcher was also checking if there was any difference identified between the teachers with full special education background knowledge compared to the special education teacher originally from the mainstream. One identified example is how the teacher with special education background use a standard national language compare to other teachers who did not modify their accent when delivering lessons to the learners. SET1 used standard national language and assisted students by using simple vocabulary and speaking clearly.

*'SET1 speaks clearly and fluently in Malay language.'*

*(Excerpts from field notes: SET1's EPP lesson)*

*'Hari ini kita akan bersama-sama bergotong-royong mengemas dan membersihkan sekitar ruang ini.'*

*Translate: Today we will work together to clean and pack this site.'*

*(Excerpts from video recording: SET1's EPP lesson)*

*'All the students understand the instruction. This includes both high-functioning, moderate and low functioning learners. All students able to understand and follow the lesson'*

*(Excerpt from Researcher's reflection)*

In contrast, SET5 was not aware that her local dialect was confusing the learners who were of other ethnicities.

*'SET5 speaks quickly using 'Malaysian Eastern Accent' during her lesson. She spoke using her local accent which difficult for the learners to understand'*

*(Excerpts from field notes: SET5's EPP lesson)*

*'Mei bah ini bkul ...'*

*Translate: Can you please hand me the basket?'*

*(Excerpts from field notes; SET5's lesson)*

*'Learners are multiracial; Malay, Chinese and Indian. Not all learners are able to understand the instructions they were given to carry out. E.g. There was no reaction to the given instruction from one of the Chinese learners, who did not respond when the teacher asked a question. (Learner's face looks confused).'*

*Then later the other Malay learner/colleagues explain the teacher's instructions to the Chinese learner which was met with a more positive response.'*

*(Excerpt from Researcher's reflection)*

The researcher found that amongst five schools those teachers whom recruited from mainstream background had a slightly different way of performing in the EPP settings. From the above content, it is clear the special education teachers who are from the same background understand the nature of the character of the special needs learner and understand how the learners learn and how to make them understand better. For instance, participant SET1 applied language academically, without causing distraction by using their own accent, which might confuse the learners. However, SET5, who was recruited 6 years ago directly into special education, was unaware of the effect her accent had on the special needs learners and their ability to fully comprehend her teaching. This was because SET5 did not modify her local dialect and fail to take account the fact that there were learners who were not able to understand. Her strong accent left some learners confused. This also proves that the 3 days course is inadequate to master all aspects of special education. In addition, those educated with the mainstream curriculum will sometimes apply what they have learnt, such as higher-level thinking skills, which only fit for the mainstream education, not into the special education. In addition, those teachers from the mainstream curriculum background tend to apply what they have learned to special education without any modification or adaption. This may put the learners in stressful situations until the teacher becomes aware of the issue. Similarly, teachers, regardless of background, are rarely trained to use local national languages efficiently in the classroom (Mahboob and Lin, 2018).

b) Teaching approach: (ii) Teaching aids

To validate these findings, the researcher reviewed and crosschecked with the relevant teaching materials from other schools before making assumptions. Picture diagrams used with clear instructions. SET9 with B. Ed (Special Education), Dip. English from SEIP5 avoided vague instructions. The sentences were printed, and the information

diagram was laminated. SET9 was well prepared with appropriate materials before delivering his lesson. Below is the picture diagram used by participant SET9 during his lesson.



Figure 5: Picture diagram representing the instructions to prepare a plant nutrition, material used by participant SET9

*‘By providing the picture diagram along with clear instructions, this enables the learners to understand the instructions and shows the actions needed to solve this given task with minimum support.’*

*(Excerpt from Researcher’s reflection)*

Contrasting this situation, was the observation with participant SET3, who holds a BA in Household Management and attended a three days Special Education courses. She did not write the recipe used for the lesson neatly enough on the whiteboard. The following photograph back up this statement.

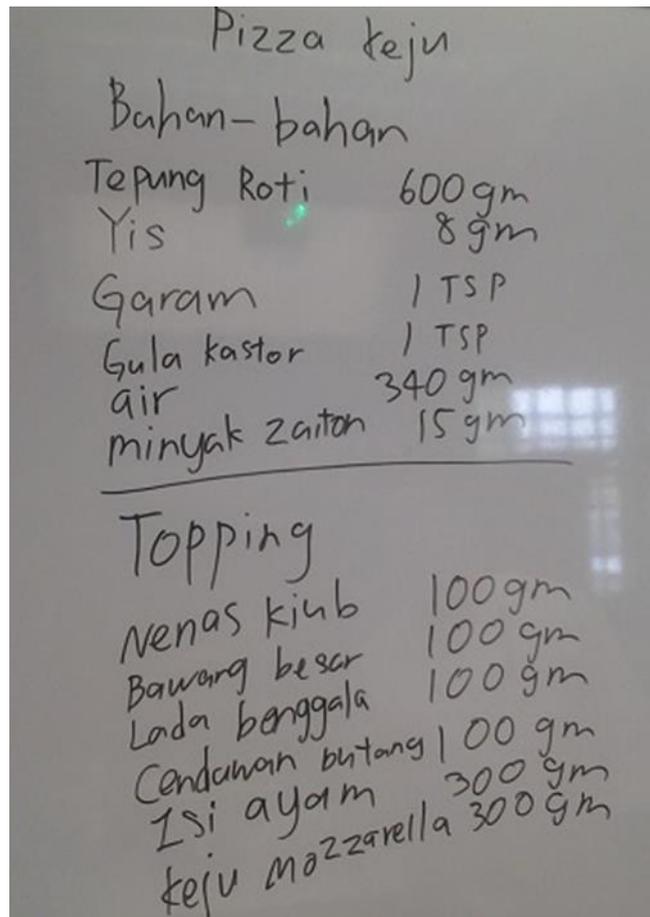


Figure 6: Written recipe used in the EPP teaching lesson, photograph taken from the lesson directly by the researcher

*'The recipe was not written out neatly on the whiteboard. Even though the high function learners were able to read and understand the recipe, this lack of clarity made it difficult for some of the other special needs learners to follow the instructions.'*

*(Excerpts from Researcher's field notes)*

Based on the evidence above the following is the researcher's reflection.

*'Participant SET3 lacked awareness of how best to deliver clear instructions while delivering her lesson. This may have had the adverse effect of causing the learners to copy the untidy writing style and perceiving the displayed writing style as the norm.'*

*(Excerpts from researcher's reflection)*

In order to establish whether or not there is a significant difference between the teaching approach employed by educators from a special education academic background and those recruited from a mainstream educational background, the researcher observed teachers from both of these backgrounds. To conclude this section, recruiting a special education teacher without their being trained to the standard of a specialist only serves to exacerbates the demands placed upon special needs learners, particularly regarding their ability to fully comprehend what they are being taught, which, consequently, impacts their capacity to complete their tasks. The lack of awareness about the importance of the academic background to the teaching approach, including the delivery of poor or incorrect concepts, and preparing special education learners for an independent work life is notable. Stronge (2018) claimed that teachers are at their most effective when teaching within the sphere of their own certification. Conversely, those who teach outside of their own field are less effective. Furthermore, the standard of teaching carried out by those who trained within a single specialisation was considerably better in comparison to the standard of those teachers who did not have a single specialised area of expertise. Cooper and Alvarado (2006) revealed that insufficient competence levels of graduates or recruited teachers from different academic backgrounds are contributing factors in reducing students' level of achievement. This finding may fill in the gap left by previous literature by contributing to a change in the policy of recruiting teachers from mainstream education to special education after attending a short special education course (Brownell et al., 2018). This in turn contributes to answering Research Question 1: How is EPP implemented in the secondary school's SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?

c) Motivation behind teachers switching their area of specialisation in mainstream education to special education, influencing the approach to teaching on an EPP

The researcher also sought to determine the motivation behind mainstream teachers entering special education. Some of them explained that having a family member with special needs directed them to study this field.

*'I have a child with special needs so that has motivated me to explore this field (SET3)'*

*'The reason is I have son with autism (SET2)'*

*'I have a special needs child therefore I intend to focus on vocational skills for his benefit (HoD2)'*

*'I could not find a job so I applied to be a teacher and did a diploma in teaching which then lead me to being given a teaching post in special education. I now have 8 years in this field (SET6).'*

*'I completed a degree of education (Accountancy) but there was no vacancy for an Accountancy teacher at that moment therefore I was jobless with no placement for about a year. It was the same for all undergraduates from my year. We then set about fighting for the right to be posted to a school. As a result, I was offered a post of teaching in special education (SET5).'*

Although the above quotes are taken from people who are now successfully established as special education teachers, the problem with this haphazard method of filling the posts of special educators is two-fold: differences between mainstream education and special education or between special education in one school and another school. Firstly, it is taking too long for these educators to become fully rounded special education teachers, which has a detrimental effect on the employment prospects of special needs learners. Secondly, there appears to be a lack of consistency in the implementation of EPP or programmes which are designed to help special needs learners transition from school to work. This proves to be particularly problematic when a special education teacher transfers from one school to another and is then replaced by another teacher, evidenced by this quote:

*'I established mango juice production in my previous school but once I transferred to my current school, no one replaced that particular programme. However, I have started the same production in this current school, which is all very well, but what this entails is me having to start completely from scratch in terms of trying to secure funding (HoD2).'*

As participant HoD2 describes, when he was transferred to a different school his successor, who was a newcomer to special education, was unable to continue the programme he had instigated due to a lack of relevant interest, knowledge and skills. This lack of continuity has proven to be a very frustrating experience for HoD2. The disruptive nature of having EPP programmes ended when the teacher changes schools has created a sense insecurity amongst learners too. In addition, when a new teacher discontinues the previous teachers' EPP, this serves to undermine the efforts of the other teacher, thus producing a feeling of lack of recognition that is quite disheartening.

As we can see, the main motive behind these particular educators entering the field of special education is inextricably linked to the fact that they have special needs children, rather than a broader sense of commitment to the teaching profession. This also represents their willingness to forgo their specialisation in mainstream subjects. Boe (2006) emphasised that even though there is no ostensible reduction in terms of the quantity of teachers, it is apparently a lack of producing either mainstream teachers or special education teachers with the crucial background of a subject specialism which determines their level of effectiveness and their overall contribution to the subject. From the above first method stated, which is about filling the posts of special educators, there is a need for appropriate time to acclimate completely for a teacher who came from a different academic background into the special education field. Therefore, the current methods of transformation of teachers from mainstream education backgrounds to special education is not efficient yet. There is a lack of consistency in the implementation of the career experience programmes, which is indicative of the lack of quality of the programme. This finding serves to answer the question of why these programmes are not yet fully established comprehensively (Abdullah et al., 2015). This answered the 'Research Question 1. The motive behind teachers switching their area of specialisation influenced the quality of EPP implementation.

d) The importance of periodically updating a relevant curriculum

The existing curriculum, which was designed in the 1988s, is no longer appropriate twenty-nine years later, with significant changes in both the technology available and

the number of students enrolled in such a programme. An experienced teacher of 27 years preferred to continue to deliver traditional subjects, long after the subject matter had become outdated. Thus, graduates of the programme were left with a redundant skillset and little chance of gaining meaningful employment and, inevitably, a loss of confidence in the process from parents and other stakeholders. Educators must continually enhance their programmes to ensure they remain relevant and must develop their own knowledge and skills in parallel. This is illustrated below:

*'I feel ashamed to discuss our syllabus, which was designed in the 1988s as a Special Education Programme for small groups of students – say, ten to fifteen in a class – compared to today, where the reality is we see over 100 students enrolled on the programme at any time. (HoD4)'*

*'I prefer to teach traditional skills from the syllabus, such as a manual laundry service; however, I found that on completion of the course, the skills I had taught were no longer relevant – in this case because technology had made the service redundant, and so drastically reduced the likelihood of one of my students gaining employment in this field. (HoD5)'*

As a result of this, not every secondary school is involved in EPPs, as it is not fully established as part of the curriculum. Instead, most SEIPs deliver basic life-skills (such as sewing, gardening, cooking) with the aim of enabling fundamental independent daily routines.

The basic principles of learning design for special needs students include a mandate to modify a given curriculum to accommodate the learners' individual circumstances and requirements, which is summarised by supporting quotes as below:

*'Any curriculum for special needs learners should be modified to reflect their specific needs and interests. (SET4, HoD4 and HoD5)'*

The Ministry of Education encourages secondary schools to begin EPPs, however, the implementation of EPPs is not mandatory, and many schools do not do so because

the curriculum is not sufficiently clear. This is illustrated by a special education teacher:

*'Some teachers think that because EPPs are not an established part of the syllabus or curriculum, they consider it not as important as other programmes which are. This has led to a culture and belief that it is not to be taken seriously and also that it is not their core business. (SET10)'*

*'Some teachers describe EPP as a waste of time. They also tease me about why I would look to increase my workload especially considering there is no guidance or module provided (SET5)'*

From the above statements, there is a direct link between the outmoded nature of the basic transitional school to work programme and its inability to meet the demand of the current labour market. These only serves to undermine the standard of the special education system. Consequently, this also affects the special education teachers' professional development. This begs the question: Why has the curriculum not been updated for twenty-nine years (Ministry of Education, 2017). In contrast, the mainstream curriculum was periodically revised, on average between every five to ten years, which ensures that mainstream education learners are better equipped for the job market than their special education counterparts. One could speculate that this is due to lack of awareness of the potential of special education on the part of the education system. According to Tomlinson (2014) a quality curriculum is interpreted as one which meets the current needs and requirements of the learners and labour market, which clearly expresses the goals of both teaching and learning. This is seen as a practical step towards effectively fully engaging learners. Similarly Hale and Fisher (2013) revealed that revitalising the curriculum was an efficient way to transform learners' individual needs and to amalgamate their performance to the demands and requirements of the labour market. This in turn answered Research Question 1.

#### e) Designing own module and teaching environment

In contrast to HoD2's case regarding lack of standardised documentation to facilitate handover has coincided with similar results and experiences of other teachers, participant SET1 has begun to take the initiative by designing his own module for a Quail Incubation programme. He also documented each phase of this EPP precisely. With the participant SET1's background founded solely in the realm of special education, he has used his own initiative by taking the pre-emptive step of trying to secure continuity of the programme by sharing his module with one other school. After testing this particular module, the school found that identical results had been obtained (e.g. the weight of the quail and the quality of the quail's egg). This was significant in participant SET1's attempt at standardising the documentation. This is illustrated by the following quote;

*'I maybe transferring to a vocational school next year. I hope that my programme will be continued by the replacement teacher, as my self-prepared module has already been tested with one other school in particular, which has obtained a similar result as I designed. I have also shared my module with other SEIP secondary schools (SET1).'*

In this study, the researcher also reviewed the module and other relevant documents and found that the design of the module was clearly presented and easily adaptable for all levels of learners. Participant SET1's module consists of all stages of EPP project as below; Introduction to the EPP project, training and guidance provided by partnership members (e.g. NGOs, Veterinary, FAMA), practical training, commencing the project and assessment. Each of the stages as seen in figure 7. Similarly, Hale and Fisher (2013) highlighted the competence of revitalising instructional practices by providing an efficient frameworks to enhance for student learning and performances.

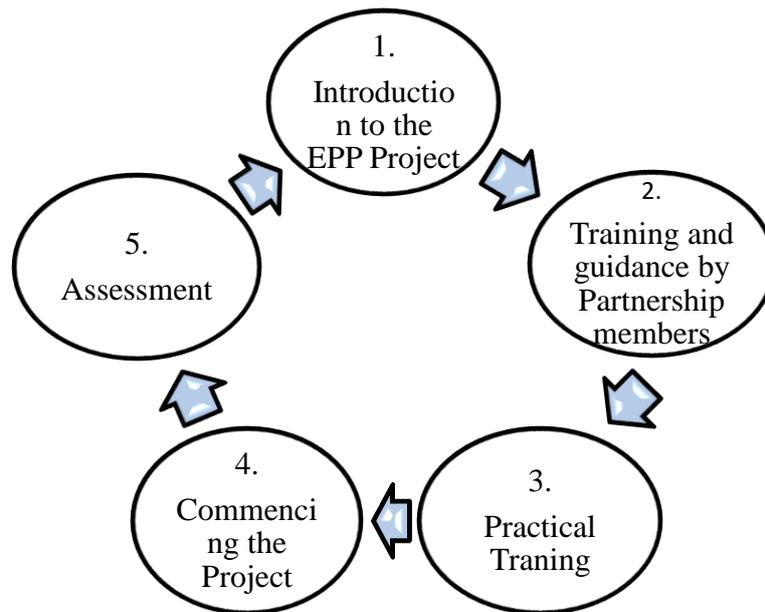


Figure 7: Process of all stages in EPP project

f) A well designed practical task

From the researcher’s observations of this particular EPP in SEIP1, it was found that the special needs learners were well trained. Pantic and Wubbels (2010) highlighted the link between a fundamental understanding of structures of education and the effectiveness of programmes of education, all which were enhanced by an extensive background knowledge of specific subjects within the wider curriculum. The following are the field notes and pictures representing the task of educating the learners using the designed module in EPP parameters. It also shows how the practical task had been simplified separately to ease the learners learning process.



Figure 8: Laminated card representing the task in each station posted on the quail cage

*‘The first laminated card illustrated all of the equipment needed for the task. The second card, third card onwards showed the step-by-step guide to the particular task and activities of quail incubation in chronological order’.*

*(Excerpts from the field notes, SEIP1)*

The learners followed the guidance displays using an illustrated picture printed on laminated cards, which detailed each of the required steps. Cards were fixed to the front of each individual section with the essential to the task to be carried out. As the learners tend to forget complex instructions, the reminder card method helps them to retain information regarding these set tasks. The special needs learners then just followed the illustrated instructions. Each of the cards corresponded to the particular station. Once these particular tasks or activities have been completed, the learners used a checklist to tick off each of their completed tasks.

<b>No</b>	<b>Membersihkan bekas makanan sehingga bersih.</b>	<b>/</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Masukkan dedak baru mengikut bilangan skop yang telah ditetapkan.</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Membuangkan dedak lama.</b>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Membersihkan tempat air sehingga bersih.</b>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Isikan air dan titiskan ubat titis .</b>	

Figure 9: Checklist prepared for each simplified task, excerpts from the field notes

*‘As each task is completed, the team members are responsible for ticking off each corresponding box of the checklist.’*

*(Excerpts from the field notes, SEIP1)*

*‘From the above field notes, it was discovered that these methods of simplifying the tasks, if carried out on a daily basis, enable the learners to become acclimatised to a similar setting in a real world working environment. The*

*learners were also actively encouraged to work as a team, which helped to establish a sense of shared responsibility by engaging with and helping each other.'*

*(Excerpts from the researcher's reflection)*

Overall, this EPP is simulating a real work life environment, established on the school ground with appropriate guidance. In terms of theory, what is needed is the preparation of modules and a teaching environment and modelling techniques to provide a way of helping learners learn through observing other individuals, similar to Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977). The overall EPP settings helps to discipline the individual and make them aware that they are learning these skills for their future independent life. The teacher will demonstrate how to complete the task. Then, the learner should be able to copy and reproduce the same actions. By referring to the picture cards, the learner is helped to remember what they have to do. This way enables the learners to learn through observing. This way also forms a self-help group

Subsequently, the outcome from this teaching approach is that, in 2014, three former students have started businesses (quail incubation) with parental support, alongside continued support in an advisory role from their former teacher. All this indicating SET1's module and teaching method are transferable and flexible to learning by any level of group of learners. These findings are similar to those reported by Lee et al (2016) that the learners who completed career education and training from school had a brighter opportunity to be hired. This illustrated by the following quotes.

*'In 2014, three of my former learner had started this project once they completed school education with the parent's support (HoD1)'*

Triangulation of all of the sources: interviews, observations, document reviews and theories concluded that implementation of EPPs in SEIP1 is well established and prove that it can be replicated elsewhere. In this context of study, it is found that one particular teacher, who has only a special education background, was deemed to be better equipped to implement and develop EPP than non-specialists. As he has a stronger foundation in special education, he has a greater understanding of students'

needs, which has a positive impact on their outcomes. SET's priority is for the welfare of his learner regardless of how high functioning or low functioning they are, unlike some SETs, whose priority was focused more on the business model than the learning experience. Having an enthusiastic educator who has a passion for teaching will help to enhance the support in the transitional planning process in the secondary school (Hatfield et al., 2018). Similarly, designing modules relevant to the subject being taught, and the role of the educator, was fundamental to a positive learning experience (Li et al., 2016). Students had higher levels of self-determination and greater participation resulting from the transition planning service delivery model (Flowers et al., 2017).

Following participant SET1's success, participant SET2 from the same SEIP1s school admitted the difficulties with the approach needed to be overcome in order to deliver effective EPP programme for special needs learners. Currently with some guideline based on SET1's module, participant SET2 has taken steps to create a new module for his EPP project.

*'Handling students and teaching in the mainstream education is far different compare to teaching in the special education. I admit that a one-week courses is insufficient to switch to different area of specialisation. However, I learnt a lot from my colleagues SET1. SET1 is currently guiding me to create a new module for my EPP project (SET2, 1- week special education course)'*

In contrast to the above finding, there is no one module can applicable to all learners, regardless of their strength and capabilities. However, the educator may use the existing modules as guidelines which can be modified to meet the learners' needs and requirements (Majid and Razzak, 2015). Likewise, SET3 has exposed that she is utilising the mainstream vocational syllabus from the mainstream curriculum to conduct her EPP bakery for the special needs learners.

*'Currently, I am referring to the mainstream vocational syllabus from mainstream curriculum. There is no module provided for bakery (SET3, 3-days special education course)'*

As we can see each SEIP is establishing an EPP by using their own module, creating a new module by referring to others module as guidance, or by just using mainstream vocational module. Teachers with academic background knowledge were showed to be more creative in terms of methods and approach used in EPP, whereas those teachers who approached special needs learners in the same manner as their mainstream students had a negative influence on learner performance. These results appear to be similar to the research performed by Lokman et al. (2009), which asserted that although the syllabi are formulated according to the National Education Philosophy, the teaching techniques used in the mainstream are not suited to the special needs learners. Therefore, academic background knowledge from either mainstream or special education background will influence the way they prepare their teaching environment. This offers an insight into EPP implementation and suggests that this process is not yet sufficiently well executed. This all contributes to a clearer a sense of how best the schools are enhancing the quality of their teaching approach which answered the ‘Research Question 1: How best EPP was implemented in the SEIPs secondary school?’

#### 4.2.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: Time constraint exacerbate the problems faced by EPP educators

Another factor that appears to be having a detrimental effect on the successful implementation of EPP, in terms of meeting the particular career interests and ambitions of each individual learner, is time limitations. A perfect illustration of this problem is that there are on average only six periods of EPP per week, each period lasting thirty minutes. This is clearly an insufficient amount of time to successfully execute a programme, especially considering the hands-on nature of EPPs, and considering the particularly difficult tasks involved in training the special needs learners.

Since 2015, SEIP2 has extended the timetable for to 20 periods a week, with the goal of implementing their more EPPs effectively. However, this has raised criticism among other colleagues because the special education teachers do not teach in the classroom. Criticism is raised by mainstream teachers in the school due to their lack

of knowledge about the role of a special education teacher. When conducting EPP, most of their time was spent in the real work life simulation setting. However, this seems to be looked on by the mainstream teachers as not teaching in the classroom. This also acts as a barrier to be ambitious in their role in special education. This partially answers research question 2; What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?

In another instance, SET2 cannot rely upon his special needs learner to care for the fish as their parents are reluctant to allow their children to attend school outside of normal school hours.

*'I need to feed the fish myself because I can't depend on my students during school holidays, as their parents won't allow them to come to school outside of term time. This means I can't plan any family activities'. (SET2)*

In the instance of SET7's situation, SEIP4 operates an EPP in the form of a non-profit café-based business where SET7 acts as a liaison between the collaborating funder from the Department of Labour and special needs learners. The Cafe is situated outside of the school grounds. Due to the nature of the café business, the café's supervisor has direct involvement in the supervision and training of special needs learners. SET7's responsibility involves having meetings with the supervisor, which sometimes involves him sharing confidential information about the special needs learners. This is an important part of SET7's role because the café's supervisor will have direct contact with the learners. That said, SET7 has to be mindful of possible misinterpretation of his description of the learners' characteristics, as he does not want to prejudice the view of the supervisor. He also acts as a mediator between students and the supervisor, as well as resolving any problems that may occur from time to time during the EPP progression. All of these very important aspects of SET7's responsibilities in conducting his EPP result in time constraints. As SET7 mentioned, he has many other responsibilities within his school, which means he is unable to fully focus on EPP activities. This is to say he is not allowed to leave the school premises during school hours except when he transports his

special needs learners to the café. This is because his EPP is not clearly formed as part of the curriculum. Therefore, many of his EPP monitoring activities take place outside of school time, which results in him using up his own personal time.

*'My restaurant-based programme operates between 8am to 11pm. There are 2 shifts per day. The first shift runs from 8am to 3pm and the second from 3pm to 11pm. I don't have any time for myself. I'm not even paid any extra allowance, nor do I get any recognition from the principal because the curriculum is still not clear.'* (SET7)

In the case of SET5 and SET6 from SEIP3 they illustrate another aspect of these time constraints that manifest when carrying out EPPs. Their experience of this is centred more on the special needs learners' parents, as they too are reluctant to allow their children to attend school during school holidays. This means there is more reliance on the teachers for production and marketing of their produce (mushrooms and chillies).

*'There's particular pressure on me, especially after school hours and during school holidays, as some parents won't allow their children to spend these times in school. I have no choice but to go back to school to maintain the quality of the produce.'* (SET5 and SET6)

From the participants' interviews, most teachers revealed that they had insufficient time to manage the programme and were without appropriate levels of support from schools and parents, resulting in teachers often finding themselves working overtime without pay or any form recognition from principals. Understandably, this can result in increased stress levels amongst teachers, which can have a negative impact on their personal and family lives. By contrast, Wong et al. (2017) specified that increased stress levels amongst teachers did not undermine their personal lives. However, the performance of learners was negatively impacted by those teachers who were experiencing high levels of stress.

Subsequently, the problem of leaving low functioning learners behind is made worse by the insufficient amount of time that is allocated for the special education teachers to carry out EPP. This appears to be a recurring theme of EPP implementation. On

average, only 180 minutes are allocated to EPP each week. This is clearly an insufficient amount of time to successfully execute this programme, especially considering the hands-on nature of EPP. Therefore, teachers are unable to allocate additional time to the learners with low function, who require more one-to-one attention than the high functioning learners.

*'Only six period blocks of time lasting 30 minutes are allocated for this EPP which means sometimes I have to complete the packaging even after the EPP session finished otherwise the produce will be spoilt. I agree we can't focus on all of the students at the same time (SET3, SEIP2)'*

Another teacher claimed that only three periods were allocated for his EPP, resulting him being unable to complete the tasks involved. This in turn forced him to spend his time after school hours, which including school holidays, carrying out the EPP.

*Only 90 minutes in a week (divided into 2+1 sessions) allocated for my subject (livestock fish) in my school. After this, I have to rush for other subject lessons. I sacrifice a lot of time even after school hours including school holidays to feed my fish (SET2)*

What was identified during the observation session at SEIP3 was that not all of the learners were fully engaged. Low functioning learners in particular were left behind. This was in spite of the fact that the teacher in question had conducted the class creatively. With insufficient time dedicated to the overall demanding tasks, this then lead to the level of engagement being poor. Added to this, the unfinished tasks are then forced onto the following group of learners or staff to continue to carry out what was left by the previous class. The objective of delivering EPP are not fully achieved. This is illustrated by the following field notes:

*'However, due to time constraint of the bakery class the learners were unable to wait until the packaging step was completed. The remaining task then continued by the next class of learners, teachers and teacher's assistant. Not all the learners took advantage of the session, with some learners of lower function just sitting in a corner and watching the session and not participating.'*

*Those lower function learners were instead given less demanding task such as a colouring task in the worksheet.'*

*(Excerpts from the field notes at SET3, SEIP2)'*

*'The learners were unable to package the produce, as there was simply not enough time to do so. The following class of learners, teachers as well as the teacher's assistant continued the remainder of the tasks. It was also noted that not all of the learners were involved in the session. Low function learners merely sat in the corner and watched the session whilst colouring from the worksheet that had been given.'*

*(Excerpts from the researcher's reflection at SET3, SEIP2)*

From the above statements, it was noticed that learners were both from low function and high function levels. On the one hand, high functions learners were able to carry out their set tasks independently and with minimal support. In contrast, the low functions learners were often left behind even though they were clearly interested in taking part in various tasks, including packaging products for sale. This is due in large part to the teacher being preoccupied with the marketing side of this particular EPP. Although this means that this programme is successfully established as a business, this has come at a cost i.e. the low function learners lagging behind the high function learners. The researcher has noticed that there is an apparent shift in priorities from educating all of the learners, to EPP becoming a successful business model due to time constraint. SEND Code of Practice (2015) stated that all special educators should be responsible for every special needs learners' participation and engagement in every lesson.

Based on the document reviews from SEIP3, the school has a prepared programme module, an annual report and documented photographic evidence of programme activities along with an achievement record of former students and their employability success rate. It was found that high function EPP students were successful in finding employment. Although the school remains in touch with leavers, there is no required commitment on the part of the school to follow-up on a former learner's progress. However, this does raise concerns when it is revealed that none of the low function EPP learners has found employment.

Fundamentally special needs learner may require additional length of time to master any instructions. The standard curriculum in school consist of limited length of time allocated for vocational skills subjects. Lack of time may result, insufficient result at the end of the lesson. What can be concluded in this section is insufficient time acts as a hindrance to the special educators to locate the best approach in preparing learners from all levels for employment. The specified standard curriculum has a limited length of time which allocated for vocational subjects, this is insufficient to practice social and employment skills (Bouck, 2014). In spite of a ten-year gap between two research papers, focusing on the issue of time constraints faced by learners, Johnson et al., (2003) and Alias (2013) concluded that special needs learners showed both adaptability and the capacity to excel at skill mastering in order to enhance their employability given sufficient time. Moreover, lack of available time is a very palpable problem regarding the school's improvement project and adversely affects the teacher's ability to meet the needs of the learners (Pocklington and Weindling, 2018). This in turn answered Research Question 2.

#### Hindrance 2: Lack of Vocational Skills Development of EPP Special Educators

A weakness found in educators who are recruited from a mainstream academic background is their lack of adequate knowledge of special education. Likewise, most special educators are lacking in vocational skills. In spite of the fact that they had no prior knowledge of vocational skills, both SET1 and SET7 were encouraged to conduct EPP in their secondary school. Even though SET1 did have a special education academic background, he found that EPP was a difficult task to undertake without the adequate vocational skills. Similarly, SET7 also found EPP to be a daunting task, as he had been recruited after receiving only 2 weeks basic special education preparation without any vocational training. These statements are supported by the following quotes:

*'I was told to start EPP but I was not provided with any comprehensive curriculum to conduct the EPP. (SET1)'*

*'When I started the programme, I did not know how to conduct the EPP as I didn't major in any vocational related field. How do I teach my special needs learners systematically? (SET7)'*

As with SET1 and SET7, who both acknowledged their lack of vocational skills, SET6 also claimed that there was no guidance nor any specific curriculum to direct them as they began EPP. Additionally, SET7 specified that there was a complete lack of training regarding how best to deliver EPP. This was particularly problematic when it came to adapting existing knowledge gained from both his mainstream educational background, as well as his 2 weeks special education preparation. This preparation is indispensable training which is essential for an educator to deliver lessons at the necessary level, one at which special needs learners can understand. All of these points are highlighted in the quotes below:

*'There was no guideline on how to begin EPP in the secondary school (SET6)'*

*'I don't know how to implement EPP and teach at the level special needs learners understand (SET7)'*

SET7 added that when he sought to attend vocational skills-related courses, he found that the school had no allocated budget for EPP. Furthermore, SET6 attended vocational developmental courses and found it impossible to access funding from the school. Therefore, he was forced to bear the cost of his own training.

*'I found some skills-related courses and attended on my own but my school didn't support me financially (SET7)'*

*'I attended some short courses but was unable to claim back the cost as EPP had no budget (SET6)'*

As EPP is not a compulsory component of the special education curriculum, this acts as a hindrance to special educators' ability to access adequate vocational skill courses, which are required in order to deliver a successful EPP. In instances where the educator chose not to self-fund their training, this had the unfortunate consequence of undermining the outcomes for learners, as the teachers in question

were not adequately equipped to deliver EPP at its full potential. This only goes to show how significant a factor the teacher's dedication is. As a result of lack of funding as well as the scarcity of facilities, those teachers who are not dedicated fail to deliver creative ideas to students (Razali, 2018).

Following on from this, the local education authorities as well as the state and district education departments offered encouragement in conducting this programme. There is still no appropriate guidance nor any allocation of funding for special educators to attend relevant vocational courses for the purpose of the EPP (Nassir and Hashim, 2017). Improvements are needed in the amount of support and training of educators, in order to reinforce their ability to efficiently deliver knowledge, skills and values for special needs enhancement programmes (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013, p. E-25). The Vocational and Training Division regularly provides courses for the mainstream education staff. Nevertheless, this department still does not yet offer any developmental courses for special education teachers. This is illustrated by the following:

*'We have a Vocational and Training Division in each state who offer regular vocational courses for mainstream education teachers, but they do not show any action in providing vocational courses to special educators (SET8)'*

Regardless of the support of education authorities for providing courses for special educators, there continues to be a lack of financial backing for these teachers in attending such courses. Therefore, the effectiveness of the programmes often relies on the initiative and dedication of the educators themselves.

With the limitations that are faced by the EPP educators, the researcher set about investigating the steps that were taken in delivering a successful EPP.

According to HoD2, teachers are still heavily dependent on specialist outside help to guide them in implementing the EPP. Therefore, the general success of the EPP is chiefly due to the collaborator's involvement in giving guidance, facilities and providing other resources. Likewise, HoD1 claimed that his school obtained the necessary guidelines and basic vocational certificate graded courses from non-educational governmental departments. Further, Level 1 and Level 2 Skills Certificates provide for the special needs learners at secondary schools. This is illustrated from the following quotes:

*'We still depend on the particular vocational specialist from outside to conduct an effective EPP (HoD2, SEIP2)'*

*'Intergovernmental departments offer certificate-graded courses such as the Malaysian Skills Training Programme (MSTP) to both teachers and students at different levels. For instance, the special needs learners in the secondary school are eligible to gain Lower Level Skills Certificate of Level 1 and Level 2 before beginning the EPP (HoD1, SEIP1)'*

Nonetheless, from the above statements, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of EPP in the secondary school often relies on the initiative and dedication of the educators themselves. The more academic and vocational preparation a teacher had, to the higher the level of achievement of his or her learners. This is in stark contrast to the achievement levels of learners of educators who lack sufficient preparation (Cooper and Alvarado, 2006). As educators themselves were solely reliant on themselves for preparation of EPPs, the educational authorities did not play any part in the success of the programme until it had risen in prominence within special education. However, in the absence of tailored curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2013: 7-9), hindrances still exist in terms of accessing financial support from the school budget. The Malaysian Education Blueprint (2013-2025) calls for schools to be given greater flexibility regarding allocating funding to vocational programmes for special needs learners. The amount of funding would be directly related to the population of special needs learners within the school (ibid). What is apparent is that this ideal remains aspirational rather than reality-based.

For this to become reality, a successful EPP needs educators not only with academic background knowledge but also adequate vocational skills. Inability to source funding for vocational courses exacerbates the low level of implementation of EPP. This will be worse for the educators who had been recruited from mainstream background, with limited special education background, and who are now having difficulty sourcing budget for the vocational courses for relevant EPPs. Ensuring that every teacher is given the opportunity to receive full support and training during the transformation from traditional classroom teaching to an effective employment-based programme

should be a priority. In order to guarantee that the professional development budget is directed appropriately for the maximum benefit of participants, there need to be fully established funding guidelines for the teacher responsible to follow. For a teacher's work to be of a professional standard, what is required is a strategy of delivering practical tasks, followed by analysis and reflection of student performance and the subsequent self-improvement of the teacher (Ingvarson, Meiers and Beavis, 2005). The skills related to employment and experience amongst the special needs learners can only be taught by providing similar employability skills and experience, delivered by teachers who possess a high standard of professionalism. In theory, it was stated that the standard of teacher training for vocational skills should be improved by 2020, the second wave (2016-2020) of the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. E-25).

In reality, as the number of special needs learners who continued to work during their studies while in the secondary school increased, more special educators were needed to deliver an adequate standard of vocational skills which would meet the industry's demand. For teachers to be fully able to meet the requirements of special needs learners, it is essential they are fully equipped with the appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject they teach. A large part of this is guiding the teacher's continuing professional development to reach a high standard (SEND Code of Practice, 2015). Also, Malle et al. (2015) emphasised the importance of staff training regarding special needs education. This is seen as key to implementing an efficient programme which meets the needs of special needs learners. Regardless of other factors, the priority for special needs educators has to be meeting the needs of all of their learners (SEND Code of Practice, 2015). This in turn answered Research Question 2; What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?

#### 4.2.3 Overview

In summary, what can be concluded in this section there is a lack of special education background knowledge amongst the recruited teachers from different specialisations, which in turn acts as a hindrance to the delivery of an effective EPP. In addition, special education teachers with the same specialisations are lacking in adequate vocational skills. In this instance, insufficient funding and facilities from the school

budgets as acts as a hindrance preventing the special educators from taking their professional development courses in the particular training subjects which are relevant to delivering a quality EPP. Academic background knowledge and the vocational skills of the educator play a major role in the approach to teaching, leading to the successful implementation of an EPP. Time limitations for special education teachers when delivering vocational and employability skills for special needs students, remains an issue. Lack of any of these elements contributes to the hindrances faced by educators to enhance a successful EPP. The authors Zuki and Rahman (2016) claim that although teachers with different academic backgrounds are willing to accept special needs learners, without the relevant skills and special education background knowledge, they are unable to do so successfully. A lack of standardised documentation (as not all the schools have complete EPP modules) detailing the production method and associated processes, and an absence of any protocols to facilitate handover of modules between old and new educators, results in a systematic failure to ensure the continued and successful operation of the EPP. This becomes a hindrance to the special educators teachers' ability, either to continue an EPP or to start a new one.

### 4.3 Theme 3: Social and Physical Environment

In this theme, the impact of the environment in relation to an EPP will be discussed. Environments such as the local environment, school environment, psychology environment, emotional environment and other common environment issues which occur via the selected Secondary School Special Education Integrated Programmes (SEIP). Research has been undertaken in five selected integrated secondary schools around rural and urban in the west and southwest states of Malaysia.

#### 4.3.1 Implementation of EPP

##### a) Local Environment:

- (i) Suitability of the location in setting up an EPP
- (ii) Promoting independence in special needs learners
- (iii) The influence of the surrounding territory in setting up an EPP

##### b) Family Environment: Contributing role of parental support in EPP's success

##### c) Social Interaction

#### 4.3.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: The logistical difficulties in choosing an EPP appropriate to its environment

Hindrance 2: Family Environment: Lack of Parents / Family support

Hindrance 3: Psychological environment - circumventing social participation

Hindrance 4: Emotional environment overwhelming bullying issues

Hindrance 5: Unwilling to include special needs learners in the best performing classes

Hindrance 6: Insufficient site in the school ground cause difficulty to setup EPP

#### 4.3.3 Overview

#### 4.3.1 Implementation of EPP

##### a) Local Environment: (i) Suitability of the location in setting up an EPP

Firstly, the researcher sought to establish how the suitability of the location of the school influenced the setting up of EPP. Through the interview sessions, most of the participants agreed that the location did play a significant role in establishing an employment programme based on real life work settings in SEIP. Three of the SET participants; SET1, SET7 and SET9 agreed that the location of the school was one of a number of important factors in determining which EPP model was most suitable for those learners living close by. Participant SET10 indicated that as some of the students are dependent on their parents for daily support, for things like personal hygiene and health, they are limited in their choice of location for their work, as they are unable to spend any significant amount of time away from their parents. This proves to be particularly difficult with vocational skills courses such as the `Buying Seat` programme, which involves special needs learners living away from home (Nassir and Hashim, 2017). All the above points of view were illustrated by the following quotes;

*‘Yes, the location counted. Having easy access to the workplace helps them to continue working after they’ve left school’ (SET7).*

*‘The students live here permanently and need to find some sort of job that relates to their interests and where they could continue to work once they left school’ (SET1).*

*‘Some of my students returned home before they completed the ‘Buying Seat’ programme in college like any other mainstream student, because they were unable to stay far from their parents for very long. They still need help with things like those personal health issues so yes, I tried to fit my programme based on what they were able to do while staying with their parents. This means they can continue to work and earn some money for themselves’ (SET10).*

From the above quotes, it is understandable that special needs learners with learning difficulties seek to learn the work skills at an early stage. These skills can be related to any local school environment that can provide them either to start up an entrepreneurship project or job search. Indeed, they are unable to travel as far as other mainstream students to further their studies. Therefore, work opportunities near their place of living allow them to continue to stay at their parents' house, and at the same time allows them to have pride in earning their own wages and becoming self-sufficient. The researcher then crosschecked how the learners travel during the observation session.

a) Local Environment: (ii) Promoting independence in special needs learners

During the observation session and the review of IEP, it was discovered the learners are trained to be independent. It is apparent that the special needs learners who were detailed to work in the restaurant were travelling to the venue by their own means of transport, such as bicycle and motorcycle, due to the location of the restaurant being less than 30 minutes from their house or school. Below are the excerpts from the field notes and reflections from the observer/ researcher.

*'Two of the learners, aged over 17, hold a motorbike license. Three of the other learners travel from home to the EPP restaurant setting by bicycle. Some just walk independently. Occasionally, parents pick up and drop off their children from home'.*

*(Excerpts from field notes)*

*'The implementation of EPP also acts as a rejuvenating programme that helps enable the learners who return home from vocational colleges to build their confidence'.*

*(Excerpts from researcher's reflection)*

The following excerpts explained the situation for those requiring assistance:

*What became apparent was that some of the low function learners, as well as those who were wheelchair bound required extra assistance when using both the canteen and toilet facilities.*

*(Excerpts from field notes)*

*It is apparent that low functioning learners who are able to complete simple tasks, for example packaging, should be allowed to play an active role in the job market. It would also be a positive step if the training they were undertaking was located closer to the families of these learners. This would allow them to gain support from family members regarding their limitations and other health issues.*

*(Excerpts from researcher's reflection)*

The above explanation has supported the fact that SETs had highlighted about the distance to workplace and home is paying a fundamental role to serve their needs and requirements. Wahab, Ayub and Arshad (2016) affirmed that by providing a barrier free local environment such as easy access to the training or workplace, services and other facilities encouraged the learners with special needs to be employed in the societies and labour market. This contributes to answer 'Research Question 1.'

a) Local Environment: (iii) The influence of the surrounding territory in setting up an EPP

Another factor which was highlighted was the influence of the surroundings, either urban or rural, which had an effect on choosing a suitable employment programme. Participant SET1, a special education teacher from the west part of Malaysia, emphasised that since his school was in a rural region, it lent itself to rearing quails, whereas participant SET7 working at SEIP4, which is situated in an urban area, set up his EPP in a nearby restaurant. Similar to this situation, participant SET5 and SET6 who both teach at SEIP3, which is located in a rural area, which enables them to run farming programmes such as mushroom cultivation and chilli plantations. This is possible because the quality of soil in the rural areas provides a great opportunity

for farming. Opposed to agriculture activity with soil dependence, other schools from Southwest Peninsular Malaysia utilised an alternative source to implement EPP. For instance, in order to carry out their hydroponic project, participant HoD5 noted that an adequate source is required to develop the produce. Easily accessible quality water, without any requirement for soil, provides an excellent opportunity to conduct this project in urban areas with limited space. These statements are evidence by the following quotes;

*'As this school is in a rural area, I looked into the suitability of the surroundings to find out the best way to meet the needs of my students. In my case, it was rearing quails' (SET1, rural).*

*'It is easier and less demanding to create a chillies plantation' (SET6, rural).*

*'This school's suitability is exactly the right choice to run the mushroom plantation. My former student continues this project even after he left. The quality of soil in rural areas provides a great opportunity for farming' (SET5, rural).*

*'In order to carry out our hydroponic project, we need a proper source to develop our produce such as quality water, which we could easily find anywhere. Since this project doesn't require soil, it's easy to conduct this procedure in urban areas with limited space' (HoD5, urban).*

From the above quotes, the establishment of the employment programme is dependent on what opportunities the surroundings may provide in preparing the learners to understand what skills they can bring to the employer. This is also an opportunity for them to be an entrepreneur with parent support from the available source.

In addition, data which was derived from the observation showed that the educators: Heads of Department and the special education teachers, exploited many of the available opportunities found in their surroundings, whether they were located in

urban or rural areas (referring to the Appendix D for further clarification: Location and Physical setting).

*'In SEIP5, it was apparent that regardless of the learners from a lower function category, they were also able to contribute in the packaging task.'*

*(Excerpts from the field notes)*

From the document analysis, all level of learners were able to adapt themselves to the needs and opportunities available for them in the jobs market. For example, in the case of learners from low function categories, they displayed the sample of the logo, which they help to stick into the plastic jar which was for sale.



Figure 10: The school's product, using their own logo. Excerpts from document collected from SEIP4



Figure 11: The school's product, using their own logo. Excerpts from document collected from SEIP5

*'Also considering the interest, available opportunities and distance from the school or home to the EPP setting before any decision is made. This is allowed the IEP team to help the learner to make preparations for what job to do, once the learners completed their school. This also allows them to prepare and train to travel to EPP setting (SEIP4: Restaurant operation), to be an entrepreneur with family support (SEIP1: Livestock Quail; SEIP3: Cultivation; SEIP5: Bakery operation) or may look for a paid job nearby their living place regardless to the surrounding; rural or urban.'*

*(Excerpts from the researcher's reflection)*

Similarly, research by Griffin, Hammis and Keeton (2014) highlighted that the self-employment approach focuses on the individual's existing skills and abilities and the talents of the person, rather than the business, which in turn enables them to learn and grow when provided equal opportunities in terms of local environment and support. This supports this study by indicating that either a rural or urban environment is not a barrier to exploring opportunities. However, these findings confirmed there is significant achievement within a ten-year period where research by Eide, Jelsma, Loeb and Ka Toni (2007) reported that the implementation of equal opportunities of people with disabilities lagged behind in rural areas compared to urban areas which supports the idea that they require more resources. This in turn answered the 'Research Question 1'; how EPP is best implemented in preparing special needs learners for employment.

b) Family Environment: Contributing role of parental support in EPP's success

Participant SET1 from SEIP1 indicated that all of the parents were very supportive of the employment programme, regardless of which level of function the students were at. The students were trained according to their capabilities using whichever model suited them well. Similarly, participant HoD5 specified that parents were incredibly supportive of his programme. This showed itself in many ways, including some of the parents often supplying equipment others would help by providing financial assistance. HoD5 also noted that this parental support did not cease once the students had left school. Parents would continue to support their children by assisting them with job searches or small business ventures based upon the skills they had acquired through EPP. This point is illustrated by the following quotes;

*'All parents are very supportive of my employment programme, which consists of both high function and low function students. Both levels of student are trained according to their capabilities. Therefore, policymakers and educators should develop the vocational training model according to their level and capacity; mild, moderate and severe' (SET1, SEIP1).*

*The parents are very dedicated to their children's performance and are very supportive. Some parents act as a supplier by helping us with providing facilities and some of the parents sponsored the project financially. They also continue giving support to their children even after they have completed school with job search or starting a small business from home using the skill they learnt such as cake business' (HoD5, SEIP5).*

However, this is in contrast to parents who fear about the safety of the program: participant SET8 claims that those parents with low-functioning children, (those with disabilities such as poor motor skills), preferred a classroom-based employment programme as opposed to one set in a real-simulation setting. In this case special educators had designed simple tasks such as beading, or batik painting that is part of the needlework programme.

*'Parents who have children with low function usually agreed that a classroom-based employment programme was preferable. My needlework EPP is a classroom-based programme offering them the opportunity to learn simple craft skills' (SET8, SEIP4).*

From the above quotes, however, it is understandable that all of the parents from SEIP1, SEIP4 and SEIP5 have shown their utmost support to the employment programme in the secondary school from the very start. This clearly proves the fact that all of the parents from these selected schools fully understand the importance of and the benefits gained by supporting the establishment of such employment preparation programmes in schools. All this evidence confirms that neither the location of southwest or west of Peninsular Malaysia nor the areas of the school, both rural and urban, influenced the parents' understanding or their support for the establishment of EPP in the secondary school. Ideally, previous study supporting the fact that those parents of low function learners who are concerned about their children's safety should not fear for their children's future undertakings (Ayvazoglu et al., 2015). The selected schools in this study had delivered comprehensive information about how it is important to provide real work simulation experience, compared to the traditional classroom-based learning, to their children and the benefits behind this effort. This also reflects a comprehensive model which enables them to develop the learners' capacity before making the right decision for them. This is supported by the previous research highlighting the importance of designing and developing a vocational training model for all three levels of special needs learner; mild, moderate and severe, enabling them to enhance the learners potential (Majid, 2015).

Another benefit which is apparent is that this platform may enhance the learners' engagement.



Figure 12: Photograph for produce of cross stitch by low level category learners

Based on the annual report, the above work was produced by the learners who are classified under mild and moderate level. Some parents showed voluntary support, and they sponsored some of the material, services and facilities used in EPP activities. Thus, this is evidenced of parental. This answered the ‘Research Question 1’; How is EPP implemented in the secondary school’s SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?

### c) Social Interaction

During the observation at SEIP1 and SEIP4, there were many similarities discovered between them and other schools. It is apparent that all EPP learners from these schools were provided opportunities to interact directly with society. Below are the excerpts of the field notes which illustrate how the social interaction took place.

*‘In the restaurant EPP (SEIP4), the punctuality of the learners is logged using a punch card system. The learners greeted the diners, showed them to their table and then gave them menus. They then took orders using a note pad and pen. One of the learners was responsible for using the till’.*

*‘In another EPP setting in SEIP1, special needs learners, along with their teachers, opened a stall in a nearby Tesco supermarket in order to sell pet fish. This enabled them to practice marketing skills. Learners interacted directly with customers. Some of the learners were busy promoting the stall by distributing leaflets to passing customers whilst others were responsible for selling the product and handling the customer’s cash by use of a calculator. All of the learners looked happy and confident. This EPP also took place during school hours’*

*(Excerpts from the field notes)*

*‘What is apparent from both EPPs is that they instilled a sense of discipline in the learners by focusing on the importance of punctuality. In addition, by socialising and interacting with colleagues, they learned to work as a team. Also, by marketing the produce in the supermarket, they were able to socially interact with members of the public, which boosted their confidence’*

*(Excerpts from researcher’s reflection)*

By actively participating in the tasks within both programmes, the learner’s level of comprehension increased as they were able to retain more information. Their communication skills were also honed, due to their interaction with customers. Additionally, learners were able to practice marketing skills by using various techniques to promote their EPP activities, thus enabling them to become more socially integrated by dealing with different customers in both settings. What can be concluded from all of the above is that it represents self-regulation where the special needs should be able to rely on themselves in following a set routine and/or a set of instructions (Bandura, 2006).

#### 4.3.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: The logistical difficulties in choosing an EPP appropriate to its environment

Matching the suitability of an EPP to its environment is critical. To achieve this, the of the IEP teams (HoD, SET, parents) have a crucial part in providing the right opportunities within the location, regardless of rural or urban, and the supply service (transportation and limited health issues) needed to prepare them for employability. However, if this was not in place, it may in turn become a hindrance to the educators ability to fulfill the needs and requirement of the learners’ interest, along with the parents expectation. Not all the learners alike from SEIP4 are independent. For instance, SET5 and SET6 shared the difficulties when setting up employment programme for learners.

*'There is a lack of available transportation. Therefore, once they complete EPP the learners might find difficulty to travel to the training centre or workplace as so many parents unable to send their children' (SET5).*

*'Some learners are not confident when dealing with money especially when travelling alone or buying tickets for bus/ train' (SET6).*

SET5 touched upon the logistical difficulty some learners face in reaching the location of the training centers/ workplace, which are located some distance from both school and home. Whereas, SET6 identified the issue of learners lacking in confidence in regard to handling money. What is clear from the above statement is that although the teachers are aware of the learners' ability to participate in training programmes, they are not yet able to take part because the distances involved which is somewhat of a hindrance. One of the reason for the student unable to complete or continue other vocational courses from colleges is that the parents are too dependable with teachers to assist them. Difficulty to do assist them regularly acts as a major hindrance to both special educators and learners alike. Research by Ali, Schur and Blanck (2011) reported on the supply side barriers such as transportation and limited health issues which, they observed, decreased the chances of individuals getting their desired job. This contributes to answering 'Research Question 2.

#### Hindrance 2: Family Environment: Lack of Parents / Family support

In terms of the parents/family environment, the researcher intended to discover the level at which the parents were involved in supporting their children in preparing them for employment. For example, participant SET3 stated that not all of the parents were in favour of their children participating in bakery-based programmes, as they were worried about their safety when using ovens and knives. They would rather their children be involved in classroom-based activities, as they felt that the classroom would be a safer environment for their children. These statements are confirmed by the evidence from the following quotes;

*'Not all of the parents support the idea of engaging their children in employability training because they worry about the safety of their children*

*outside of the usual classroom setting. They prefer more homework and classroom-based teaching and learning, compared to programmes and activities in real life settings such as in a bakery where they have to work with ovens, sharp knives etc.’ (SET3, SEIP2).*

The above quote demonstrated some of the parent’s fears for the safety of their children. Such was their concern that they were unwilling to allow their children to join non-classroom based employment programme activities. These experiences confirmed the fact that there still exists a lack of understanding about the motive behind the EPP’s introduction in the secondary school amongst the parents or guardians.

Another dimension is that some parents are too busy and are therefore unavailable to discuss their children’s progress. This leads to an unfortunate situation where there is poor interaction between parents and teachers. All of this creates a situation where those parents do not wish to become involved with EPP, as they believe that their children do not possess the ability to perform the required tasks. Lack of interaction acts as a hindrance to special educators. SET6 expressed this situation as below.

*‘Some parents are very busy with their own work and do not play their part or discuss about their children’s progress becomes a problem for special educators. There is a lack of interaction between parents and teachers. Some of them do not wish to become involved with EPP. Their reply is that their children cannot cope with the EPP task. Others depend fully on teachers to guide the learners’ (SET6, SEIP3).*

Most of the family, including the parents, may lack an awareness of the capabilities of their children. Parents’ general reluctance to allow their children to become involved in seeking a career experience activity in the secondary school may lead to a failure in the transition from school to adult life in future. Parents should realise the fact that they are unable to support and look after their children throughout their life, and by stopping them from learning more challenging activities also hindrance to the efforts made by the teachers. On the other hand, other parents who fully depend on teachers to coach them also act as a hindrance to the special educators. This finding is similar to the research by Lindsay (2018) which confirmed that parental and family

support influences learners' transitional process from school to an independent life in work or post-secondary education. The above explanation answers the Research Question 2; What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?

### Hindrance 3: Psychological environment: Circumventing social participation

In terms of psychological environments, participant HoD5 stated there are still some students from urban areas who suffer from very low self-esteem. They are conscious of the fact that they were labelled as having learning difficulties. Subsequently, they will often shy away from attending even award ceremonies, which recognise their achievements in public. Participant HoD4, also from an urban school, illustrated that some of her students are still suffering psychological abuse due to reinforced negative stereotyping of special needs individuals by mainstream students.

*'Whenever the students receive an award, they won't attend the ceremony to collect their award because they are shy to admit that they are part of a learning difficulty category' (HoD5).*

*'Some still suffer from low self-esteem, as they're worried about being stereotyped as low function' (HoD4).*

On the other hand, participant SET10 claimed that one of the parents was reluctant to take their child out to public events for fear of being ridiculed. However, she believes that much of this fear is irrational, as people are often more considerate and understanding of special needs individuals. Participant SET6 added that some special needs students actually prefer to be in their own community, as opposed to being integrated with mainstream students, as they feel their freedom to be themselves is disrupted if they are forced to mix. This is illustrated by the following quotes.

*'One of the parents was reluctant to take their child out to public events for fear of being mocked. I personally think it is just their thoughts but they do not realise the level of acceptance is high in the society' (SET10).*

*'Some students prefer to be in their own community only. They are suffering from self-stigma' (SET6).*

The above results show that special needs learners are reluctant to engage even within the school community, due to fear of being labelled as having a disability (Ayvazoglu et al, 2015). Those special needs learners who have low self-esteem may also suffer from a lack of confidence. This may lead to depression for both themselves and their families at some point.

Also, the above result confirms some of the parents are refusing to introduce their children as disabled in public. This adds to the distress of the parents, thus creating a situation where the parents not allowing their children to participate in any activities with their peers. There is clearly a lack of student engagement in the community, which results in challenges for educators. These incidents still occur in the school, because even though the community accepts special needs students as being disabled, special needs learners, along with their parents, still face psychological challenges, and often have low self-esteem. Educators' still make efforts to engage the students in the community, because one way for there to be a successful EPP, is to engage the students in society. Reluctant attitudes from the learners and family and their natural instinct to isolate themselves from social participation is clearly a hindrance to the educators. Self-stigma, which could lead to low self-esteem, shame and communal isolation, can be reduced if initiative is undertaken to reduce public stigma (Oexle et al 2017). Therefore, student engagement in education is a fundamental pathway to achieving a successful learning environment (Plasman, 2018). However, Plasman (2018) added that student engagement is a difficult task to carry out in the high school if the students are creating their own barriers.

Following the above issues, it was documented that many people with disabilities are denied opportunities in mainstream inclusive settings due to a failure of the learners and their parents to understand their own rights in society (United Nation, 2017). This in turn answers the 'Research Question 2': What are the hindrances faced by special educators while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) from the perspective of special educators?

#### Hindrance 4: Emotional environment: Overwhelming bullying issues

In terms of the emotional environment, according to participant HoD2, there have been reports of instances of bullying of special needs learners by mainstream students. This has taken place in the school during entrepreneurship events, where there is a policy of integration between the two groups of pupils. Teachers have expressed great concern regarding this issue and have taken a zero-tolerance approach regarding the matter. Participant HoD5 highlighted an approach the school has used to tackle this problem, which is the establishment an annual anti-bullying campaign. These experiences expressed in the following quotes:

*'In the inclusive schools, events such as entrepreneurship day, some of the mainstream students are believed to be bullying the special needs learners and our children are scared to say anything. We are very concern about this issue and do not tolerate bullying in school (HoD2).*

*We have an anti-bullying campaign every year, but there are still some cases which exist (HoD5)'*

The above scenario shows the educators are faced with overwhelming bullying issues in schools, and as well as the steps undertaken by the educators in schools to prevent this issue. The efforts indicate the level of acceptance needed and the need to raise awareness among all members of the schools and the of community involved with the schools. This is because a successful EPP creates a healthy environment to prepare the special needs learners for engagement with society and help them to increase their career experiences alongside peers. The negative attitude which was created amongst the other mainstream students resulted in the special needs learners disliking their surroundings, and this negative attitude influenced the transition process from school to adult life. These finding are similar to research by Lindsay (2018), which confirmed that the attitudes of people in society, such as bullying and stereotyping the youth with disabilities, influenced the transition to towards working within society lifestyles. Therefore, it is crucial to prepare learners for independent work life by creating an ecological approach. All this effort begins from the school, and if the issues created within the school are not rectified, then this in turn leads to

hindrances amongst the educators which prevents learners from engaging in society. As Bandura' social learning theory identified, by promoting socially acceptable proactive behaviours amongst school members, schools will be able to nurture problem solving strategies in a non-aggressive environment (Huston, 2018). Thus, these answered the Research Question 2: What are the hindrances faced by special educators while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPPs) from the perspective of special educators?

Hindrance 5: Unwillingness to include special needs learners in the best performing classes

Subsequently, according to participant HoD2, some special needs learners with learning difficulties faced emotional problems in joint events in the school who now focus on an inclusive learning environment. Some mainstream teachers are unwilling to include them in their best performing classes, as they are worried about the risk of failure in reaching their syllabus targets. This would have the consequential effect of reducing the overall performance of that particular class. This means that students with learning difficulties are often excluded from the best performing and the most disciplined classes. This ultimately exacerbates the problem of low self-esteem amongst special needs learners. Consequently, special needs learners are, more often than not, demoted to classes with poor academic standards. The school believes that both mainstream and special needs students are equally poor academically and therefore are easily managed by the teacher. On the other hand, the school fails to realise that those classes are also suffering from discipline problems. Being in the same classroom as disruptive pupils is not a suitable learning environment for special needs learners. When this happens, special needs pupils are often frightened by the noise and therefore are keen to leave the classroom as soon as possible. Added to this, when disruptive behaviour, such as fights or the use of swear words in the classroom, happens, special needs students might feel threatened. Another aspect of this problem occurs when some special needs students attempt to socialise and integrate with mainstream students. The bad behaviour of the disruptive pupils influences some of the special needs learners, who then copy this behaviour, as they are unable to distinguish which behaviours are acceptable in society.

Evidence of the above statement is supported by the following quotes;

*'Some mainstream teachers, including deputy heads, are reluctant to teach students with learning difficulties in the schools as they labelled them as academically poor, that in turn meant they were unable to achieve their target of completing the syllabus. They find it difficult to educate them in the best performance classes. This means they are only allowed to join the low performing classes where there are combination students with behavioural problems. This results in special needs students copying the badly behaved mainstream learners. The special needs students are bullied by some of the more aggressive mainstream students (HoD2).'*

The above issues are highlighted because some of the EPPs special needs learners are also inclusive participants in the school. Such approaches, however, have failed to create a holistic inclusive environment, as the educators found notable bad influences occurring whilst integrating into the inclusive setting. The reluctance of some of the mainstream teachers to enrol the special needs learners in high performance classes is causing major problem. The lack of information and sufficient communication between the special education department and the mainstream department seems to be causing a twofold problem. Firstly, the special needs learners tend to isolate themselves amongst the peers in the classroom, which leads to serious emotional problems. Secondly, the special needs learners who want to be friendly with their peers may end up replicating the bad behaviour of some of the mainstream students. Both issues become a hindrance to the special education teachers, who wish to create a healthy environment and a stress-free situation. Similarly, Dutta (2009) specified that the lack of communication and information sharing about the special needs learners' condition adversely affected the youth with disabilities during the transitional period. Low priority is given in Malaysia to data collection on bullying cases in the school. Thus, most victims of bullying do not tell anyone, because of lack of trust in particular teachers, fear of repercussions or reprisals, feeling of guilt, shame or confusion and concern that they will not be taken seriously (UNESCO, 2017, p. 20). Therefore, creating a safe and inclusive learning environment for up to 75% of students with disabilities by the year 2025 is seemingly unachievable if the bullying culture which persists amongst staff and students continues (Ministry of Education, 2013, p. 4-18). These reports support the finding in this study that when

the efforts are made by the special education teachers in EPP in regard to career pathways, they fail due to lack of communication with the mainstream educators about information relevant to the special needs learner's condition and the EPP's motive. Thus, these above facts answered Research Questions 2.

#### Hindrance 6: Insufficient space on school grounds causes difficulty in setting up EPP

In this section, results and discussion are related to the hindrances faced by the educators in a physical environment. Special education teachers described the issue of insufficient sites to meet the requirements to carry out activities in the secondary schools. Participant HoD4 from urban SEIP4 in the West of Peninsular Malaysia talked about her experience in developing an entrepreneurship restaurant business. For her to establish this programme, and in order for her to simulate a real work-based setting, she carried out her programme outside the school compound to overcome the issue of limited sites on the school grounds. Comparatively participant SET6 from rural SEIP3 in the Southwest of Peninsular Malaysia chose a project of mushroom cultivation due to the fact that there was sufficient site to establish her EPP within the school. However, participant HoD1 exposed the hindrances he faced during the setting up of the employment programme in his school, due to the unclear curriculum in the special education (Special Education Curriculum, 1988). The evidence from the following quotes supports the above statements:

*'Insufficient space in our school building acts as a hindrance to conducting real work-like settings and, as the students are interested in the restaurant business, we are unable to provide these facilities due to lack of space. Therefore, our programme is conducted outside of the school compound' (HoD4, West, urban).*

*'I am able to conduct mushroom cultivation because we have sufficient site to do this project within the school' (SET6, Southwest, rural).*

*'Barriers needed to be faced when there is a lack of principal support in allocating the site for EPP, as EPP does not form clearly in the special*

*education curriculum. I appealed for the site because I can see the future in there' (HoDI, West, rural).*

From the above explanation by the department's head and special education teachers, insufficient sites are one of the major hindrances to conducting EPP in the secondary schools' premises.

According to the special education educators, allocation of sites acts as a barrier to conducting a pioneer EPP. The curriculum of special education indicated that the educators should be flexible and should be able to modify the content in delivering teaching and learning to meet the individual needs and requirement of students, in an attempt to promote an independent life. The EPP is known as an innovative project involving partnerships with various outside bodies, such as inter-government agencies and from non-government sectors, which is not clearly apparent in the special education curriculum. Therefore, allocating a site is not the main priority for the special education. This is a similar situation to that of funding allocation for EPPs in the secondary schools. This problem also acts as a barrier preventing the educators from conducting EPP successfully in the secondary schools. However, the Ministry of Education, as well as the State Department of Education, gave a vast amount of encouragement (explained in the Leadership and Management theme in detail). Moreover, lack of guidance while beginning the EPP hinders the educators when finding sponsors for the EPP.

On the other hand, one of the aims and policies of inter-governmental bodies such as the Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority (FAMA) is targeting schools so as to promote collaboration to produce entrepreneurs amongst people with disabilities (Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority, 2010). Therefore, the content of the curriculum needs to be very clear, in order to illustrate to decision-makers the resource requirements of the EPP, and to ensure they are able to locate sufficient space to allow learners and collaborators to operate effectively. These hindrances have to be rectified to secure the support of the principal, otherwise the efforts made by the educators will result in failure.

From the observation session, EPP was set up to mimic real work situations. From the investigation, it was found the EPP settings were located as following. Also refer

Appendix E for the photograph collected to further clarification about the chronology of the setup of EPP in each SEIPs:

- *SEIP1 and SEIP3: EPP is located behind the last block within the school grounds.*
- *SEIP1: Livestock Quail A; Livestock Fish B*
- *EPP in SEIP1 was previously the place used for the main bin collection corner.*
- *SEIP3: Mushrooms cultivation A and chillies cultivation B)*
- *SEIP2 : EPP is located at the boundary of the school compound*
- *SEIP2: Mango Plantation B*
- *SEIP4 : EPP is located within 2 miles of the school*
- *SEIP4: Restaurant Operation A*
- *SEIP2 Bakery Operation A/SEIP5 Bakery Operation B*
- *Classroom in both SEIP2 and SEIP5 has been renovated into a real work setting*

*(Excerpts from the field notes)*

*'Location of the site was very far from the main entrance of the school. All EPPs had been sponsored by inter-government agencies. Partially the school had allocated funding for bakery operation and Needlework as both EPP are part of the curriculum (Special Education Curriculum 1988) at the time observation took place'.*

*(Excerpts from researcher' reflection)*

The above excerpts and the documentation collection evidences the outcome of the collaboration which occurred between schools and the inter-government agencies. Physical space to house the EPPs, and provision of the necessary funding, were not allocated due to the fact that those EPPs were not part of the school curriculum used at the time (Ministry of Education, 2017). Research by Aning, Zaaba and Gunggut (2014) backed up the fact that there is a gap between designed policies and

programmes designed for people with disabilities, which were implemented ineffectively in real situations. Similarly, McGrath (2012) highlighted Tomasevski's concern about practical access for people living with disabilities and if there were provided sufficient sites to enhance the accessibility to quality in work. Thus, insufficient sites and funding contributed to answering the 'Research Question 2': What are the hindrances faced by the educators; heads of department and the special education teachers in implementing EPP in the SEIP secondary school?

#### 4.3.3 Overview

Overall, in this study it was confirmed that in all the selected five SEIP schools the EPP was based on the location of the schools and the suitability of the area. Through conversations with participants, the finding in this study also revealed that the environment made a huge contribution to the real-work simulation via the employment preparation setting. However, these efforts were limited to only a few schools. The reason behind this was numerous hindrances which faced special educators. These hindrances included logistical issues and a lack of parental support, as well as psychological and emotional issues related to an absence of acceptance in society. All this proves that the schools are best placed to provide the fundamental platform in harnessing the potential of special needs learners. Therefore, those hindrances need to be overcome in order to continue these great efforts, which began in secondary schools, and to continue to achieve the goal of preparing the special needs learners for employment and the leading of an independent life.

#### 4.4 Theme 4: Collaboration and Coordination

Collaboration and coordination was also discovered as one of the major factors, which determine how EPP was best implemented in the secondary school's SEIP. This theme explains how the selected Secondary School Special Education Integrated Programmes (SEIP) collaborate and cooperate with non-academically focused governmental departments, interagency, the private sector and other stakeholders to enhance the effectiveness of EPPs in preparing students for working life. The next step will be to identify the hindrances faced by the educators from both Department Heads and special education teachers. The findings from this study provide some insight as to what areas need improvement. The evidence collected is discussed from the perspective of the participants and includes the researchers' reflections on the observations sessions performed in SEIP in Southwest and West Malaysia, along with reviewed relevant documents.

##### 4.4.1 The implementation of EPP involving collaborators

- a) Review of the Establishment of EPP
- b) Setting up EPP
- c) Contacts and/or a network of community-based support
- d) Collaboration of inter-agencies to provide facilities/adequate training to EPP teams

##### 4.4.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: Efforts of implementing EPP to meet the career interests and ambitions of each individual learner

Hindrance 2: Collaboration with reluctant employer in making connection between Special needs learners' initiative and the Employer's acceptance

Internal Hindrance 3: Lack of equally shared commitment amongst EPP teachers

External Hindrance 4: An absence of a signed protocol between schools and the collaborators

##### 4.4.3 Overview

#### 4.4.1 The implementation of EPP involving collaborators

EPP	Collaborators
SEIP1 A: Livestock Rearing Quails (2012)	<p>Site: Learning Outside the Classroom</p> <p>2012: Sponsor at beginning stage A local quail breeder donated in between 30 to 40 quail. They also offered to give SETs advice and guidance</p> <p>2013: Under supervision of Inter-governmental: Department of Labour under the Ministry of Human resources. Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) and Department of Veterinary Services (DVS) are both government bodies under Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-Based Industry</p>
SEIP1 B: Livestock: Rearing Siamese Fighting fish (2013)	<p>Site: Learning Outside the Classroom</p> <p>2013: Under supervision of Inter-governmental: Department of Labour under the Ministry of Human resources. Provide/ Introduce the local vendor as supplier</p>
SEIP2 A: Farming Mango Plantation (2012)	<p>Site: Learning Outside the Classroom</p> <p>2012: Mango Plantation supplier was the farm owner (HoD2) Funded by the Parent-Teacher Association</p> <p>2013 : Under supervision of Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA)</p>
SEIP2 B: Bakery Bakery Operation (2013)	<p>Site: Classroom renovated</p> <p>Parent-Teacher Association and School Support</p> <p>Sale/Marketing under Cooperative Club</p>
SEIP3A: Farming 1. Cultivate mushroom (2011) 2. Planting chillies (2011)	<p>Site: Learning Outside the Classroom</p> <p>2011: Under supervision of Inter-governmental: Special National Dual Training System (SNDTS) under the Department of Labour, Ministry of Human resources</p> <p>Agriculture Vocational School Enterprise Training Programme sponsored by Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA).</p> <p>Specialists and suppliers:</p>

	Morifa Resources.
SEIP4: Restaurant Operation and Needlework 1. Restaurant Operation (2011) 2. Needlework (2011)	Site: Restaurant Operation : Outside School ground Needlework : Classroom  2011: Under supervision of Inter-government: EPP was funded and supported by the Department of Labour under the Ministry of Human resources through the Government transformation programme(GTP)
SEIP5 1. Hydroponics (2013) 2. Bakery Operation (2013)	Inter-governmental: Site: Hydroponics: Learning Outside the Classroom Bakery; Sharing Mainstream's Bakery  Hydroponics and Bakery: Under supervision of Inter-government Department of Labour under the Ministry of Human resources  Bakery: Cooperative Club

Table 5: Involvement of collaborators

In this section, the contexts of the Employment Preparation Programmes in the selected Special Education Integrated Programmes involving collaborators are explained below.

a) Review of the establishment of EPP

From the above table 5, we can see EPPs related to food production and crafts such as those incorporating livestock, restaurant operation, bakery, needlework and farming using both traditional and modern technology. For example, the EPPs in both SEIP3 and SEIP4 (Restaurant operation and Needlework) were the earliest among all schools, which had been starting such programmes since 2011. SEIP3 launched two major EPPs concerned with both chilli and mushroom cultivation. This was followed by SEIP1, which has operated livestock and agriculture-focused EPPs, concerned with rearing quail and a mango plantation in 2012. That same year. SEIP2 developed a mango plantation within the school grounds. Subsequently, in 2013, both SEIP2 and SEIP5 began conducting EPPs where the learners were engaged in a range of activities supporting in-school bakeries.

Following the success of the quail-breeding programme, in 2014, SEIP1 began operating a second EPP, which was concerned with the rearing of Siamese fighting fish. All programmes in this study were selected following consultation with the learners to ascertain their vocational ambitions. This statement was illustrated as below.

*'One of our quail incubation project had proven itself to be a success, there was an increased in the amount of trust from the school principal, and a growing number of special needs students. We were then allowed to introduce a second project in 2013. The learners were interested in breeding fish' (SET2).*

From the above information, obtained from the participants and school's annual reports, all EPPs in this case study operated between the years 2011 and 2013. This initiative was part of the Tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015), which aimed to ensure equal opportunities through inclusivity, and to transform the nation's economy through specialisation, skills training and entrepreneurial programs. And to improve the quality of life for all (The tenth Malaysia Plan (2011-2015), 2010). What can be concluded is the number of schools who participate in EPP is increasing yearly in comparison to previous research, which indicated that there is only one school found which collaborated with inter-agencies (Abdullah et al., 2015). According to Yahaya, Rasul and Yasin (2017), between the years 2011 and 2014 special NDTs had benefited approximately 13 000 young people, including school leavers and those who did not sit for the General Certificate of Education. These included special needs learners. Although this finding showed that all the selected case study schools up to this date actively participated in this educational plan, there are still many other SEIPs in Malaysia which have yet to fully engage.

#### b) Setting up EPP

All SEIPs set up their EPPs in the school grounds except for SEIP4, which conducts their EPP in a manner different from other schools: their programmes are conducted off-site at a non-profit café/restaurant. SEIP4 also operates an EPP specifically for its low-functioning learners, which focuses on needlework; sewing, stitching, embroidery, beading and batik, which is a technique of wax-resist dyeing, applied to cloth. While some classrooms were renovated into EPP settings such as bakery

(SEIP2) and the one for needlework (SEIP4). Other EPPs were set up in a non-classroom setting, based within the school ground. Added to this, SEIP5 shared the same bakery station with the mainstream students.

*'In 2013, I transformed one of the schools' classrooms into a 30' x 20' kitchen which now houses a bakery, used exclusively for our EPP' (HoD2, SEIP2).*

*'We have planted 100 mango trees around the perimeter of the school in 2012' (SET4, SEIP2).*

*'My principal allows us to share the mainstream's bakery station' (SET10, SEIP5).*

In this section, the researcher will look at how each case study had begun their EPPs. SEIP1 sought help from a local, privately owned and operated quail breeder, who initially donated approximately thirty quail, and later provided guidance and advice throughout the programme. They began housing and rearing the livestock in 2012 with a budget of just £8. Over the course of the academic year the project proved to be self-sustaining, generating small profits and enabling continued growth and reinvestment. By the end of the school year, the project was generating around £60 of revenue per quarter.

*'Initially, a local quail breeder donated between 30 to 40 quail. They also offered to give us advice and guidance, which they did. They also offered to give us advice and guidance, which they did. As we didn't have any dedicated space or the appropriate farming facilities, the principal allocated us the school's waste collection shed, which we then converted to a mini-farm. Our profits increased gradually from RM50 to RM100, RM200, RM300 etc.' (SET1).*

On the other hand, HoD2 stated that as an owner of the local mangos farm, he sponsored the mango trees and seeds for SEIP2.

*'As I am the owner of the mango farm, I sponsored 100 mango trees and seeds' (HoD2, SEIP2).*

However, SET4 from SEIP2 explained the difficulty he faced, as the school did not allocate any funding, due to the fact that the EPP did not form part of the curriculum. As the result, this EPP relied on the support of the Parent-Teacher Association in order to execute the project in its early stages. The following evidence supports this statement:

*'In the early stages of our EPP, because the programmes were not allocated funding by the school, we relied on the support of parents and teachers through Parent-Teacher Association to build a small plantation platform. To help expand the platform we are looking for a sponsor as it is difficult to grow the project without a sponsor or any external support' (SET4).*

The scenario faced by SET4 in SEIP2 in mango plantation, begs the following question: is it really the best interests of all involved in EPP to have the HoD2 acting as both special educator and supplier simultaneously? It seems as though the special educator in this particular EPP is possibly placing more of an emphasis on his own personal financial gain through departments head's business enterprise than on the benefit afforded to his special learners. Additionally, it could be interpreted that by using the school funds and school premises the departments head's role diverted from educational to that of business benefiting, thus suggesting a possible ulterior motive in the eyes of some. This is in stark contrast to other EPP's aims.

However, both SEIP2 and SEIP5 operated bakeries and were both funded differently. According to SET3, SEIP2's EPP received financial support from parents via the Parent-Teacher Association, and SEIP5's EPP received a small budget directly from the school, as the planned EPP activities were broadly compatible with existing life-skills content as per the curriculum. SET10 noted that by using the school's facility, students have baked bread and pastries, and have then sold them. Both SEIP2 and SEIP5 sold their produce through the in-school cooperative club and through events. The following quotes evidence this statement:

*'Our programme initially sponsored by Parent-Teacher Association. Using this facility, students have baked bread and pastries, and have then sold them through the in-school cooperative club' (SET3, SEIP2).*

*'There was no budget for the creation of a specialist facility for our bakery-focused EPP. Instead, the principal made funds available to add specialist equipment to the kitchen used by mainstream students, for use by the EPP learners. My students and I took orders for cakes, pastries, cookies etc. all your round, but this wasn't really profitable. However, during the festival season the special needs learners and I took orders from teachers, students, parents and so on, which generated a small profit' (SET10, SEIP5).*

What can be concluded based on these findings is that the space required to operate these EPPs was not made available, supported or funded by the schools. The project teams in both SEIP1 and SEIP2's initiative also sought sponsors, resulting in a positive outcome at the beginning stage. Opposed to this bakery facilities in SEIP5 supported by school. Therefore, if the project is beyond the curricular, the teachers are committed to seek sponsors elsewhere. Similarly, research which focuses on learning and curricular highlighted the challenges faced by teachers in considering both the demand for, and supply of learning opportunities influencing the learners performances (Pavlova et al., 2017).

In the case of EPPs from SEIP3 and SEIP4 have been under the supervision of the Department of Labour's Ministry of Human Resources, with the help of parents, teachers and other volunteers since the year 2011.

*'Funded by the Department of Labour Ministry of Human Resources, we started a restaurant with the aim of providing more opportunities for special needs learners to develop skills in entrepreneurship and restaurant operation'(SET7).*

From the above quotes, SEIP3 and SEIP4 were proven the only schools which did not face difficulty in looking for sponsors for its EPP. Both EPPs from SEIP3 and SEIP4 were funded by the Department of Labour under Ministry of Human Resources, through Special National Dual Training System (SNDTS) and Government Transformation Programme (GTP) since 2011 respectively (Malaysian Prime Minister's Office, 2010).

According to HoD4, at an early stage, she urged the teachers to prepare proposals with relevant documents which detailed the capabilities of the students with disabilities. This is due to fighting for the equal rights for the disabled from the Department of Labour, so as to force them to provide employment programme relevant to the learners' capabilities. This is illustrated by the following quotes.

*'We fight for their rights from the Labour Department. For example, if the special needs learner has the interest and capability, we will prepare the relevant proposal to labour department and demand to provide model, source and financial or facilities whichever way to support them... is their rights as people with disabilities. Ministry could also seek to help to launch a shop/café if the special needs learner able to start the business and learn the skills require' (HoD4).*

As can be seen, the special educators from all schools have shown a full commitment to collaborate with inter-governmental agencies, the private sectors or from individuals in order to provide training for special needs learners based on each individual's interest and capabilities. The Government Transformation Programme comprehended that what works in one case may not necessarily work in another case (Xavier et al., 2016). Therefore, the goal setting and the level of achievement for each learner may not be the same with one another.

Subsequently, beginning from 2012 to 2013, all the EPPs in this study were fully funded and supervised by the Department of Labour under the Ministry of Human resources. For instance, in 2013, livestock quail's EPP approached the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) with a proposal for further expansion of the project. Representatives from FAMA visited the premises and performed an inspection to ascertain the suitability and cleanliness of the quail-rearing facility. This was followed by a visit from the Department of Veterinary Services (DVS), which approved the quail-rearing facilities and gave the school permission to continue with the project. With both inspections passed successfully, under the authority of the 'Ministry of Agricultural and Agro-Based Industry Malaysia', FAMA and the DVS approved the creation of a certified programme of study, aimed specifically at people with disabilities, under the Malaysian Development Plan (2011-2015), which would be delivered by FAMA, and recognised by both organisations.

*In 2013, the school approached FAMA, whose inspectors visited the school to see how we were running the programme. This was followed shortly afterwards by the Department of Veterinary Services, who sent people down to inspect the quality of our produce' (SET1).*

In a similar way, SEIP2 and SEIP5 also collaborated with the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) to develop a mango plantation and hydroponic facility within the school grounds; All EPPs also received support, guidance, advice and physical assets to facilitate the creation of the plantation and produce.

*'We have established links with Federal Agricultural Authority (FAMA)' (SET4).*

*The project was funded by the Department of Labour, who provided all the equipment as well as guidance on the subject. We were given a course at the beginning, and then later this was followed up by staff from the Labour Department visiting us every three months to see how we were getting on' (SET9)*

In examining this, FAMA's role varies from school to school, and is dependent on the individual contract with each of the providers. For example, the marketing and distribution required for relatively small livestock-related projects is more easily undertaken by special needs learners than the higher-volume and more competitive fruit plantation projects. Thus, FAMA demonstrates flexibility in its approach to supporting special needs learners. In order to assist special needs learners in transitioning from training to employment, it is vital that school-based preparation programmes be as representative of the real world of employment as possible. This is vital, based on the evidence that participation of the special needs learner in work environments is still low, as a future career holds less relevance to them (Robinson et al., 2018). Real world situations or 'School-based employment' improves implementation of inter-agency collaboration in schools (Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah, 2015). From the above explanation, it is proven that inter-government contribution in collaborating with SEIP is a relatively positive approach. Similarly, Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) also indicated the implementation of

interagency collaboration with secondary schools in Malaysia. Generally, this strategy is similar to the strategy undertaken by Code of Federal Regulations (2013), related to Agriculture, that is promoting and strengthening food and agricultural sciences, thus providing grants to public Secondary Schools including for people with disabilities (p.256, 257). In short word, collaboration is being implemented in the secondary school because of the agriculture policies in Malaysia (FAMA, 2010). Correspondingly, Johnson et al (2013) highlighted that the interagency collaborations have been developed due to the legislative mandates.

c) Contacts and/or a network of community-based support

Next, the researcher looked at the contacts and/or a network of community-based support involved in supporting EPP in the secondary school. Participant SET3 stressed that favourable local contacts and/or a network of community-based support is crucial in conducting any real work-based settings for special needs learners with disabilities. It is important because the special needs learners will then be able to start on their own projects and maintain these project for their living once they leave school. For example, with the baking project, it is easy to find contacts, such as suppliers and distributors, for the continuity of the EPP development. Participant SET2 considered the fact that it is favourable to contact vendors who are in easy reach, and that it is highly important to maintain the project for the long term. The above perspective is evidence from the following quotes;

*'Favourable contacts and/or a network of community-based support is crucial in conducting any real work-like settings for the learners with disabilities, even after they have left school. Our school is suitable for a baking project as it's easy to find contacts such as suppliers and distributors for the continuity of my EPP development' (SET3, Southwest, urban).*

*'I have got easy access to vendors who could supply assistance and resources for my real work-like school-based employment programme; livestock fish' (SET2, West, rural).*

The above perspective revealed how important the contacts are within the network of community-based support in influencing the EPP outcome. This is due to the fact that

specialist teachers with particular employment skills are not available throughout the EPP. The influence of a locally based supportive network is therefore essential, in order for a successful work based education programme to be effectively delivered to special needs learners (Hassrick et al., 2018)

During the observation at SEIP1's livestock fish programme, vendors came to schools to provide help needed for the SETs and special needs learners to establish and maintain EPP in the secondary schools.

*'Special needs learner communicate with the vendors with confident in clarifying their doubts and other information about the task involved.'*

*(Excerpts from field notes: SEIP1)*

*'It can be seen how the special needs learners take responsibility to clarifying their doubts'.*

*(Researcher's reflection)*

From the researcher's observation approach, vendors came to schools weekly or whenever necessary to provide help needed for the special education teachers to establish and maintain EPP in the secondary schools. Following this, vendors from the Department of Labour's Ministry of Human Resources collaborate with special needs learners to promote career experience to them and at the same time guide the teachers whenever necessary.

This objective to provide vocational skills and training for the people with disabilities is part of the equal right of people with disabilities to be engaged in economics (Wahab, 2016, Salamanca Statement, 1994, UNCPRD, 2008). Thus, these opportunities may improve the educational system, leading towards a more successful life in work for the learners. In light of these facts, the effectiveness of the supported-employment system is generalised across a wide-range of consumer individuals and community settings (Bond, 2014). Fundamentally, they arrange a course and they train special needs learners towards successful career development. They also provide a special needs teacher to brief the course, provide a complete module, and set up both a conducive vocational setting and a school-based employment setting. Document reviews, such as annual reports, confirm the evidence and identifies the vendors as well as other third-party supporters. Therefore,

seeking guidance to assist the special education teachers to share and learn the skills becomes a challenge to the educators if the school authorities are unsupportive of the project. However, the involvement of third-party providers enables academics to tailor the project to their special needs learners as well as the specialist promoting a self-employed or/and paid job in the future. Previous research states that the “secured authorities are a systematic manpower development” and they open an opportunity for special needs efforts for project planning, system design, product development, operation, maintenance and repair of deployed models for beginners (Gallardo and Fullan, 2016). This in turn answered the ‘Research Question 1.

d) Collaboration of inter-agencies to provide facilities/adequate training to EPP teams

Apart from funding allocated to schools, inter-governmental agencies also provide a certificate course for the EPP team to ensure the quality of the courses, and as a proof of the achievement. According to SET1, support and guidance were provided, and, after a period of time, participants were able to demonstrate their subject knowledge and practical ability, resulting the awarding of a series of Level 1 and 2 Skill Certificates. This statement is supported by the following quote:

*‘The Department of Veterinary Services sent people down to inspect the quality of our produce. As the outcome of the inspections, the organisations agreed to set up a certified course for the teachers involved and our learners at a cost of RM20000, which led to us receiving Level 1 and 2 Skills Certificates within a year (SET1)’*

Pertaining this issue, the researcher discovered from the document analysis that special educators had undertaken this step with the support from inter-government (Ministry of Human Resources), to provide a relevant skills and training, which is equal to Level 1, to ensure learners with special needs have met the basic, predetermined criteria to support their accountability. This is accompanied by a certificate of achievement to persuade them to move to the next level or to search for a job once they leave school. EPPs from SEIP1, SEIP3 and SEIP4 have committed to this framework to ensure the quality of EPPs in those secondary schools. These findings revealed a situation where, although teachers had pinpointed the hindrances faced when approaching employers for placement during the interview session in this

study, they had also to take the initiative to overcome these barriers to ease the process of gaining a job. Upon completion of this pertaining course may gain confidence and reduce the negative insights of employers. The following is the evidence of the document of the enrolment with the inter-agencies and the certificate after achievement.



Figure 13: Enrolment letter of Skills and Training courses; and the certificates of achievement. Both documents are the excerpts from the school document

The National Qualification Framework states that the certificates obtained from the training outcomes allow the abilities and capabilities of the learners to be recognised (UNESCO, 2016). According to the Equality Act 2010 Disability Rights, people with disabilities who are applying for a job will be treated equally. Apart from giving theoretical and practical training, the special education teachers' roles in building confidence and trust amongst the employers and within the community members acts as a challenge to prepare the special needs learners for integrating in to the labour market. This statement is similar to the research by Alias (2013), who underscored the initiative to negotiate with the employers in an attempt to encourage them to accept disabled students, with a view to the students working on their premises. This

displayed the fact the special needs learners were more than capable of making the necessary adjustments needed to excel in the workplace, when given sufficient time to master the skills. Research by Wahab (2016) specified that stigma and negative perceptions of the employers about the people with disabilities was mainly due to their level of performance: if they could or not contribute to the job expectation. This in turn answered Research Question 1: How is EPP implemented in the secondary school's SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment from the perspective of special educators?

The following section will deal with the hindrances faced by the special educators while implementing EPP in the selected SEIP. From the perspective of educators, there are a number of challenges or hindrances faced while conducting EPP in Southwest and Western States in Malaysia. Clarification will be based on the educator's perspective, researcher's observation and document analysis.

#### 4.4.2 Hindrances faced by the special educators

Hindrance 1: Efforts of implementing EPP to meet the career interests and ambitions of each individual learner

A major hindrance is in the effort to implementing EPP. if it is meeting the particular career interests and ambitions of each individual learner. HoD3 expressed that the number of special needs learners continues to increase, and that each of them has their own individual interests. Therefore, a wider variety of employment programmes is required. However, this is something which is not financially feasible with current levels of in-school funding. HoD5 noted that special educators are struggling to adopt suitable strategies to source additional funding from third-party organisations, who will collaborate with the schools to deliver the range of EPP projects required to meet the learner's interests and needs. This is evidenced by the following quotes:

*'The number of students has increased, and their interests are varied, so we need to develop more programmes. Each teacher needs to find way to find a sponsor on his or her own for an EPP to have a successful outcome.'* (HoD3, Southwest)

*'Educators struggling to accommodate the most appropriate strategies to introduce more EPPs to fit the learner's interests with secured funding.'*  
(HoD5, Southwest)

SET7 also explained that he has 15 special needs learners from each class in his school, aged 13 and above, all of whom have different interests and career goals. The problem with this is that it is impossible to meet the needs of all 15 learners if they do not have similar career interests. Funding from the collaborator is sufficient to establish only one EPP for high functioning learners, focusing on restaurant-based business and one EPP, focused on needlework for low function learners. This is illustrated by the following quote:

*'Students' interests are varied. We have 15 special needs learners from each class, aged 13 and above. It is difficult to meet their needs whilst conducting only a limited number of EPPs in the same school. It would require 15 separate EPPs to accommodate all 15 students' particular interests. More funding needed if to begin more EPP (SET7, West)'.*

To crosscheck this statement, the researcher reviewed the statistical data. According to data provided by Ministry of Education in Malaysia, the total enrolment of student with difficulties in SEIP was 50000 students in 2012 (UNICEF, 2014, p. 38). In 2016 the total population of student with disabilities in SIEP was 53000 and, to be specific, student enrolled for secondary school numbered 23000 (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 25).

From the above quotes and document reviewed, it shown that special educators' have the ambitions and willingness to develop more programmes to better accommodate the increasing number of special needs learners in their schools. This also illustrates that the special educators are proactive in enhancing the special education system by accommodating employment preparation programme for the special needs leaners, to allow them to contribute to the labour market at a level matching their capacities. These arguments seem to provide evidence of difficulties in putting the policies into

practice, as the opportunities to promote special needs learners towards their career interests are limited (Nagata, 2004). Similarly, other research also supported the statement that individuals with disabilities should be offered more than one choice so they can try multiple opportunities (Timmons et al., 2011).

#### Hindrance 2: Collaboration with reluctant employer in making connection between Special needs learners' initiative and the Employer's acceptance

Collaborating with the employer is essential, as it opens a gateway to the real world of work life. Both Special Education teachers SET4 and SET5 discussed their experiences and perceptions regarding how much faith employers had in people with special needs and whether or not those people had confidence in their ability to carry out work. Despite acknowledging the positive aspects of these students' abilities, some employers remained to be convinced. Participant SET4 from urban SEIP2 in Southwest of Peninsular Malaysia noted the employers' belief and trust in special needs learners is very poor. This is due to the difficulty of convincing them to offer a placement for practical purposes. Furthermore, one of the employers' responses to participant SET4 is that they do not have sufficient time to train these learners at their workplace as it causes them to waste time and harms productivity.

*'With some employers, I think there is a lack of belief in students with learning difficulties. They seem to think that if they offer these students a job, they won't be reliable enough and will just prove to be a waste of time' (SET4, SEIP2: Southwest, urban).*

In contrast to this perception, employers expressed their willingness to continue to offer placement and practical training for learners with disabilities (McConnell et al., 2018).

Likewise, another participant SET5 from rural SEIP3 in Southwest of Peninsular Malaysia also claimed that the difficulties she faced to build the confidence level of employers was due to their lack of confidence in the students' capabilities. Moreover, the employers are not prepared themselves to give guidance to and train the students in job skills at their premises.

*'It is not easy to build confidence amongst employers regarding special needs students and their capabilities. Even after I gave a thorough explanation about the aims and purposes of the programme, they only agreed to give the students a trial because they said, as employers, they have no time to guide and support them from scratch' (SET5, SEIP3: Southwest, rural).*

In contrast to this, according to Brendle, Lock and Smith (2018) employers were trained to provide disabled individuals with individuals with positive and essential support, in terms of being able to establish a routine incorporating greater time flexibility. Additionally, these employers were given training and management, retention, problem solving, supervision as well as reinforcement of both formal and informal communication within the workplace.

Opposed to the above quotes, participant SET10 from urban SEIP5 in the Southwest of Peninsular Malaysia specified that the employer that she approached, initially refused to offer the opportunity, but then later agreed that he was satisfied with the students' performances.

*'At first, when I introduced my students as having special needs to the hotel manager, they do not happy to offer the job. However, after a few months the manager are happy with my student's performance (SET10, SEIP5: Southwest, urban).'*

The above report by the special education teachers indicated the degree of acceptance from the employer comparing to other literature. Generally the employer's main concern is about the learners' capacity to complete any task given. Hence, some of the employers believe the special needs learners are not workplace adequate for the required job, resulting in them preferring not to offer any job opportunities. This acts as a challenge to the special educators in the placement progress. However, on the positive side, those employers who once refused to offer opportunities later changed his mind set regarding people with disabilities, proving that the special education teachers' ability and role to raise awareness and distribute sufficient information to the community is a big part of success. Similarly, research by Wells (2018) indicated that employers had a greater incentive to hire people with disabilities once they had been made aware of the fact that this sector of the population had a positive impact on the economic growth of the nation.

From these findings, it is apparent that there is still a lack of understanding about people with disabilities today. It also confirms there is lack of participation of people with disabilities in the job market. There is also an incorrect perception on the part of the employers when they are beginning to consider employing disabled people. However, this perception changes from negative to positive, confirming the level of acceptance of people with disabilities in the labour market. After a period of time, the employer gains confidence and appreciates the efforts made by the disabled person in his/her employ. To reach this stage the challenges posed to the special educators still remain, as there is still lack of awareness about the capabilities of special needs learners. This also highlighted the hindrances faced by the Special educators in negotiating with the employers to achieve EPPs aim. Given the correct assessment, along with the appropriate level of support plus an informed welcoming employer, there will be no barriers placed in front of special needs learners who wish to enter employment (Wells, 2018). Thus, this also answered Research Question 2: What are the hindrances or challenges faced by the special educators in preparing the special needs learners for employment?

#### Internal Hindrance 3: Lack of equally shared commitment amongst EPP teachers

Where there is seen to be an imbalance in the workload distributed amongst EPP staff, the situation often arises where the burden is shifted onto a particular teacher, in this instance SET2. The drawback in all of this for SET2 is that his primary role of teacher is now being stretched beyond that of an ordinary educator. He now has to incorporate managing the programme, bookkeeping, developing individual training plans for special needs learners as well as teaching different subjects and taking on other responsibilities. From the teacher's perspective, there needs to be an even greater level of commitment from EPP members of staff. For example, in the case of SET2, their EPP is based on rearing fish. These creatures need attending both inside and outside of school hours and term time. As this particular EPP is livestock based, SET2 has the responsibility of ensuring that the fish are fed at particular times, both in and out of school hours. This was illustrated by the following quote:

*'I feel as though there is not enough commitment amongst some of my colleagues. I often find myself burdened by responsibilities, which makes me feel overloaded with work. For my EPP based on livestock, it needs to feed and maintain the programme. Bear in mind I also have other commitments outside of teaching. I can't plan any family activities as other colleagues not free to offer hand' (SET2).*

Similarly, SET7 also expressed his concern that he was becoming weighed down with the amount of work he was being expected to carry out. He felt there was an absence of sufficient commitment from colleagues:

*'My restaurant-based programme operates between 8am to 11pm. There are two shifts per day. The first shift runs from 8am to 3pm and the second from 3pm to 11pm. This naturally means that I am obliged to work outside of school hours, for which I am not given any extra wages. Even though it is fully run by the team of collaborators, I am still responsible for my special needs learners. Sometimes my colleagues wash their hands of their responsibilities and that's burdening me somewhat (SET7)*

This begs the question of why the imbalance of workload amongst EPP teachers occurs, an insight to which was found in an interview with SET6 in which she spoke about the fact that she is the only one in charge of her programme, as there are not enough teachers who can conduct EPPs.

*'It's quite stressful maintaining the programme for long periods of time as I'm also trying to balance a family life. I am the only one in charge' (SET6)*

Teamwork amongst teachers has been shown to significantly increase the amount of commitment towards sharing the burden of responsibility more equally (Kunnari et al., 2018). However, what can be concluded from the above statements in this study is that the implementation of EPP is undermined by the unequal sharing of the teacher's workload. This statement was supported by Abdullah, Yasin and Abdullah (2015) who showed that although the educators have shown a certain level of commitment, they do so reluctantly resulting in a suboptimal level of collaboration

between inter-agencies and SEIP. As a result, the implementation of EPP has been poor.

The researcher has identified the two factors that act as obstacles in meeting the particular career interests and ambitions of each individual learner. The first factor being that there is clearly a lack of special education teachers in charge of EPP in the secondary schools. Shortages of trained special education teachers, in particular EPP subject in rural areas, results in poor teaching (Sindelar, 2018). Similarly, SET5 from rural school stated, a lack of teaching staff is proving to be burdensome. This is problematic in his case as he has other school responsibilities.

*'I think shortage of special education teachers in charge of EPP cause this issue' (SET5, rural)*

Further, the second factor acting as an obstacle is, SET5 argues, due to the fact that some of the teachers have the attitude of pushing the job to the one who initially led the programmes in instances where a teacher who is meant to be developing a strategy has not turned up and is not playing their part. SET1 from SEIP1 reinforces this point too. The lack of teachers involved in the EPP acts as a hindrance to the effectiveness of the entire programme. Whereas SET7 exposed the fact that unavailability of his colleagues to share the burden made his task more onerous. This is illustrated by the following quotes:

*'I'm the lead teacher in charge of EPPs in my school and I'm finding it a burden due to some teacher's attitude expecting the programme leader will handle it as EPP is a major project' (SET5).*

*'It is difficult having to deal with all of the aspects of the programme myself. It's not easy at all. Usually the one who leads the programme has all of the responsibilities. It would help if there were more teachers to share the burden.'*(SET1).

*'I'm in charge of the restaurant business operation. There is another teacher who is my helper. However, she is often busy with her own family commitments such as childcare. Even though we teach as a team, the one who leads is the only one who has any responsibility. It maybe the culture in this school, but it seems as if the teacher who acts as an assistant tends to automatically put the burden of running the programme onto the lead teacher. Especially when you are single, they think you have more time compared to the teacher who is married' (SET7).*

From the above explanation, it shown the reasons for this problem are manifold. Family responsibilities can be an issue for some members of staff. For others, it is a general lack of a conscientious attitude toward their work. This finding revealed that some special education teachers were taken for granted because of their personal availability. Finding in this study identified that shortage of EPP educators and/or a lack of involvement amongst the special education teachers subsequently signalled internal issues within the schools, due to lack of ability or interests in the chosen EPP. All this contributes to the low performance of EPP activities. Similarly, this finding can be relate to the teacher's attitude as well as their ability to cope with challenges experienced in school, may be directly influenced by their level of involvement within the school and the level of support given to the teacher by the school itself (Hong, 2018).

In this study, the fact that one, or a maximum of two teachers, are allocated as in-charge for each EPP is problematic, since these teachers are forced to work more hours without any appreciation, which will inevitably cause frustration. The cases of lack of involvement are possibly due to lack of information about what is mandatory. Both shortages of teachers and/or lack of involvement in EPP will lead to the ignorant behaviour among their colleagues and these posed hindrances to special education teachers. All this will affect the special needs learners' outcome. Flexible or well-adjusted teachers displayed the highest level of engagement and commitment, as well as experiencing a greater sense of job satisfaction. This was in stark contrast to teachers who were less predictable and commonly showed the lowest level of engagement (Perera et al., 2018).

Furthermore, what can be concluded in this situation is the teachers are unable to depend on their collaborators for support in matters of providing and maintaining sufficient staffing for the efficient running of EPPs, as their role is primarily concerned with providing facilities and giving advice to the teachers on how best to conduct the programme. For example, as mentioned above, the inter-governmental collaborator aims to provide the necessary facilities and funding to establish a real-life setting in school, in order for the special needs learners to acclimatise to a workplace environment. At the same time, the collaborators also introduce the teachers to private vendors who work as specialists in the field related to the EPP. The vendor then acts as a supplier and an advisor.

From the above arguments, it is apparent that shortages of teachers occurred amongst all of the selected school in the case study. Shortage of special educators acts as a hindrance to special education teachers, due to the difficulty of handling a massive EPP. This in turn answers research question 2: What are the hindrances faced while implementing the Employment Preparation Programmes (EPP) from the perspective of special educators?

**External Hindrance 4: An absence of a signed protocol between schools and the collaborators**

To enhance the relationship between the collaborators and school members, there should be a protocol specifying the tasks, obligation and responsibility of each party. This will help to establish a greater sense of stability for both parties, thus enhancing reliability through clearer understanding of each roles. In some cases, the lack of a signed protocol between EPP collaborators and schools is causing many detrimental effects to the special education teachers. SET2 brought to light the difference between the situation before and after a verbal agreement was made between the collaborators and the teachers. For example, about a year after an agreement was made at an early stage that the collaborators would buy the produce and market it themselves, the collaborators reneged and handed the responsibility for the marketing back to the school. This circumstance is highlighted below.

*'During the early stage of the collaboration, our collaborators told us that they would buy and sell the produce but now that the produce is ready for marketing, they are telling us to sell the produce ourselves.'* (SET2).

What can be seen from the above quote is that without a legally binding contract, there is a propensity for misunderstanding between the parties regarding their roles that can unfortunately lead to a breakdown of trust. Although the collaborators' action in this case was well-intentioned, with their approach being that, since the students had successfully produced the product, it would be more beneficial to them to then take on the further challenge themselves of marketing the product, this additional major task burdens the teachers in charge and impairs their ability to run the programme effectively.

Similarly, SET5 spoke about how the collaborators had previously agreed to offer full assistance to the school's programme at no cost. However, once the programme had proven to be successful, the amount of support from the collaborators became gradually reduced. This proved to be problematic as it resulted in more pressure being placed upon the teacher, which in turn made the running of the programme extremely difficult. SET9 also highlighted the consequences faced by the special education teachers due to the changes in their mind set. In spite of this the tasks for the teacher increased and it is undoubtedly burdening the teachers.

*'The collaborator changed their minds once they saw how well the programme did. Although they'd said earlier that they'd offer full assistant including taking care of marketing, they withdrew this support which meant it then became our burden mainly the teacher in charge'* (SET5).

*'Any changes result in the teacher bearing the consequences'* (SET9)

The quotes above highlighted that offers were made by some of the collaborators in question who then later changed their minds and amended their offers by expecting the special education teachers to handle the tasks by themselves, causing responsibilities to change without further discussion with the EPP team.

From the document analysis, according to the vision and mission of the collaborators whose EPP involves marketing activities, the agreement had been for the collaborators to be heavily involved in promotion of the business (Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority, 2018). In reality, this level of involvement did not materialise, and it was left to the teachers to promote the EPP which had the side effect of discouraging other teachers from engaging with EPPs in the future.

In the following quote, HoD4 recognised the fact that verbal agreements are not always permanent, as people tend to be forgetful by nature especially when conducting a programme for a lengthy period.

*'Verbal agreements aren't permanent. People can be forgetful about promises they're made, especially as EPP is a long-term programme' (HoD4).*

What is clearly demonstrated by HoD4's statement is that the actions occur without there necessarily being any intent on the part of the collaborators to renege on the promise. This was more a matter of forgetfulness rather than anything malicious.

Another issue arising from the absence of a protocol was changes in staff, either at the collaborators or the schools, where it can affect the progress of the programme. HoD2 specified that changes in staff resulted in collaborators breaking their promises. SET2 also argued that when the previous staff, who were in charge of the collaboration programmes, moved, the promises made were amended by the new staff who may not have been fully aware of, or had not bought into, the programme; this would have been addressed by a written, signed protocol.

*'Changes in staff are a problem when it comes to sticking to an earlier agreement' (HoD2).*

*'When the staff who in charge shifted, therefore the regularities also changed' (SET2)*

From the above quotes, what can be identified is that changes in personnel significantly impact the programme's outcomes, by causing changes in collaborator commitment and practice, which typically results in impairment of the special education teachers' efforts.

Consequently, HoD1 highlighted that the procedures can be varied across the different departments within the government bodies. Therefore, SET1 discovered that the absence of any procedural documentation for EPP can be challenging for the teachers in charge, who have to comply with a weak framework.

*'The various departments involved in the administration of these collaboration have different ways of managing them' (HoD1)*

*'Without any procedural documentation, it is especially difficult for teachers to comply with such a weak framework' (SET1).*

Overall, what can be concluded from the above statements is that the absence of signed, written protocols before beginning the EPP caused some unexpected drawbacks, especially to the special education teachers in charge. Although the approach from the collaborators' team were positive, the broken promises may affect the relationship between collaborators' team and educators' team. This potentially negative impact can be minimised if there is a signed, written protocols prepared, so that both parties are aware of their respective roles and responsibilities ahead.

#### 4.4.3 Overview

The findings from this study provide some new insights into the implementation of the EPP involving collaborations with outsiders of various practices. They also provide a basis for further in-depth exploration that can be utilised to enhance the knowledge base surrounding EPPs involving work with outside bodies. This study provides an insight into the difficulties in meeting the learners' career interest and in making connections between the employers' expectation and the readiness of the learners. The findings also revealed the external and internal hindrances faced by the special educators. Difficulties in proving a platform for equally shared commitment within the school negatively influenced EPP improvement. The findings identified an absence of protocol. resulting in misunderstandings between schools and collaborators. A systematic approach is needed to overcome the hindrances, in order to provide a holistic EPP.

#### 4.4 Forming a Framework for an effective Employment Preparation Programme (EPP) for Secondary schools Special education Integrated Programme

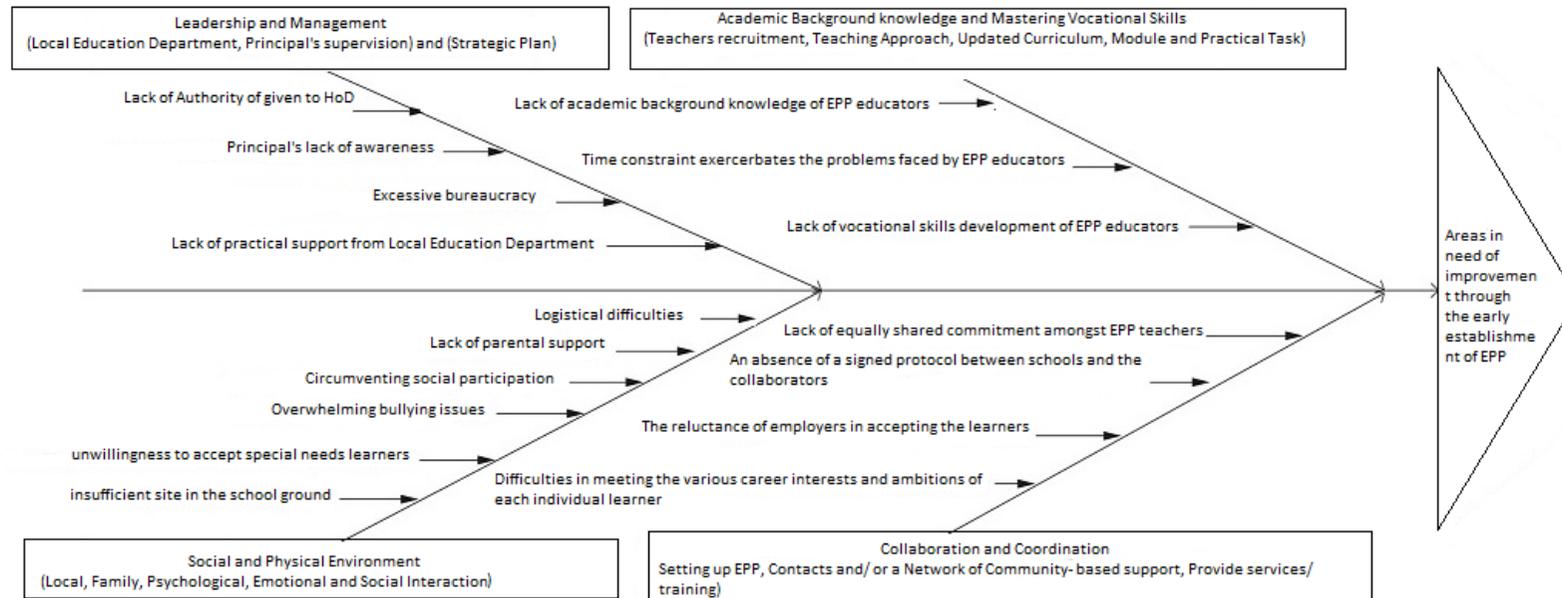


Figure 14: Areas in need of improvement through the early establishment of EPP

Above is a diagram illustrating the hindrances faced, to enable the establishment of the areas of improvement within the EPP in secondary schools. This serves to answer research question 3: What are the areas in need of improvement within the Employment Preparation Programmes? In addition, this diagram enables the researcher to form a framework of ideas and priorities to be considered in order to implement an effective Employment Preparation Programme.

The following is the framework for an effective Employment Preparation Programme (EPP) for Secondary schools Special Education Integrated Programme.

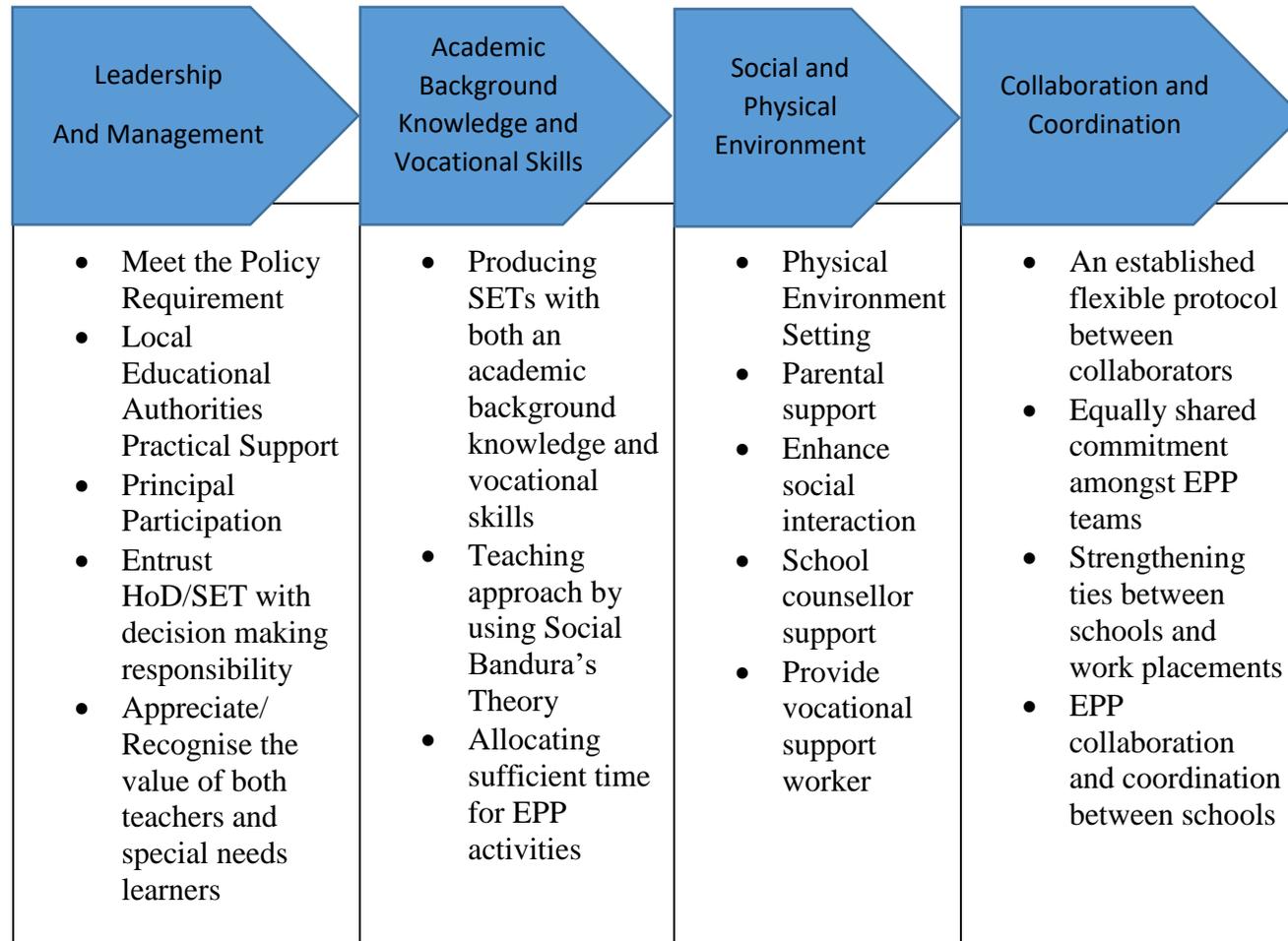


Figure 15: Framework for an effective Employment Preparation Programme (EPP) for Secondary Schools Special Education Integrated Programme

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### 5.0 Introduction

The findings from this study provide some new insights into the implementation of EPPs which involve collaborations with third-parties of various backgrounds. They also provide a basis for further, in-depth, exploration that can be utilised to enhance the knowledge base about EPPs involving work with outside practices. This study will complement current literature, fill in some gaps which may help special educators (HoD/ SET), policymakers and researchers by allowing them to cite this study as a way to improve employment preparation planning and establishment of EPP programmes in secondary schools.

In this chapter, the final perspectives of the project are presented. The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of participants of EPPs as they prepare special needs learners for gainful employment, to explore how best EPPs can be implemented in SEIP secondary schools. To achieve this, the researcher will conclude and summarise in detail the findings through the main four themes identified in this study. The study will then briefly revisit the review of the literature and theory involved, in order to draw further connections. The researcher will discuss some recommendations to the policymakers, Departments Heads, special education teachers and implications for future research. Next, the researcher also examines some possible limitations identified during the entire research process.

### 5.1 Conclusion

Leadership and management is proven to be effective in supporting the design and implementation of EPPs within SEIP secondary schools with regard to reaching the set goal of preparing special needs learners for work, whether that be in self-employment or as an employee. The findings of this study reveal that Heads of Department and teachers in special education carry the weight of responsibility concerning how to manage and lead the learners. These roles are especially crucial as the learners, who are between the ages of 16 and 19, are often quite vulnerable. This means that the decisions made by the learners with the help and advice of the

Heads of Department and Special Education Teachers are likely to have a greater impact on the future of these special needs learners.

This study has discussed further the role played by the Heads of Department, followed by the role carried out by special education teachers. Firstly, in order for a Head of Department to carry out their responsibilities, they must be responsible in carefully following all current special education legislation, special education curriculum as well as the latest up-to-date directives from policy makers. Additionally, their role involves the participation and support of the school principal, the State Education Department and the Ministry of Education. Special education teachers have the responsibility of designing the lesson and implementing the programme. This is especially important as it is the teacher who is in daily close contact with the special needs learner. Externally, both the Heads of Department and the special education teachers carry equal responsibility for the role of forming a trust-based relationship with parents to meet not only their expectations but to fulfil the potential of their children as well. They also share the responsibility of ensuring that the school improves and attains a record of achievement, thus establishing and maintaining a good reputation. Perhaps the most vital aspect of the combined efforts of the school, in conjunction with Heads of Department and teachers, is the integration of special needs learners into society, which encompasses the students being able to lead independent lives through work.

Next, this study looked at how leadership and management influenced the implementation of EPP in five different case study schools. As the students' interests and needs vary so widely, there is room to adapt the planning and application of the programme to best meet their requirements. This was illustrated in the aforementioned five schools case study where some schools were running the same programmes, such as bakery and needlework, whilst others ran a completely different version of EPP, examples of which were programmes based on livestock (quail and fish), agriculture (mango/chilies/mushroom plantation and hydroponic) as well as a restaurant-based programme. The leadership and management in each school is responsible for strategic planning, the role of which is to fulfill student's requirements, interests, skills and abilities. Findings in this study revealed that the State Education Department has endorsed more innovative education and training programmes. However, the study also revealed that some schools did not conduct

EPP because, at present, the programme is not compulsory, as the current curriculum gives teachers the option as to whether or not EPP should be implemented. The whole purpose of the special education curriculum is to provide a programme of training that is specifically designed for the benefit of students deemed to have special educational needs (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2013). In a bid to serve the needs of special learners, it is necessary to enhance their skills and, subsequently, improve the chances of special needs learners gaining employment after they leave school. EPP provides a successful platform to enhance and reinforce self-efficacy skills, which enables the learner to believe in themselves and subsequently supports them in their efforts to perform set tasks (Bandura, 2006).

There is no known legislation that automatically entitles any person the right to employment. The Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 also does not give any assurance of the rights of disabled people to be guaranteed employment. There is however, a statement contained within this act, which addresses the rights of all individuals to have equal access to employment. The rights of hiring people with or without disabilities still rests solely with the employer (Wahab and Ayub, 2016).

As this is currently the situation, special needs learners need to be trained in secondary school before proceeding with further post-secondary education or employment. This study also revealed the circumstances faced by special needs learners who drop out of college as they are unable to survive independently whilst living far from their families. Therefore, the leadership and management of each school should consider implementing EPP in Malaysia. The State Education Department within the five case study schools has created the right environment for offering opportunities in their region and because of this these schools have now achieved successful results in leading their learners towards self-employment or paid work.

On the one hand, the implementation of EPPs has been a resounding success. However, what also became apparent in this study is the emergence of certain hindrances faced by educators within the programme. One such hindrance is the apparent lack of documentation, such as incomplete records of items/ contents in IEP. This stems from a lack of coordinated planning and disorganised leadership on the part of the policy makers.

The Special Education Regulations 2013 state that IEP should be used as the main document for educational planning. Currently, IEP is also used for skills subject in the transitional school to work programme, including EPPs. In this study, however EPP, which involves collaborators from inter-governmental and non-governmental bodies, is encouraged by leaders within the State Education Department and the Department Heads. This illustrates the need for standardised documentation, a lack of which has a potentially detrimental effect on dealing with safety issues. The establishment of standardised documentation would also boost the confidence of teachers in implementing EPPs. Contained within the documentation should be items concerning activities with collaborators, the commitment of parents as well as feedback from principals and heads of department.

What is apparent in this study is the significant role played by Heads of Department who receive the full backing and support of their principal in implementing EPPs. In instances where there is a clear lack of support from a principal, this tends to be due to the fact that EPPs are not a compulsory or clearly stated part of the curriculum. Therefore, there is an absence of funding allocated to EPPs. The inclination based on these factors creates a misperception that EPPs are unnecessary. Consequently, special needs learners are often lacking in basic work-life skills and are therefore not equipped to meet the requirements of employment. Subsequently, and understandably, the parents of special needs learners are left feeling frustrated that their children have not received appropriate skills. Although special needs learners do receive lots of instruction, the nature of these activities are often of little or no use in preparing these students for employability. What is absolutely crucial in addressing these problems is for policy makers to increase awareness of EPPs and the importance of its impact on the lives of special needs learners once they have completed their schooling.

Another hindrance identified in this study is the way in which special education educators (HoD and SET) are viewed by both principals and mainstream teachers. As special educators are not teaching an examination-based programme, they are often looked upon as being inferior to mainstream educators. Added to this, previously there was also a misuse of the time allocated to special needs learners. This lead to the difficulties in performing their chief role as special educators to increase the potential of the special needs learner. This is further exacerbated by the

absence of any performance related testimonial evidence in SEIP schools compared to mainstream, exam-based education. All this clearly indicates the lack of awareness of the principals towards the role of special education teachers. To keep this from happening, there is a new directive (Special Education Service circular) which put into effect an item which stated that the special education educators are not allowed to replace an absent mainstream teacher to relieve classes or leading any mainstream teachers role (Malaysian Ministry of Education, 2014). This circular is now proof that there is a misconception about the role of special needs educators and the importance of special education generally.

Furthermore, another hindrance highlighted in this study is the lack of authority afforded to the role of Heads of Department: they play less or no part in the planning and designing of the most effective methods of instruction, which results in the students not receiving the best coaching, and thus fail to meet their full potential while in the secondary school. Additionally, this study revealed that the level of commitment at the strategic level to follow any proposed plans accurately was low, and that the lack of authority of the Heads of Departments all contributed to poor leadership.

However, in the five case study schools where a recognised, outcome based EPP was implemented, it was shown to have a positive influence on the attitude of mainstream teachers and principals towards special education. Another positive effect of this EPP was the interest it generated from various local and state schools which sought to learn from the experience of the five case study schools in the form of benchmarking and coaching activities.

The findings of this study also emphasise the importance of leaders in motivating their staff to conduct a programme in the school. Innovation and creating a new approach in the secondary school will be successful if combined with an inspiration to make the changes in the education system.

The bureaucratic structure was burdensome for the special educators when starting collaborative activities with the outsiders. From the findings, there exists no standard protocol to deal with or follow up with outsiders. Some schools have more paperwork and restrictions compared to other schools. This in turn addresses the questions by the collaborators who often claim that management and implementation of EPPs is

comparatively easier in other schools. The high volume of paperwork and the extensive bureaucracy involved causes high demands of the collaborators. Academics require with some urgency an improved, more structured, framework as a guide and a reference point, especially those who are starting their EPPs at a pioneer stage in their schools. This may improve the quality of the programme.

Secondly, there is a lack in awareness among the leaders and the educators the level of importance of the programme and the benefits to the learners. There is a need to move forward to undertake the innovative employment preparation programme to train the special needs learners in the secondary schools. This is importance to grab the opportunities that the secured inter-government is providing to schools, which includes all the needs such as funding, sets of module as references, guidance from a specialist and facilities, all of this will combine to achieve mutual aims between two parties and this resulting high impact in the performance of special needs learners.

The next hindrances identified are the poor level of support and commitment between the Ministry of Education, the State Department and the district education office to collaborate with each other in preparing special needs learners for employment. According to the participants in this study it was revealed that all these departments within the education system have very little co-operation, communication, or link between each other, which results in poor collaboration activities. That said, for instance, it should be relatively easy to deal separately with any official matter between all of these departments.

On the other hand, the supervision and support between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education has also reported poor performance. Both ministries rarely run joined-up thinking and practicing programmes or activity to coach the special needs learners. This way may be adequate for any mainstream students, however, in the case of special needs learners, who need an individual approach and attention, further exacerbates their difficulties.

What is also apparent is that there is a lack of coordination between the schools located in the same district. All of the schools are moving forward in the form of competition in determining their performances. Participants claimed that during the courses among the schools in the same district, they are usually aiming to implement the information and knowledge gained from the courses within the school staff. For

instance, they are encouraged to conduct an employment programme for the learners in their own schools. In the current situation, they have problems with insufficient space to conduct a major programme, lacking in funding and facilities to accommodate the needs of all the learners. Added to this, the vocational training divisions in every state do not give any guidance to assist special educators in conducting EPP in their schools. Therefore, the amount of support needs to be improved via cooperation between the Ministries of Education and the Ministries of Higher Education. This way, the educators' goals are for mutual agreements to be formed, with agreed, standardised protocols that come into practice. This way also enables all schools to grab these opportunities to approach inter-government department or other resources to gain funding, facilities and guidance so that the EPP can be implemented in all secondary schools. It is also useful to review the items in the curriculum and to be very clear about the subject before encouraging all educators in special education to become more involved whilst delivering vocational skills to the special education learners. This will increase the confidence level of the teachers who are responsible for conducting the programme.

This approach of establishing EPP in all secondary schools highlights the importance of the skills training which needs to be delivered in the secondary school to ensure the best possible outcome for students. It also brings to light the efforts of the special education teachers and helps elevate their standing in education, which consequently places them on an equal footing with mainstream teachers. This is in marked contrast from an earlier period, when these same five schools had not implemented EPP and such schools were not recognised for their work. Since EPP was established, these schools have now received recognition, and the appreciation shown has resulted in the schools and educators involved receiving awards, both locally and internationally. Hence, this emphasises the importance of the role played by leadership and management in special education in ensuring the best possible outcome for special needs learners via EPP, resulting in the elevated status of the schools. Similarly, research by Al Mahdy, Mahmoud and Hallinger (2017) specified that recognition and giving awards or/and rewards to the special education teachers for their contributions and efforts makes a difference to the field and should be encouraged as this enables teachers to build confidence as well as strengthening the teaching profession.

Finally, all of these efforts should focus on the key issue of facilitation and motivation, since this study has emphasised the importance of leadership facilitation and motivation in conducting a programme in the school system. Innovation to create a new approach in the secondary school will be a success if it has as a key element the inspiration needed to make the changes in the education system.

In terms of the barriers related to academic background knowledge and vocational skills, what is identified in this section is that there still exist some special education teachers who are not sufficiently qualified for the job. Short courses, between three and fourteen days in length, are fundamentally an insufficient duration to develop an understanding of special education fields. In this instance, the ability of teachers who takes these courses to maximise their assistance of the special needs learners is in question, because the role of short courses is to upgrade existing academic background, but it fails to act as a certified qualification for the broader field of special education. Therefore, there is a need to consider the most suitable options or way of recruiting educators to teach special needs learners. It is because the teacher who acquires a solid academic background and a proficient, deep knowledge of the field of special education is believed to have the capability to understand the needs and requirements of special needs learners, who have unique strengths and weaknesses. Similarly, Mamlin (2012) reported that the accepted standards of the teacher preparation programmes are often overlooked. Furthermore, a capable and qualified special education teacher who can assist special needs learners is the most qualified candidates to direct the special needs learners to the right pathway (Mamlin, 2012). Correspondingly, this finding is similar to what the previous literature by Boe (2006) stressed that an educator lacking the required qualifications to work in a particular field or specialised area should not be recruited or they should not be retained unless their qualifications or specialisation is upgraded appropriately. This should be applied to the Malaysian Education system too, so that all educators have the certified academic background, along with the required upgraded specialisation within the broad special education field specifically before placement. This is because experience can be gained after years of teaching in the particular field. However, schools are not the best avenue to learn or explore any new field as it

affects the special needs learner's outcome. This way is believed to be the best method to overcome or prevent any flaws occurring as one of the many major hindrances in the recruitment stages. This is supported by Cooper and Alvarado (2006) that insufficient competence levels of teachers from various academic backgrounds resulting in reducing the level of students' achievement.

The motivation of the transformation from general education or other field of expertise into special education field was revealed as a second barrier in preparing the special needs learners for employability. Findings in this study exposed that personal reasons, for one's own benefit, stand as a haphazard approach to entering the special education field. This action indicates educators' willingness to withdraw their expertise and their specialisation. An efficient educator with academic background, knowledge and skills is able to implement an efficient EPP to meet the needs of special needs learners. Previous research about teacher training is crucial in regard to special needs education, as it acts as a key to implementing an efficient programme that enables it to meet the needs of special needs learners (Malle et al., 2015). Failure to apply the specialisation in turn leads to failure in supplying and produces a specialist in the field of special education. Subsequently this results in poor performance by students (Morningstar and Mazzotti, 2014).

The third barrier is what occurs in terms of the inconsistency in the implementation of EPP, especially when one special educator of EPP transferred to another special education school, with the result being the ending of the programme conducted, due to lack of knowledge or skills to continue the same employment programme successfully. Noraini, Hanafi and Nur Aishah (2015) revealed that special education teachers from other parts of Malaysia, in the employment programme, faced obstacles due to a lack of good knowledge and information about how to continue and maintain EPP, thus resulting in a poor performance in preparing students for employability. However, in this study, the SEIP1 was one of five other SEIP schools obliged to prepare a fully tested module, so that at any time and under any circumstance the replacement teacher was able to conduct the class and produce similar results. Robinson (2018) and Pallisera, Villa and Fullana (2012) similarly discovered that an appropriate and relevant career preparation information programme and report needs to provide evidence of successful programmes for the future benefit of others.

Several employment programmes such as the “Buying Seats” system, were established to encourage equal opportunities in an inclusive education system. However, this study confirmed that not all the special needs learners who participate in this programme benefit from these efforts, as they returned without completing the course offered. It is because the educators who conducted this programme are from general education or other vocational education and training backgrounds. Even though they are specialists in skills related programmes, their competence level in special education did not fully meet the needs of special needs learners. Opposed to this, some of the special needs learners were unable to meet the threshold standards required by the college. For instance, those learners who learn academic and basic life skills in schools are now meeting new educators from colleges in order to be trained in new vocational skills but they will find it difficult to adjust in a limited timeframe. This in turn to reduces the number of students who are able to complete the vocational course and prepare themselves for adult work-life.

Following the observation session, the researcher noted that students who are classified as high functioning and low functioning meet the designed target at their own level without pressure. Lack of knowledge amongst the educators resulted in poor outcomes, thus diverting from the main motive of preparing them for career experiences instead of reaching their EPP targets in the small entrepreneurship model. In short, most of the special education teachers (SET) do not have any vocational skills thus vocational education and training teachers (VET) do not understand the characteristics of special needs learners.

In terms of teaching and learning process in this study, practical tasks had been simplified to make it easier for the learners to observe, retain and apply the information to carry out the given task (Bandura, 1977). Special educators should be adequately equipped to deliver and participate in both teaching and learning activities. A lack of academic background, knowledge and skills among these teachers resulted in failure to achieve the objective of the EPP. The best solution to overcome this barrier is to provide sufficient special education background knowledge to all general educators before certifying them to teach special needs learners. As mentioned earlier, basic two-week courses lead to failure in performing Employment Preparation Programmes to meet the unique characteristics of the special needs learners. Remarkably, there still exists a lack of understanding in how

best to support people with disabilities. The general educators from schools and other experts are still lacking in the knowledge of how best to approach and/or socialise with people with disabilities. This can be achieved by delivering a universal subject, such as ‘Working with People with Disabilities’ in all universities and institutions globally. On the other hand, special education teachers who are conducting EPP in the secondary schools are currently conducting EPP on their own initiative, with the experience and knowledge they already have. In order for special educators to be proficient educators, they need adequate and certified vocational skills and training in order to perform EPP successfully in the secondary schools, because they can only teach what they really know of the subject and only when they understand the receiver’s capabilities. The need for teachers who have academic background, knowledge and skills with an ability to teach special-education students is more critical today than ever before. It is important that the teachers have a strong grounding in the methodology and the philosophy of their own discipline to ensure they know how to teach their pupils. Educators should plan and design EPP for a secure and positive outcome, rather than to prepare for trial and error programmes. The Vocational Education and Training Division in the Ministry of Education should also consider providing vocational courses for the special education teacher in the secondary schools’ SEIP and also to tailor them in preparing the special needs learners towards employability in the secondary schools in Malaysia.

This study found that the social and physical environment is also a determining factor in the successful implementation of EPP. That is to say that the local environment, whether an urban or a rural setting, the physical environment which refers to the facilities available for EPP, the social environment in terms of how special needs learners are treated within the school and/ or society, impacts the psychological/emotional environment i.e. the learners suffer low self-esteem.

The suitability of the location, in terms of distance, is also an influential factor for educators (both HoD and SET) regarding which available opportunities exist in the local area. The distance that the learners need to travel to the location of any future workplace was shown to be influential in determining the setting up of EPP in their school, so that once they leave school it becomes much easier for the learners to be able to embark on their working lives. According to EPP participants, this is a way of overcoming previous logistical problems caused by special needs learners having

to travel far from home, as the majority of them are not independent. Findings in this study also revealed that neither rural nor urban settings created any barriers for educators when choosing which EPP to implement, as the programme was quite adaptable regarding use of whatever the surroundings offered.

Parents with low-functioning children, for example those with poor motor skills, were reluctant to permit them to take part in a real-simulation setting, as they preferred a classroom-based employment programme. This was often as a result of these parents lacking awareness of their children's full potential. What is also notable is that they were quite anxious regarding their children's safety. Raising the level of awareness amongst these parents regarding both of these issues is seen as one of the hindrance faced by educators, as failure to tackle this problem leads to students being unable to successfully transition from school to a working life. What was interesting to note however was that all of the other parents were keen for their children to participate in EPP, so much so that many of them offered support in the form of providing equipment for the programme as well as some parents even providing financial support.

Furthermore, those parents of children who have completed their schooling and have since established their own self-employment business based on the skills they learnt through EPP now volunteer support for younger students who are still in school. What is clear from these findings is the decisive role played by educators in determining the success of EPP, alongside the participation of supportive parents.

In terms of the role the psychological environment plays on students' self-esteem, this study revealed that this was a more noticeable problem in urban areas than in rural areas, as special needs learners tended to be more negatively stereotyped in an urban environment. A result of this is that students with high levels of success, but who also suffer from low confidence, tend to withdraw from many general school events held in public, even those events which celebrate their achievements. This fear of ridicule even affected some of the parents of special needs learners, so much so that they too were afraid of appearing at these events and subsequently chose not to attend. This added to the growing sense of isolation for both student and parent.

Generally, although steps have been taken to address this issue, the stigma felt by some students and their parents still remains. To overcome this problem of low

confidence and self-esteem is a continuing hindrance faced by educators. According to the participants, one way to achieve this is by encouraging special needs learners to come forward with their negative experiences and share their problems with school counsellors. This would help to create a healthy atmosphere between special and mainstream education members. This in turn would go some way to creating a greater sense of inclusivity.

Similarly, the emotional environment also plays a key role in overcoming the issue of bullying, which is experienced by some special needs learners within schools. Many schools have adopted a policy of zero-tolerance in addressing this problem in the form of anti-bullying campaigns. Although these policies are already in place to tackle this issue, the problem remains. Another issue, which only serves to exacerbate this problem of stigmatisation of special needs learners, is that of the attitude of some mainstream teachers towards these students. This stems from a culture of negative stereotyping amongst some teachers, of special needs pupils' potential, which often leads to pupils being demoted to less well-performing classes. When this happens, special needs learners who begin socialising with mainstream students who have problems with discipline will often copy this bad behaviour. This only serves to worsen their performance, adding to the problem of low self-esteem amongst those affected learners. This all negatively impacts EPP learner's ability to fully engage in school life which, in turn, will affect their ability to take part in the wider community later on in their lives. Collectively, these problems act as hindrances to special educators in their efforts to integrate special needs learners with non-disabled people as the school can be seen as a gateway to begin the process of dismantling the barriers that are currently preventing full integration.

Next, the issue of employers' attitudes towards special needs learners is one of the challenges faced by special educators when trying to convince employers of the benefits of providing opportunities for learners. The main concern being the lack of faith employers had in the ability of disabled people to carry out their workplace responsibilities. According to educators in this study, the previously negative attitude shown by employers was transformed once they had witnessed first-hand the performance of disabled trainees. This was largely due to the excellent work of special educators and their dedication to raising awareness of the capabilities of special needs learners amongst employers.

Other challenges special educators faced which this study identified related to the lack of sufficient space/site within schools for carrying out EPP. It is indeed a measure of the innovative nature of EPP that there was initial reluctance to provide funding and/or facilities for the programme, especially as it is not part of the curriculum. However, all of this changed once EPP had started to show signs of success in these particular five case study schools. A factor of this success can be attributed to the flexibility of the course, meaning EPP is very adaptable and, as a result, gained support from principals.

In terms of collaboration and coordination, another dimension which contributes to the success of EPP is the involvement of outside agencies related to labour authorities. These agencies provide opportunities for special needs learners in the form of collaborative efforts. Those efforts mean that funding and facilities can now be provided. Therefore, this study concludes that the setting up of EPP as a real-work simulation programme should be widely adopted throughout schools. Also, by setting up EPP in the form of real life work, the setting acts to prevent the challenges faced by the special needs learners, similar to what was shown in the research by Alias (2013), which exposed the difficulties in understanding the instructions from the co-workers they hardly knew at workplace. Added to this was the learners' difficulty in dealing with the environment of their workplace, such as a mini market, which was entirely different from what they learned in the classroom (ibid).

This study identified the need for educators to adopt a strategic approach to access funding opportunities from various sources who will act as collaborators. This will safeguard the delivery of EPP projects, thus meeting the needs and requirements of special needs learners. This is important in order to accommodate the increasing number of special needs learners in their respective schools. EPP activities were established after a consultation with learners and their parents had been carried out. These meetings discussed what they were planning to achieve, as well as their work interests, which they intended to pursue when they left school.

Each selected case study school established EPP in a somewhat similar or different form, offering various opportunities in the process of achieving their goal. It identified the teachers' initiative and the special needs learners' commitments, resulting in a positive outcome. The study indicated that once the EPP became a

success and was recognised, it seemed to gain much support and appreciation from the local school and other schools within the district. What is very clear is that all the participants are encouraging the programme to be introduced in all the secondary schools and the school-based employment preparation programme which portrays a real work-like setting and is sufficient to make a smooth transition from the school-to-work programme and it is proven that inter-government collaboration has helped the learners to gain career experience. This means the learners had proven their level of independence by either being an entrepreneur or employee. These structures prepare special needs learners to make a smooth transition from training to actual work performance. The self-operated café by the former students is evidence that shows the level of confidence they have gained to begin their work in life after finishing school. Therefore, the main challenges faced by the educators are to discover the learners' individual interests and their desire to fulfil their needs to achieve their own individual career goals. The problems occurred when not all the special education teachers were teaching correctly or were not handling this subject and conducting this programme in the proper manner. What is transparent in this situation is the scarcity of EPP educators, or limited participation amongst the special education teachers, reflecting internal issues which should be solved. Lack of commitment or showing lack of interest in conducting the employment-related programme is reflected by a poor level of co-operation, thus resulting in a poor performance amongst the special needs learners.

Another current hindrance faced by the teachers is the time limitation in conducting the hands-on activities in the employment programme successfully. The need of the special education teachers to assist the special needs students is becoming a pivotal and crucial role, as the teachers are acting as an educator and a motivator and the liaison between the various agencies during this period of employment is a practical task and this should be given more priority. The adjustment in the teachers' timetable will help to prevent these issues.

Establishing local contacts and/or a network of community-based support seems to be one of the challenges facing educators, and this is crucial for conducting a realistic work-like environment in secondary school. This is especially important as the main aim of the programme is to enable special learners to lead independent lives post-

school. However, due to a lack of specialist educators with the necessary vocational skills, it is essential that outside specialists are brought in to join forces to secure the success of EPP. By doing this, the study proves that the learners are able to become independent through self-employment or by becoming an employee. In the case of self-employed workers, local contacts and/or the support network team will continue to provide all necessary assistance and guidance in the form of equipment, facilities and funding, enabling them to embark on their own working lives.

Regardless of how successful EPP is in schools, it is vital that there is continued vocational support service provided for special needs individuals. For instance, the current study found that those learners who were working during and/or after school hours needed further assistance at the workplace. However, there are times when assistance is needed at the learner's workplace, but the teacher is otherwise occupied and unable to offer help during school hours. The same situation may also occur with those learners who work after school hours, as teachers will often have family and other commitments.

The district officers from the education division should emphasise and deliver the benefits of implementing the EPP in all secondary schools through seminars. Also, this information should be delivered to the parents, as one of the participants claimed that their voices are not taken seriously. Any failure to deliver the necessary information to the parents may raise unnecessary enquiries, and this turns into a hindrance to the educators, as the school needs to seek further sponsors or further funding from the parents of the special needs learners and could have problems in conducting any programme without the appropriate documents attached. One strategy, which could be implemented in order to solve this problem, is the introduction of fully trained vocational support staff for those learners requiring assistance at their workplace. These members of staff would also be able to help motivate learners as well as offer general assistance and skill learning. This is especially important when considering the potential burden placed on employers by special needs workers and would help persuade employers of the capabilities of these special needs employees. This would ensure increased employment rates amongst the special needs population. Vocational support services would also help relieve the strain placed on working families of individuals with special needs. Subsequently, this will help nurture a growing sense of confidence within special needs workers.

This study has successfully identified how EPP is implemented currently in the secondary schools' SEIP in preparing special needs learners for employment. This study revealed how factors such as leadership and management, academic background knowledge and mastering vocational skills, social and physical environment and collaboration and coordination themes influenced the implementation of EPP. Further, the researcher also discovered the list of hindrances faced by the special educators in the process of EPP. In five case studies, the programme is successful, and the students gain paid employment either through job or as a self-employed entrepreneur. This results in improvements which enhance the school's reputation. From the teachers' perception, the program contributes to the preparation of special needs learners' employability. However, although the programme is moderately successful in terms of students' outcomes, it is not compulsory in the curriculum, therefore not all schools conduct EPP. For this reason, the study recommended that EPP be implemented in all SEIP secondary schools.

The best solution which has been identified is to allocate more special education teachers, with these new additional ones identified as having extra-special qualifications and being more highly-qualified and are able to inject further knowledge and influence to any given situation, mainly due to them holding one academic subject and one transitional plan subject. Added to this, all special education educators and their leaders should be very attentive to and updated on all the details/ content in the legislation. Curriculums should be revised from time to time to fit the current needs and requirement. The complaint from the participants regarding not being in the syllabus or not being in their timetable should be taken with serious concern. The existing curriculum is clearly written about delivering any vocational skills that benefits the learners (Special education, 2013). Lack of information on the part of the teachers should be improved and the teachers themselves should become more efficient and professional and become more alert. The existing curriculum should be available online, with additional courses and training methods brought into the programme from time to time. All of this will enable the educators to prepare and guide the learners towards integration in the labour market. This study exemplifier how important it is that the implementation of EPP needs to become an integral part of the school's organisations. The issues these

findings highlighted are adding to the knowledge of what can be achieved and how it should be executed correctly.

## 5.2 Recommendations

In this section, the researcher sought to recommend ways for improvement to create an effective EPP.

### Leadership and management

1. Lack of Authority given to Head of Department in comparison to other Department Heads within the same school

HoDs in special education are uniquely disadvantaged in that they are the only Department Heads who are universally excluded from receiving an allowance from the Ministry of Education. Correcting this disparity would help to improve job satisfaction amongst Department Heads. Additionally, as indicated in the findings, the level of authority amongst the HoDs within the same school influences the HoD's ability to make decisions in special education. The HoD's lack of authority means there is an over reliance on principals to make decisions, which only serves to slow and worsen the process of implementation of EPP. Heads of department should be allowed to manage the special education school's budget in order to make sure the money is used appropriately and focused on enhancing the learners' performances. HoDs should be allowed to speak up for the rights of students with disabilities. This should minimise the risk of using the special needs budget for other purposes, which do not benefit special needs learners.

2. High level of bureaucracy weakening the EPP progression

There is an excessive amount of red-tape associated with special needs learners. A centralised database containing a standardised protocol for special educators needs to be introduced by the state education department to help reduce the amount of bureaucracy involved in EPP, thus relieving the teachers of this burden. This will also help to avoid confusion amongst non-educational agencies when dealing with schools. Additionally, all collaborators should be subject to Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks, similar to those which are utilised in the United Kingdom education system. This will provide reassurance to both peripatetic collaborators as well as the schools they visit. Ideally, all of this should have the beneficial effect of reducing the amount of paperwork for the teachers, and this should also help curtail the time consuming administrative side of their work.

### 3. Principal's lack of appreciation demotivates special educators

Principals should endeavor to understand more about the needs and requirements of special needs learners and have a greater awareness of the important role of special education teachers. This would stem from principals being better informed by policymakers about the current developments in EPP, as well as being made aware of what the programme involves. Principals need to be more open-minded when assessing the value of special educators. EPP was only seen as a relevant special educational tool after it had received interest from other schools, especially when it was recognised by the State Education Department as a 'benchmark' programme. This attracted visitors who wished to learn more about EPP. It was only then that the principals began to take an interest in the programme. This goal can be achieved by the distribution of an official ministry of education circular, sent directly to all principals. It would also be of immense benefit if SETs had special education specific, evidence-based evaluation forms, which at present do not exist. Currently, they are required to use a universal evaluation form. This can provide the principal with parameters by which he/she can better evaluate and assess the special education teacher. It is hoped that a by-product of this would see special education teachers being treated on a par with all other staff.

### 4. Mainstream colleagues undermining special educators

There is a misconception amongst mainstream teachers regarding the value of special educators within the school system. This stems from the culture of the education system which places emphasis on an exam-oriented target approach. Ultimately, the responsibility for altering this negative perception of special educators lies with school principals, who need to raise awareness of the value of special education amongst their mainstream teaching staff. In schools where EPP has been established and recognised, this perception improved. This was especially the case once EPP showed marked progress in the special needs learners' performance. This serves as evidence of the significance of EPP and its impact on secondary schools. Therefore, if EPP was to be replicated throughout all secondary schools, the reputation of special education would be greatly improved.

### 5. Absence of thorough supervision and joined-up thinking amongst educational ministries and between higher educational ministries

Firstly, joined-up thinking between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education needs to be established. The ministries should be encouraged to take part in collaborations between schools in the same district, so that existing EPPs can be introduced and shared more easily. In this way, each school will establish and specialise in one EPP. For instance, each school will master one particular employment programme with funding provided by the ministries and the collaborators. This will enable the special needs learners from other schools within the same district to join the programme. By setting up an EPP station, the special needs learner will be able to make a choice based on their career interests and achieve their ambitions. By establishing one station, the special education teachers can focus on that one programme which could potentially lessen the burden of their responsibility, thus they could manage their time more effectively. Added to this, the special education teachers will be able to plan more strategically and effectively regarding implementation of EPP. At the same time, the wellbeing of the teacher should also be taken into consideration. An EPP station will eliminate time wasting for the learners as they will not have to take part in programmes which do not match their interests. The parents will also be able to help their children choose the programme. Generally, all schools have a philosophy of self-improvement, with the aim of enhancing their reputation. This tends to manifest itself by cultivating a sense of competition between schools and has the detrimental effect on schools being poorly motivated to work in conjunction with other schools. However, this culture of competitiveness should be actively discouraged by encouraging a sense of shared goals amongst schools that lie within the same district. By doing this, schools could share facilities, funding and specialist skills.

6. Documentation Categories covering certain elements related to EPP activities are missing

Similar to the Individual Education Plan (IEP), Individual Employment Preparation Plan or some document with similar aims (such as an Individual Employment Plan) should be introduced in secondary schools. Using an Individual Employment Plan for learners who are involved in EPPs will enable teachers to fill in details about the collaborators' activities. To establish an EPP, there needs to be a coordinated plan, built upon regularly scheduled meetings along with formal documentation. This will ensure stability and uniformity within the programme.

Academic background, knowledge and skills of the educators

1. Time constraints exacerbates the problems faced by EPP educators

Universities should be the starting point for solving the problem of the lack of special education teachers with an adequate vocational background. Newly graduated teachers should have studied both academic and vocational courses as their major and minor subjects. Secondly, teachers who currently work in special education should receive internal training related to EPP, providing them with guidelines in order to execute an effective programme.

2. Recruitment of teachers from different academic background into special education

Educational ministries need to consider the best options and ways of recruiting educators to teach special needs learners. It is important that the special education teacher who acquires a proficient and deep knowledge and background about the field of special education understands the needs and requirements of special needs learners. Special needs learners have their own characteristics, including unique strengths and weakness, which leads to them having a need for a specialist special education teacher to assist them and direct them to the right path (Mamlin, 2012). Therefore, the recruitment of the special education teacher needs to be improved. These findings are similar to what the previous literature by Boe (2006) stressed: That an educator lacking the required qualifications to work in a particular field or specialised area should not be recruited or they should not be retained unless their qualifications or specialisation is upgraded appropriately.

On the other hand, recruitment of teachers from different academic backgrounds have to be tailored adequately before they can enter the field of special education. A well-trained special education teacher should be able to deliver effective teaching and learning in comparison to those who gain knowledge after several years of teaching experience.

3. Lack of Vocational Skills Development of EPP Special Educators

All SEIP in the secondary schools in Malaysia should prepare the special education teachers for these challenging Employment Preparation Programmes. The

Vocational Education and Training Division under the Ministry of Education should play a major role in providing staff training related to vocational skills. Also, vocational curriculum should be practiced for learners between 16 to 19 years of age. If this is done, the level of trust adds to the value and effectiveness of the programme

### Social and Physical Environment

#### 1. Local Environment: The logical difficulties in choosing an EPP appropriate to its environment

Introducing vocational support services to provide mobility to learners may solve this issue. As working parents are very busy, its often difficult for them to be available to assist their children at all times. Teachers also face difficulties in leaving school premises on a regular basis. This creates a vacuum for learners who depend upon support, in terms of travelling, training, helping with certain vocational tasks as well as helping learners to deal with money. By providing and adding a trained vocational support worker in the IEP team, the learners are afforded the opportunity to fully engage in all employment preparation programme activities, both during their school years and beyond. This will enable the parents to feel reassured that a trained professional is helping their children to participate in employment. Also, by providing vocational support service, educators should be able to reduce the burden on working families. On the other hand, from the findings in this study, there is a lack of belief and trust about the capacity of the learners amongst employers. Providing vocational support service enables the learners to learn the skills at workplaces without disrupting the employers and the team. Therefore, it builds the confidence amongst the special needs learners by not relying on teachers and family. Timmons et al. (2013) highlighted that the vocational support system works as a job developer, which enables it to assist people with disabilities in terms of providing information about any vacancies arising for specific jobs. Therefore, vocational support service should be introduced in Malaysia, as it helps to lead to students' independence and enhances their quality of life.

#### 2. Family Environment: Lack of Parents/ Family Support

In addressing this issue, the school can help raise awareness amongst parents regarding the importance of their role in supporting their children with employment preparation. This can be achieved through seminars, IEP team meetings and by the distribution of leaflets, all of which cover the latest developments/opportunities in special education. Also, explaining to parents the rights and privileges of their special needs children will help. This will, in due course, enhance parent's awareness and increase their participation.

### 3. Psychological Environment: Increasing social interaction

All school members, including mainstream teachers, need to be more accepting of special needs learners as the school is the primary environment for all learners to interact broadly. If this is, in any way, an unhealthy environment, it can have a detrimental effect on those involved. This is especially the case for those already stigmatised. Heads of Parent-Teacher Associations have an important role to play in making sure those parents who have children with disabilities are encouraged to take part in school events. Principals, HoDs and SETs should also play a major role in ensuring that special education is not isolated. The level of awareness of these issues should be raised amongst all school members and there should also be active encouragement to include special needs learners in school events.

### 4. Emotional environment overwhelming bullying issues

School counselors should be well trained and have a special education background as well. With a background in both counselling and a knowledge of special education, the school counselor should be able to play a major role within special education and help to provide a harmonious school community. Research by Thornton (2018) claimed that if school counselors and special educators work together, they can be a powerful team in helping to create a better school community. This could also improve the learners' performance.

### 5. Unwilling to include special needs learners in the best performing classes

Although this does not happen in all schools, there have been instances where this has happened. Schools should represent the best platform for inclusion, regardless of whether or not pupils are academically strong. There are many mainstream students

who also have severe difficulties academically. Through EPP, mainstream students can merge with special education learners in the same setting. This way, both special needs learners and mainstream students who are interested in vocational education can be trained in the secondary schools too. This may prove to be a contributing factor in achieving the 75% of the inclusive education mission by the year 2025 (Ministry of Education, 2013).

#### 6. Insufficient space in the school grounds causes difficulty in setting-up EPP

As EPP is not part of the curriculum, the curriculum development team from the Ministry of Education should update a relevant curriculum periodically. The State Education Department should provide appropriate guidelines to both the special education team and to the school's principal before encouraging the implementation of EPP in the secondary schools. With the guidelines in place, the principal should allocate sufficient facilities, as this is proven to contribute to the learner's performance. Collaboration between schools is another way to solve space related issues. Building one station encourages a better quality EPP. The limited space issues in each school can be solved by implementing only one EPP in that particular school. This means that they will only focus on one programme at that particular station thus all of the training will take place there. Therefore, the limited space used can be fully occupied.

#### 7. Social interaction by engaging in social activities

Setting up one 'real-life setting' programme means that the students will not become confused with multiple EPPs. Collaboration and coordination with other schools develops social interaction, which in turn proves to be a crucial step in improving learner participation in society through a culture of teamwork.

#### 8. Social interaction through parent's participation

There should be an awareness programme designed to invite state or district level departments to the school to inform the parents so that they understand the situation.

Parents' collaboration is crucial for an effective EPP and for preparing the learners for employability and independence after they leave school. Distributing brochures and flyers to parents is also helpful in building confidence among parents about the employment programme. Parents' attitudes are one of the barriers in implementing a career development programme successfully in the school (Abdullah et al., 2015).

### Collaboration and Coordination

#### 1. Efforts of implementing EPP to meet the career interests and ambitions of each individual learner

Individual Education Plan (IEP) teams need to play a major role in providing the most suitable EPP. Communication is very important in building a relationship among the IEP team, to help the special needs learner by providing the most suitable EPP.

This study also recommends that SEIP should act as a centralised EPP station for a particular vocational skill. This would allow the special needs learner to travel within the same zone to gain the knowledge and skills required in order for them to choose their career interests. This way, all SEIP would be based within the same zone, allowing for collaboration with mutual benefits. This also would enable the sharing of funding and trained educators.

This means EPPs can be conducted in the station form, where the student, accompanied by the teacher, will travel to the station nearby to learn the skills. This way the funding is allocated to one school and can be focused on only one programme instead of it being used to establish many programmes, which means that if one district has around 10 schools nearby, and a different real life setting is set up in each school students from the same district will be encouraged to choose any of the options available to them. This allows the schools to share the funding and the specialists themselves.

#### 2. Collaboration with reluctant employers in making the connection between Special needs learners' initiative and the Employer's acceptance

Government can encourage employers by providing more opportunities and privileges for both individual employers and organisations who hire people with disabilities.

Seminars and conferences should be organised for employers and the public in order to raise awareness about the multitude of benefits gained by engaging and employing people with disabilities. Unfortunately, there still exists a certain level of stigmatism of special needs individuals. In dealing with this stigma, there needs to be more awareness amongst the general population. The best way to address this problem is by a coordinated effort between the labour market and policy makers, both governmental and in the private sector. In this study, the research suggested multi-pronged approaches could be effective in dismantling the barriers faced by disabled people. This will have a positive effect on the lives of people with disabilities across the board as they transition from school to work life. As disabled people play a more active role in society, this should in turn change the general public's perception of disability, thus modifying any negative preconceived ideas they may have.

3. Internal Hindrance: Lack of equally shared commitment amongst EPP teachers

Principals and heads of department should encourage team teaching. That means one teacher should hold one academic subject and one vocational subject. This way, all teachers have tasks that are involved in EPP. Internal training related to the vocational skills can be held in school.

4. External hindrance: An absence of a signed protocol between schools and the collaborators

A signed protocol between the collaborators and schools should be established. This way teachers are able to understand their role, thus avoiding any misunderstanding. This should also be applied to the schools' cooperative club, who help with the marketing and sale of the produce.

### 5.3 Implications

There are some key lessons which can be drawn from the findings of the study which may benefit the principals, head of departments, special education teachers and further research.

#### a) Implications for Heads of Department

Department heads should ensure full coordination is established between all those involved in EPP by liaising with principals, sponsors, collaborators and ensuring documentation is in order. There should also be staff support and guidance from Heads of Department in order to improve both the school and students' performance.

#### b) Implications for Special Education Teachers

Findings in this study revealed that the teachers still lack knowledge about the content in the curriculum. It is stated that the curriculum can be modified according to the needs and requirement of students with disabilities. Policies regarding employability of disabled people stated that inter-governmental bodies are encouraged to collaborate with secondary schools to provide adequate resources and training and specialist advice to help the start-up of an employment preparation programme. Teachers should endeavour to keep abreast of the latest developments and/or updates to current legislation regarding special education. Failure to do so could result in poor learner performances. It is time for the secondary schools to embrace EPP whilst striking a balance between learners' academic needs and employability skills. In doing so, the level of trust in EPP activities is combined with better value and effectiveness of the programme, which enhances the overall performance of the project.

#### c) Implications for the Principals

Generally, all schools have a philosophy of self-improvement, with the aim of enhancing their reputation. This, however, tends to manifest itself by cultivating a sense of competition between schools. However, this has a detrimental effect since schools are being poorly motivated to work in conjunction with other schools. Thus, this culture of competitiveness should be actively discouraged by encouraging a sense of shared goals amongst schools that lie within the same district. By doing this, schools could share facilities, funding and specialist skills.

#### d) Implications for the Policymakers

There needs to be greater use made of the Individual Employment Plan. Currently, only the Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is being used to record learners' performances. A record of learner's EPP activities should be documented by using the Individual Employment Plan form. This will provide a detailed record of their EPP performance.

#### e) Implications for Other Countries

This study investigated EPPs in the Malaysian context, which were using agriculture and livestock, because this is a dominant part of Malaysia's export market and is seen as the backbone of the Malaysian economy. However, this idea should not mean that EPP in general cannot be adapted to suit other environments of different parts of the world, whereby other countries may analyse their own surroundings to establish which EPP programmes to implement.

#### f) Implications for Future Research

Further research is needed to determine how the principals perceived the implementation of EPP and also to assess their level of participation and support.

Future researchers may benefit from approaching agencies and inter-governmental collaborators to examine their perception of EPPs and discover to what extent they collaborated.

Since EPPs were introduced in 2011 in a few secondary schools, there are increasing numbers of schools that have implemented EPPs across all Malaysian states. This now means there are sufficient numbers of participants to be recruited for a larger population sample. Therefore, quantitative studies can be carried out to reinforce generalised findings.

If there is a similar programme established in another country in future, the researcher would be delighted to consider carrying out a comparative study if time and funding were available.

#### 5.4 Limitations

Firstly, there are several limitations found in this study. The chief limitation that can be identified is that the nature of the research, consisting of a qualitative approach in a small number of settings, which means that the findings are not susceptible to generalisation. Thus, the research findings cannot be applied to the special needs learner population in all Malaysian schools, nor do they, in the strictest sense, have more universal applications across nations. Nonetheless, the researcher would argue that the findings from the study that delineated the hindrances faced by special educators could be relevant to practitioners in many situations and may well offer helpful guidance in meeting the challenges in this field of work.

Secondly, as EPPs were still in their pioneer stage, there was neither a suitable assessment instrument nor a framework designed specifically for special education to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

Thirdly, although the learners who were involved in an EPP were aged between 13 and 19 years old, the sample selected for this study only looked at learners who were between the ages of 16 to 19. This is because those special needs learners between the ages of 13 to 15 were still in the process of making decisions about the EPP. Undoubtedly, this group of learners should be included in a future study as a way of establishing how they perceived the introduction of EPPs and as a way of measuring the level of their participation in the practical tasks involved.

Fourthly, as the researcher undertook the PhD study in the United Kingdom and, as there is not yet an EPP or equivalent programme established there, the researcher was unable to carry out a comparative study.

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## APPENDICES

Kumudthaa Muniandy  
Researcher/ PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
I M Marsh Campus,  
Barkhill Road, Liverpool  
L17 6BD,  
United Kingdom

Ref No:  
10 March 2015

---

Head of Secretary  
Ministry of Education Malaysia  
Education Scholarship Division  
Aras 1, Blok 2251,  
Jalan Usahawan 1,  
63000 Cyberjaya,  
Selangor, Malaysia

Sir/ Madam,

**Conducting Research Applications for Completing the Topic of Doctoral Thesis ‘The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia’.**

With referral to the above matter.

2. Please be informed that the university evaluation panel has approved my doctoral thesis research as such on 30/05/2015.
3. In connection with that, I need to collect data to complete research studies in 5 Integrated Secondary School whom involved in employment preparation programme in Melaka and Perak State Education Department in term of three months from 25/08/2015 to 05/11/2015.
4. Herewith I attached the supporting documents for consideration of approval of this application.
  - i. The letter of authorization from Liverpool John Moores University
  - ii. Letter from supervisor
  - iii. Progress reports Thesis / latest learning
  - iv. Proposal & Schedule planning
  - v. Gantt chart
  - vi. Approval letter from Economic Planning Unit (EPU)
5. I expected to depart to Malaysia on 19/8/2015 from Manchester, UK and will be arrived on 23/08/2015 at Kuala Lumpur International Airport. On arrival day, I will report to the EPU, Putrajaya and get a ‘researcher passes. I will be returning to the UK from KLIA on 05/11/2015 and is expected to arrive on 06/11/2015 at Manchester, UK. Before I left to return to the UK, I will send a brief report on the collection of data to the EPU as stated in the letter of authorization.

*Appendix A: Permission to conduct Research in schools*

*i. Letters to seek permission from Ministry of Education(con)*

I hope my application will be considered as soon as possible. Cooperation and approval I precede it with gratitude.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Researcher/ PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
I M Marsh Campus,  
Barkhill Road, Liverpool  
L17 6BD, U



**PEJABAT PENDIDIKAN DAERAH  
LARUT MATANG DAN SELAMA**  
Jalan Taming Sari,  
34000 Taiping,  
PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN



Tel: 05-808 4119 / 05-807 9488  
Faks: 05-808 0660  
Portal Rasmi: www.ppdllms.edu.my  
E-mail: ppdlms@ppdlms.edu.my

**"PERAK SENTIASA DI PUNCAK KECEMERLANGAN"**

Ruj. Kami : PPD.LMS.620 - 4/1/8 (10)  
Tarikh : 1 Oktober 2015

**KUMUDTHAA A/P MUNIANDY**  
NO 38, Jalan 14  
Taman Desa Jaya IV  
34600 Kamunting,  
Perak Darul Ridzuan

Tuan,

**KELULUSAN UNTUK MENJALANKAN KAJIAN DI SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH DALAM  
DAERAH LARUT MATANG DAN SELAMA DI BAWAH JABATAN PENDIDIKAN  
NEGERI PERAK**

Dengan hormatnya saya merujuk kepada surat tuan bertarikh 22 September 2015 mengenai perkara di atas.

2. Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah Larut Matang dan Selama tiada halangan kepada pihak tuan untuk menjalankan Kajian bertajuk **'The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Students in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Melaka and Perak'** seperti dinyatakan dalam surat tuan. Walau bagaimanapun, kelulusan ini tertakluk di bawah Surat Pekeliling Ikhtisas Bil. 9/2004 – Panduan Penglibatan Murid-Murid Sekolah Dalam Program Atau Aktiviti Anjuran Agensi-Agensi Selain Daripada Agensi Di Bawah Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia.

3. Sehubungan dengan itu, pihak tuan perlu mengadakan perbincangan dengan Pengetua atau Guru Besar sekolah yang terlibat di dalam pelaksanaan program ini di samping mematuhi syarat-syarat berikut;

- 3.1 Pihak tuan perlu mendapat kebenaran terlebih dahulu daripada Pengetua atau Guru Besar sekolah berkenaan untuk menjemput sekolah ke program berkenaan dan hendaklah diselaraskan dengan perancangan pihak sekolah.
- 3.2 Pengetua atau Guru Besar boleh memilih untuk terlibat dalam program atau aktiviti anjuran Agensi bukan Kerajaan (NGO, syarikat korporat dan sebagainya) berdasarkan keperluan dan kemampuan pihak sekolah.
- 3.3 Surat kebenaran/kelulusan ini tidak boleh digunapakai bagi maksud untuk mendapatkan sumbangan dan tajaan daripada mana-mana pihak.
- 3.4 Penyertaan murid dan guru tidak mengganggu atau menjejaskan proses pengajaran dan pembelajaran yang telah ditetapkan oleh pihak sekolah. Ianya sesuai dengan usaha Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah Melindungi Masa Instruksional (MMI) yakni masa pengajaran dan pembelajaran murid.

AMN/mhmnnp

CINTAILAH BAHASA KITA



- 3.5 Penganjur bertanggungjawab menjaga keselamatan dan kebajikan murid dan guru-guru yang terlibat dalam program ini.
- 3.6 Murid-murid dan warga sekolah tidak boleh dipaksa atau diwajibkan terlibat dalam program ini.
- 3.7 Penyertaan murid-murid hendaklah mendapat kebenaran bertulis daripada ibu bapa atau penjaga.
- 3.8 Pihak penganjur hendaklah bertanggungjawab menanggung semua kos penganjuran program atau aktiviti yang hendak dianjurkan termasuk pengangkutan, makan dan minum.
- 3.9 Guru-guru pengiring hendaklah dilantik oleh pihak sekolah mengiringi murid-murid ke program atau aktiviti berkenaan.
- 3.10 Pihak tuan dipohon agar mengemukakan satu salinan laporan program dalam tempoh 30 hari selepas pelaksanaan program tersebut.
- 3.11 Tiada implikasi kewangan kepada Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah, sekolah, guru dan murid yang terlibat.
- 3.12 Pejabat Pendidikan Daerah berhak menarik balik surat kelulusan/kebenaran sekiranya pihak tuan gagal mematuhi syarat dan peraturan yang ditetapkan atau bercanggah dengan dasar sedia ada yang sedang berkuatkuasa.

4. Kelulusan permohonan ini adalah untuk tujuan yang dipohon sahaja dan luput selepas tarikh 31 Disember 2015. Jika terdapat sebarang pertanyaan sila hubungi En. Mohd Hafiz Bin Mohamad Noopiah, Penolong PPD Perhubungan di talian 05-8084119

Sekian, terima kasih.

**"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"**

Saya yang menurut perintah,



(HAJI AMINUDIN BIN MHD. NOR, PPT)  
Pegawai Pendidikan Daerah,  
Larut, Matang dan Selama

AMN/mhmp



JABATAN PENDIDIKAN MELAKA,  
JALAN ISTANA,  
PETI SURAT NO. 62,  
75450 MELAKA.

Pengarah : 06-2323783  
Timbalan : 06-2323781  
Pejabat Am : 06-2323777  
: 06-2323778  
: 06-2323779  
Peperiksaan : 06-2323780  
Faks : 06-2320500

Ruj. Kami : JPM.SPS.UPP.100 -2/5/2 Jld16(12)  
Tarikh : 03 September 2015

Kumudthaa Muniandy  
Researcher/PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty Of Education, Health and Community  
T M Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Liverpool  
L17 6BD, United Kingdom

Tuan,

**KEBENARAN MENJALANKAN KAJIAN KE SEKOLAH-SEKOLAH DI MELAKA**

Dengan segala hormatnya merujuk kepada surat tuan yang bertarikh 25 Ogos 2015 mengenai perkara di atas.

2. Sukacita dimaklumkan bahawa Jabatan ini tiada halangan bagi pihak tuan untuk menjalankan kajian yang bertajuk:

" The Effectiveness Of Employment Preparation Programmes For Special Needs Learners In Five Integrated Secondary Schools In Malaysia " diluluskan.

3. Dimaklumkan juga di sini bahawa kajian ini adalah semata-mata untuk memenuhi syarat kursus yang diduduki sahaja dan bukan untuk tujuan lain.

4. Walau bagaimanapun, pihak tuan adalah dinasihatkan menghubungi pihak Pengetua/ Guru Besar sekolah terlebih dahulu untuk berbincang dan mendapatkan persetujuan. Sebarang pertanyaan, sila hubungi En. Mohd bin Janis di falian 06-2325922 (Unit Perhubungan dan Pendaftaran).

Sekian, terima kasih.

**"BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"**  
**"MELAKA MAJU NEGERIKU SAYANG FASA II"**  
**"BERKAT, TEPAT, CEPAT,"**

Saya yang menurut perintah,

  
(HAJI AB. GHANI BIN HAJI AB. HAMID)  
Ketua Sektor Pengurusan Sekolah  
b.p. Pengarah Pendidikan Melaka

(Sila catatkan rujukan Jabatan ini apabila berhubung)



**UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI**  
**Economic Planning Unit**  
Jabatan Perdana Menteri  
*Prime Minister's Department*  
Block B5 & B6  
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan  
**62502 PUTRAJAYA**  
**MALAYSIA**



**EPU**  
EKONOMI PERANCANG  
UNIT PERANTERANGAN NEGARA

Telefon : 603-8000 8000

KUMUDTHAA A/P MUNIANDY  
NO 38, JALAN 14, TAMAN DESA JAYA IV, TAIPING  
34600 KAMUNTING  
PERAK  
Email : [k.muniandy@2014.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:k.muniandy@2014.ljmu.ac.uk)

Ruj. Tuan:  
Your Ref.:

Ruj. Kami: UPE 40/200/19/3256  
Our Ref.: (11)

Tarikh: 18 OGOS 2015  
Date:

#### APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the **Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department**. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name	:	KUMUDTHAA A/P MUNIANDY
Passport No./ I.C No	:	781107086348
Nationality	:	MALAYSIA
Title of Research	:	"The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Students' in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Melaka and Perak."
Period of Research Approved	:	48 months

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block B5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia. Bring along two (2) colour passport size photographs. Kindly, get an appointment date from us before you come to collect your research pass.

"Merancang Ke Arah Kecemerlangan"

Appendix A: Permission to conduct Research in schools

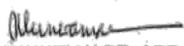
iv. Letter of approval from Economic Planning Unit (con)

3. I would like to draw your attention to the undertaking signed by you that you will submit without cost to the Economic Planning Unit the following documents:

- a) A brief summary of your research findings on completion of your research and before you leave Malaysia; and
- b) Three (3) copies of your final dissertation/publication.

4. Lastly, please submit a copy of your preliminary and final report directly to the State Government where you carried out your research. Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

  
(MUNIRAH BT. ABD MANAN)  
For Director General  
Economic Planning Unit  
E-mail: [munirah@epu.gov.my](mailto:munirah@epu.gov.my)  
Tel : 03 88882809  
Fax: 03 88883798

**ATTENTION**

This letter is only to inform you the status of your application and cannot be used as a research pass.



BAHAGIAN PERANCANGAN DAN PENYELIDIKAN DASAR PENDIDIKAN  
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN MALAYSIA  
ARAS 1-4, BLOK E-8  
KOMPLEKS KERAJAAN PARCEL E  
PUSAT PENADBIRAN KERAJAAN PERSEKUTUAN  
62604 PUTRAJAYA.

Telefon: 03-88846591  
Faks : 03-88846579

Ruj. Kami : KP(BPPDP)603/011/Jld17(48)  
Tarikh : 07 Ogos 2015

Ketua Pengarah  
Seksyen Ekonomi Makro  
Unit Perancangan Ekonomi  
Jabatan Perdana Menteri  
Blok B5 Aras 4  
Kompleks Jabatan Perdana Menteri  
Pusat Pentadbiran Kerajaan Persekutuan  
62502 PUTRAJAYA  
(u.p. Pn. Munirah Bt. Abd. Manan)

Tuan,

**Pemohonan Untuk Menjalankan Penyelidikan di Malaysia**  
**Nama: KUMUDTHAA MUNIANDY**

Dengan hormatnya saya merujuk kepada perkara di atas.

2. Adalah saya diarahkan memaklumkan bahawa permohonan tuan untuk menjalankan kajian bertajuk:

**" The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia"** diluluskan.

3. Bersama-sama ini disertakan ulasan Bahagian ini ke atas cadangan penyelidikan yang dikemukakan.

Sekian dimaklumkan, terima kasih.

**" BERKHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"**

Saya yang menurut perintah,

  
(DR. HJ. ZABANI BIN DARUS)  
Ketua Sektor  
Sektor Penyelidikan Dan Penilaian  
Bahagian Perancangan dan Penyelidikan Dasar Pendidikan  
b.p. Ketua Setiausaha  
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

**REVIEW OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL**  
**ULASAN TENTANG CADANGAN KAJIAN**

Researcher's Name: Kumuditha Muniandy      Research/ Kajian:  Ph.D/ Kedoktorian  
 Masters/ Sarjana

Name of institution/ Nama Institusi: Liverpool John Moores University

Research Title/ Tajuk Kajian: "The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia"

a) Views concerning the research proposal:  
Setelah membaca cadangan kajian seperti yang dinyatakan di atas, pandangan terhadap cadangan kajian adalah seperti berikut:

i) Area of study/ Bidang yang akan dikaji:  
 Suitable/Sesuai       Not Suitable/Tidak Sesuai

ii) Sample and research location identified/Sampel dan kawasan kajian yang telah dikenal pasti:  
 Suitable/Sesuai       Not Suitable/Tidak Sesuai  
 Not Identified/Tidak Pasti

iii) Benefits of the research or its importance to the Ministry Of Education, Malaysia  
 Benefit/Faedah       No benefits/Tidak Berfaedah  
 Not Identified/Tidak Pasti

Findings of this study would be important to the MOE because it inform policy makers on "The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia"

b) Suggestions made by EPRD, Ministry of Education, Malaysia/ Cadangan BPPDP, Kementerian Pelajaran Malaysia:  
 Approved/Diluluskan       Approved with conditions/Diluluskan dengan bersyarat  
 Not Approved/Tidak diluluskan

\* Remarks:

  
( DR. H.J. ZABANI BIN DARUS )  
Head of Sector  
Research and Evaluation Sector  
Educational Research and Planning Division  
Ministry of Education, Malaysia

Appendix A: Permission to conduct Research in schools

vi. The letter of Authorization University (LJMU Ethics approval email)

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**Muniandy, Kumudthaa**

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**From:** Williams, Mandy  
**Sent:** 08 June 2015 11:34  
**To:** Muniandy, Kumudthaa  
**Cc:** Vickerman, Philip  
**Subject:** Ethical Approval

**Importance:** High

Dear Kumudthaa

With reference to your application for Ethical approval.

**15/EHC/041 - Kumudthaa Muniandy, PGR – The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia (Phil Vickerman)**

Liverpool John Moores University Research Ethics Committee (REC) has reviewed the above application and I am pleased to inform you that ethical approval has been granted and the study can now commence.

Approval is given on the understanding that:

- any adverse reactions/events which take place during the course of the project are reported to the Committee immediately;
- any unforeseen ethical issues arising during the course of the project will be reported to the Committee immediately;
- the LJMU logo is used for all documentation relating to participant recruitment and participation eg poster, information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires. The LJMU logo can be accessed at <http://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/corporatecommunications/60486.htm>

Where any substantive amendments are proposed to the protocol or study procedures further ethical approval must be sought.

Applicants should note that where relevant appropriate gatekeeper / management permission must be obtained prior to the study commencing at the study site concerned.

For details on how to report adverse events or request ethical approval of major amendments please refer to the information provided at <https://www2.ljmu.ac.uk/RGSO/93130.htm>

Please note that ethical approval is given for a period of five years from the date granted and therefore the expiry date for this project will be June 2020. An application for extension of approval must be submitted if the project continues after this date.



Mandy Williams, Research Support Officer  
(Research Ethics and Governance)  
Research and Innovation Services  
Kingsway House, Hatton Garden, Liverpool L3 2AJ  
t: 01519046467 e: [a.f.williams@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:a.f.williams@ljmu.ac.uk)

*Appendix A: Permission to conduct Research in schools*  
vii. *Approval Letter from supervisor*

Director,  
Educational Sponsorship Division  
Ministry of education  
Level 1, Block 1,  
Jalan Usahawan 2251  
63000 Cyberjaya  
Selangor

16.6.2015

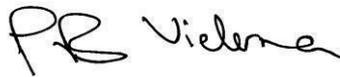
Dear Sirs,

Approval to commence Fieldwork

Reference to the above statement student details as below has been approved to commence her fieldwork/data collection in Integrated Secondary School in Melaka and Perak State, Malaysia.

Name : Kumudthaa Muniandy,  
PGR student ID : 706752  
Programme : PhD in Special Education (Vocational Training) Liverpool John Moores University

Yours faithfully



Professor Philip Vickerman  
**Executive Director to the Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and Enhancement**



## LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY GATEKEEPER INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Project:**

The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty**

Muniandy, Kumudthaa  
Researcher/ PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
I M Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Liverpool  
L17 6BD, UK

**1. What is the reason for this letter/research?**

It's a formalities information provided to Principal of school in order to conduct a PhD Postgraduate research towards the award of studies.

**2. What is the purpose of the study/rationale for the project?**

The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of employment preparation programmes in preparing special need learners towards work life. The study is also to investigate the areas that need to be improved in employment preparation programmes. Apart from that the study is to investigate factors that pose as hindrances to teachers in effectively conducting employment preparation programmes in school. The research is aimed at Head of Special Education Field, Special education teacher and students with disabilities whom involved in the Employment Preparation programme in Perak and Melaka State, Malaysia. The study will provide a framework of the outcome and the effectiveness of the programmes that enables other Integrated Secondary School to practice in Malaysia. The findings of these researches may motivate other Integrated Secondary School special education teachers and students with disabilities to involve in the Employment Preparation programme confidently and build a successful future employee in the workplace.

**1. What we are asking you to do (be explicit about access and what role the gatekeeper will be taking)**

You as a gatekeeper plays a main role to represent the school in terms of protocol approval, agreement to participate in research, protection of individual interest or permission to choose participant for the research and consent of the participant involved especially vulnerable people like special needs students. We want a permit to be granted to the researcher to access your school to approach an academic staff and students, which consist of Head of Special Education Department, Special Education Teachers and special needs students' whom undergo the Employment preparation programme in your school.

**2. Why do we need access to your facilities/staff/students?**

The researcher needs to access to your facilities, academic staff and students with disabilities is because your school has accomplished the minimum criteria that undertake the employment preparation programme successfully for at least 3 years. Generate the data from your school is believed to produce a greater impact in the field of employment preparation.

3. **If you are willing to assist in the study what happens next?**
  - a. You will be provided a gatekeeper consent form to be signed as evidence of permission granted to conduct the research.
  - b. The researcher will also try to gain an active consent letter from the staff (Head of Special Education Field and Special Education Teachers) whom at least do have 1 year experience in this programme.
  - c. Researcher will try to gain an assent form for students with special needs aged between 16 and above whom undergoes an employment preparation programme.
  - d. An active consent form will be gained from the parents or carer of the special needs students to show respect and as protocol to get their permission to approach their vulnerable children.
4. **How we will use the Information?**

Information will be well organized, documented, preserved and made available for sharing and publishing.
5. **Will the name of my organisation taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

The name of your organization/ School taking part in the study be kept confidential. All data collected from the research will remain anonymous and confidential too. The data will be stored in securing password protected university computers. Data will be destroyed completely after 12 months of graduation.
6. **What will taking part involve? What should I do now?**
  - Sign and return the **Gatekeeper Consent Form** provided.
  - For participants who may be classed as adults with special needs, please make sure **Signed Parental Consent Forms** are collected back **BEFORE** conduct the research.

Should you have any comments or questions regarding this research, you may contact the researchers: *(insert names & contact details)*

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee *(insert REC reference number and date of approval)*

**Contact Details of Researcher**

Kumudthaa Muniandy  
Email: [k.muniandy@2014.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:k.muniandy@2014.ljmu.ac.uk)

**Contact Details of Academic Supervisor *(student studies only)***

Prof Philip Vickerman  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
Email: [P.Vickerman@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:P.Vickerman@ljmu.ac.uk)

**If you have any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact [researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk) and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.**

*In the interests of safety for the researcher, LJMU Research Ethics Committee would advise researchers not to include home addresses or personal telephone numbers (mobile or home) as contact details for participants.*



## LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY GATEKEEPER CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:**

The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty**

Muniandy, Kumudthaa  
Researcher/ PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
I M Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Liverpool  
L17 6BD, UK

Please tick to confirm your understanding of the study and that you are happy for your organisation to take part and your facilities to be used to host parts of the project.

*Please add some brief information about your project here that clarifies exactly what the gatekeeper is agreeing to*

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.
2. I understand that participation of our organisation and students/members in the research is voluntary and that they are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and that this will not affect legal rights.
3. I understand that any personal information collected during the study will be anonymised and remain confidential.
4. I agree for our organisation and students/members to take part in the above study.
5. I agree to conform to the data protection act

Name of Gatekeeper:

Date:

Signature:

Name of Researcher:

Date:

Signature:

Name of Person taking consent:  
(if different from researcher)

Date:

Signature:



## LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Title of Project:**

The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty**

Muniandy, Kumudthaa  
Researcher/ PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
I M Marsh Campus, Barkhill Road, Liverpool  
L17 6BD, UK

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide if you want to take part or not.

**1. The purpose of the study**

The research is for a dissertation towards the award of PhD Postgraduate studies.

The aim of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of employment preparation programmes in preparing special need learners towards work life. The study is also to investigate the areas that need to be improved in employment preparation programmes. Apart from that the study is to investigate factors that pose as hindrances to teachers in effectively conducting employment preparation programmes in school. The research is aimed at Head of Special Education Field, Special education teacher and students with disabilities whom involved in the Employment Preparation programme in Perak and Melaka State, Malaysia. The study will provide a framework of the outcome and the effectiveness of the programmes that enables other Integrated Secondary School to practice in Malaysia. The findings of these researches may motivate other Integrated Secondary School special education teachers and students with disabilities to involve in the Employment Preparation programme confidently and build a successful future employee in the workplace.

**2. Do I have to take part?**

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do, you will be given this information sheet and asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. A decision to withdraw will not affect your rights/any future treatment/service you receive.

**3. What will happen to me if I take part?**

The researcher will interview the participant: Head of Special Education field or special education teacher (whichever applicable to you) whom involve in the employment preparation programme for at least 1 year in this school. You will be interviewed about your views, opinions, issues, challenges and perceptions as professional, experiences related to the Employment preparation and this enables in-depth information to be collected about the effectiveness of the programmes and the issues related. Participants will be interviewed individually and separately for about 1 hour. However, additional

interview sessions will be proceeding if the researcher needs additional information within 3 months duration time only. All the interview sessions will be tape-recorded. The researcher will also observe the Special Education teacher's classroom of employment preparation setting. All data collected from interview sessions and observational will be stored securely on University protected computers. Data will be destroyed after 12 months after researcher's graduation.

**4. Are there any risks / benefits involved?**

No risks are anticipated since the research activities only take place in classroom setting interaction. The benefits involved may raise an awareness among the participant's responsibilities and contribution of their competences and skills which plays the main role towards the success of the Employment Preparation Programmes.

**5. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

All the data collected from the participants are anonymous and confidential at all time.

This study has received ethical approval from LJMU's Research Ethics Committee (*insert REC reference number and date of approval*)

**Contact Details of Researcher**

Kumudthaa Muniandy  
Email: [k.muniandy@2014.ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:k.muniandy@2014.ljmu.ac.uk)

**Contact Details of Academic Supervisor (*student studies only*)**

Prof Philip Vickerman  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
Email: [P.Vickerman@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:P.Vickerman@ljmu.ac.uk)

If you any concerns regarding your involvement in this research, please discuss these with the researcher in the first instance. If you wish to make a complaint, please contact [researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@ljmu.ac.uk) and your communication will be re-directed to an independent person as appropriate.

*In the interests of safety for the researcher LJMU ethics committee would advise researchers not to include home addresses or personal telephone numbers (mobile or home) as contact details for participants.*

*Where questionnaires are to be returned by members of the public as part of the study the ethics committee would advise researchers to consider the use of collection boxes at third party locations.*

*Note: A copy of the participant information sheet should be retained by the participant with a copy of the signed consent form.*





**LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY  
ASSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN / OTHER  
DEPENDENTS**

(to be completed by the child and their parent/guardian)

**Title of Project:**

The Effectiveness of Employment Preparation Programmes for Special Needs Learners in Five Integrated Secondary Schools in Malaysia

**Name of Researcher and School/Faculty**

Muniandy, Kumudthaa  
Researcher/ PG-R Post Graduate R  
Teacher Education and Professional Learning  
Faculty of Education, Health and Community  
Liverpool L17 6BD, UK

Child (or if unable, parent/guardian on their behalf) / young person to circle all they agree with

- |  |        |
|--|--------|
| Have you read (or had read to you) information about this project? | Yes/No |
| Has somebody else explained this project to you?                   | Yes/No |
| Do you understand what this project is about?                      | Yes/No |
| Have you asked all the questions you want?                         | Yes/No |
| Have you had your questions answered in a way you understand?      | Yes/No |
| Do you understand it's OK to stop taking part at any time?         | Yes/No |
| Are you happy to take part?  | Yes/No |

If any answers are 'no' or you don't want to take part, don't sign your name!

If you do want to take part, you can write your name below

Your name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your parent or guardian must write their name here if they are happy for you to do the project.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

The researcher who explained this project to you needs to sign too.

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Sign \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Semi-structured interview

### i. Open-ended questions with Heads of Department (Special Education)

1. What qualifications are needed to become a Head of Special Education?
2. What is your role as the Head of Special Education Field in employment preparation programmes for the students with disabilities?
3. Does the school have facilities for employment preparation setting that is the main reason that your school have employment preparation programmes?
4. How does EPP in your school differ from other secondary integrated schools?
5. Tell me more about employment preparation programmes in your school?
6. How many teachers are involved in employment preparation programmes in your school?
7. What are the issues you faced in an employment preparation setting in your school?
8. What are the hindrances to the Head of Special Education Field, in effectively conducting employment preparation programmes for students with disabilities?
9. In your opinion, how effective are the employment preparation programmes in preparing special needs learners towards work life?
10. What are the need to be improved in the employment preparation programmes?
11. Are the parents giving full support to their children in these employment preparation programmes?

## Appendix B: Semi-structured interview

### ii. Open-ended questions with Special Education Teachers

1. What qualifications are needed to become a Special Education Teacher?
2. Tell me about employment preparation programmes in your school?
3. Role of the Special Education Teacher in employment preparation programmes
4. Do the special education teacher have their vocational training syllabus as guidance for employment preparation setting?
5. How many hours is allocated for the EPP subject? To conduct EPP?
6. Do school have complete facilities for employment preparation setting?
7. What is the main reason that your school have employment preparation programmes?
8. Why is the programmes in your school is differs from other secondary integrated school?
9. How many teachers involved in employment preparation in your school?
10. What are the hindrances to Special Education Teacher, in effectively conducting the employment preparation programmes
11. In your opinion how effective are the employment preparation programmes in preparing special needs learners towards work life?
12. What are the areas that need to be improved in the employment preparation programmes?
13. Are the parents giving full support to their children in these employment preparation programme?
14. Do you follow up the students' performances in their work place/ practical place?
15. Are the student given a different approach due to their different capabilities?

Appendix C: Observation contents of the EPP settings

Descriptive content	Reflection content
<p>Physical setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Location</li> <li>-position in school ground or outside</li> <li>-conducive environment</li> <li>-facilities</li> </ul>	
<p>Social interaction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Gestures</li> <li>-Sense of humour/ making jokes</li> <li>-conducive environment</li> <li>- Response when have visitors/ collaborators</li> <li>-learners engagement</li> <li>-communication</li> <li>-fear</li> <li>-Confidence</li> </ul>	
<p>Practical task</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Practicing Teamwork</li> <li>-Working by pairs or in a group to sort the task</li> <li>-individual target approach</li> <li>-flexibility of time</li> <li>-heavy task/ light task based on their capabilities</li> <li>-attention span</li> <li>-independent</li> <li>-vocational skills</li> <li>Life skills</li> </ul>	
<p>Teaching techniques</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Body language</li> <li>-Signal using hands, fingers, face, smile for indicating the answer is correct</li> <li>-Movement of teachers if keep moving around in the setting</li> <li>-Eye contact between teacher and learners</li> <li>-Teacher sitting/ stand positioned</li> <li>-Tones of voice</li> <li>-clear instruction</li> <li>-response time</li> <li>-Body language</li> <li>-communication</li> <li>-teaching aids/ module</li> </ul> <p>Teacher demonstration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-questions and answering</li> </ul>	

## Appendix D: Data Analysis

### i. Interview Transcripts : Head of Department (Special Education)

#### 1. What qualifications are needed to become a Head of Special Education Department?

*In my instance, I graduated from Batu Pahat Teacher Training College. I majored in Malay Language and my minor subject was Life Skills. I started my career by spending 8 years working in mainstream education in a secondary school. Then in 2001, I took a 3-day basic special education course before involved in Special Education as a Malay Language teacher, which then led me to teach Life Skills subject which I continue to do to this day.*

#### 2. How do you find by having a mainstream education background and taking short courses to begin a career in special education?

*Initially, I found it difficult to simplify my teaching method to fit their level of understanding as my academic background is rooted in mainstream subjects. However, after a few years of working in special education, I gained a much better understanding of the field.*

#### 3. What is your role as the Head of Special Education Department in employment preparation programmes for the students with disabilities?

*My main role as a head of department is to administrate all of the special education programmes and to ensure that they run smoothly, systematically and effectively. Challenging as holding the main position managing all activities, advising and delivering the updated information*

#### 4. Does the school have facilities for employment preparation setting? If so, is that the main reason that your school has employment preparation programmes?

*Initially there were no facilities at the school because of a lack of financial support. However, thanks to the Parent Teacher Association and School Corporation Club we now have funding. We have also established links with the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA).*

#### 5. How does EPP in your school differ from other secondary integrated schools?

*I suppose the main difference at the moment in our school is our program of mango plantation and marketing. As our school is in an urban setting, our program makes use of this environment. For schools in rural areas they would have to utilise their surroundings.*

#### 6. Tell me more about employment preparation programmes in your school?

*This school has the largest student population in South West State. Between the ages of 14 to 16, we start identifying the pupils interests. We then proceed to encourage involvement in EPP. For those not interested, we will either direct them to the general special education curriculum or to inclusive education where they will be able to sit a general national examination. By the age of 16, those who have shown an interest in participating will be fully committed to EPP.*

## Appendix D: Data Analysis

### i. Interview Transcripts: Head of Department (Special Education)-con

*An approach system is encouraged for all so that governmental sectors can join the secondary school to practice and promote skilled or entrepreneurship programme. As I mentioned previously, due to our financial sponsors, I have managed to transform one of the classrooms into a kitchen (30x20 sqft) for the use of EPP. Using this facility, students have baked bread and pastries and then sold them to the school corporation club. We have also planted 100 mango trees around the perimeter of the school. As I am the owner of the mango farm, I supplied 100 mango trees and seeds. As part of an inter-governmental collaboration, the produce is sold to the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (FAMA) under the authority of the Ministry of Agricultural and Agro-based Industry Malaysia which oversees distribution to the nearest supermarkets. All of the necessary source materials are provided by FAMA who also offer guidance and advice whenever needed.*

### 7. How many teachers are involved in employment preparation programmes in your school?

*We have two teachers; one in charge of Mango Plantation and the other in charge of the bakery. Not all the teachers are willing to participate.*

### 8. What are the issues you faced in an employment preparation setting in your school?

*a. One of the main issues is that it is not yet an established part of the curriculum which means that teachers are taken out of their comfort zone and we often feel we are in uncharted territory. There are other problems too which arise as a result of teaching a non-curriculum subject. Although special education is carried out under the same roof, the principals in various schools are mostly from different academic backgrounds and often find it difficult to understand the needs and the requirements of special education. I feel Principal reluctance to take risks for EPP and ignore our efforts. For example, as a head of department, I still had to seek clearance from my Principal and Education Authority to start EPP. Health and safety is also an issue especially when one considers the vulnerable nature of the students and the work involved.*

*b. Some mainstream teachers, including deputy heads, are reluctant to teach students with learning difficulties in the schools as they labelled them as academically poor, that in turn meant they were unable to achieve their target of completing the syllabus. They find it difficult to educate them in the best performance classes. This means they are only allowed to join the low performing classes where there are combination students with behavioural problems. This results in special needs students copying the badly behaved mainstream learners. The special needs students are bullied by some of the more aggressive mainstream students. This is why mainly EPP were established to educate special needs learners in SEIP itself towards independent lives.*

## Appendix D: Data Analysis

### i. Interview Transcripts: Head of Department (Special Education)-con

9. What are the hindrances to the Head of Special Education Field, in effectively conducting employment preparation programmes for students with disabilities?

*As a head of department, I am responsible for allocation of time for EPP. Currently there are only three opportunities each week to conduct EPP sessions. This amounts to no more than 90 minutes per week which is obviously very restrictive. This has led to an overspill into the spare time of both teachers and students. This lack of flexibility is a concern for some parents and teachers as it interferes with home time. I am also responsible for the itemisation of all funds allocated to EPP which can prove to be time consuming.*

*Principals do not understand that it is necessary to train the special needs learners towards employability. It's very difficult to arrange employment programmes, especially when it involves dealing with outsiders. Therefore, it's hard to give the students the necessary assistance, especially escorting and supervising them when they need to go to Tesco to sell their produce. This is due to the red tape. For example, paperwork and protocols due to health and safety issues. That's understandable but because of the special requirements of EPP which involves outsiders, there's no formal school protocol for dealing with these circumstances.*

*Furthermore, lack of support from mainstream education staff, where they always highlight the fact that they probably don't have faith in special needs learners. So our initiative has very little support from colleagues and school management'*

10. In your opinion how effective are the employment preparation programmes in preparing special needs learners towards a working life?

*The idea of establishing EPP is a very effective program in terms of it building up a student's confidence through the responsibility of work. Social interaction is also a major contributing factor in developing a student's participation in society through team-work. Learning new skills makes an invaluable contribution in preparing the student's for employment. We have to show complete transparency in our program as we don't want to be accused of using disabled students aged below 19 as cheap labour. It is also important to point out that 30% of all profits from the sale of produce is returned directly to the school accounts. This is then re-invested in the pupils involved. This reward element has proven to be a motivating factor for students and teaches them about the benefits of a working life.*

Appendix D: Data Analysis

i. Interview Transcripts: Head of Department (Special Education)-con

11. Which area needs to be improved in the employment preparation programmes?

*Most of the issues I've previously mentioned would be addressed once EPP became established as part of the curriculum. Special education teachers currently have limited knowledge of vocational skills. Therefore, there needs to be financial support allocated for the training of Special Education Teachers. The lack of continuity is a very frustrating experience. For example, I established mango juice production in my previous school but once I transferred to my current school, no one replaced that particular programme. There appears to be a lack of consistency in the implementation of EPP. However, I have started the same production in this current school, which is all very well, but what this entails is me having to start completely from scratch in terms of trying to secure funding. This demotivates my progress when I do not feel the Principal appreciating it. Therefore Principal support is crucial and should therefore increase awareness among Principals/leaders to support and participate in our programme.*

12. Are the parents giving full support to their children in these employment preparation programmes?

*As the parents trust the school, they are fully supportive of our efforts in ensuring EPP is a success. There is also a will on the part of the parents for their children to lead independent lives.*

Appendix D:

ii. Employment Preparation Programme's Site Synthesis

Category for Observation	Descriptive content	Reflection content
Physical setting	<p>1. SEIP1 a. Livestock Quail (A) b. Livestock Fish (B)</p> <p>2. SEIP2 a. Bakery Operation (A) b. Mango Plantation (B)</p> <p>3. SEIP3 a. Mushrooms Cultivation (A) b. Chillies cultivation (B)</p> <p>4. SEIP4 a. Restaurant Operation (A) b. Needlework (B)</p> <p>5. SEIP5 a. Hydroponic (A) b. Bakery Operation (B)</p>	<p>Although every school was conducting a different EPP, the strategies used were all very similar. The decision about which particular EPP to implement was founded on the interests of the learners, based upon discussions held between their parents, educators and the learners themselves. Even though bakery and needlework were part of the special education curriculum, the difference was that these schools developed the programme with additional support of collaborators with the aim of promoting skilled individuals and entrepreneurs amongst the learners.</p>
Physical Setting	<p>Venue <u>Site</u> a. <u>SEIP1 and SEIP3</u> EPP is located behind the last block within the school grounds (SEIP1: Livestock Quail A; Livestock Fish B, SEIP3: Mushrooms cultivation A and chillies cultivation B)</p> <p>b. SEIP2 EPP is located at the boundary of the school compound (SEIP2 : Mango Plantation B)</p> <p>c. SEIP4 EPP is located within 2 miles of the school (SEIP4: Restaurant Operation A)</p> <p>d. SEIP2 Bakery Operation A Classroom has been renovated into a real work setting</p>	<p>Location of the site is very far from the main entrance of the school.</p> <p>The site lies far from the school's mainstream block thus mainstream teachers rarely get to see the work/efforts of their special education colleagues. This only serves to reinforce the stigma associated with special education teaching.</p>

	<p>SEIP5 Bakery Operation B Sharing with the mainstream's bakery station</p>	
Physical Setting	<p>a) <u>Facilities</u> All the five schools have adequate facilities required for their EPP.</p>	Four school are set up as the real work simulation as this school are sponsored by inter-government and teachers/ parents society.
Physical Setting	<p>b) <u>Furniture</u> Table, desks and chairs in their own classroom (Learning theory) Practical task training on the site inside the school compound (SEIP3 A and B/ SEIP2 B/ SEIP5 A)</p> <p>Both theoretical and training activities are situated in the same site within the school compound. For example; students long tables, benches, whiteboard, noticeboard, furniture/equipment/tools/ materials. (SEIP A and B/ SEIP4 B/ SEIP5 B)</p> <p>Both theoretical and training activities situated within 2 miles distance from the school. For example; students tables, benches, lockers, noticeboard, furniture, equipment, tools, materials. (restaurant, SEIP4 A)</p>	All the furniture built according the convenient and suitability of the space available
Physical Setting	<p>c) <u>Ventilation</u> Sites are in open area with solid roof building (Livestock Quail and Fish- SEIP1)</p> <p>Sites are occupied with ceiling fan (Restaurant operation-SEIP4)</p> <p>Sites are with air- conditioned (Bakery-SEIP2 , SEIP5)</p> <p>Sites which falls at the boundary of the school area is in the open area (SEIP2</p>	All site are established according to the needs of the nature of the EPP

	A)	
Document Analysis : Areas of improvement	Restaurant operation Part of the teacher's role was that of programme leader. This involved the teacher visiting the site of the programme on a regular basis (3 times per week). However, there is no record indicating how many times the teacher visits the site.	Lack of records related to the teacher's visits to EPP sites, resulting in no clear evidence of their efforts or initiatives.  Consequently, failure to update documentation results in poor evaluation of the teachers at the end of the year, resulting in there being no true appreciation or recognition from principals. Therefore, a stigma arises amongst other colleagues due to a lack of awareness of SET's efforts.
Document analysis: Areas to improve	There is also no centralised database/documentation specifically for EPP learners regarding any emotional/psychological issues they may encounter on a daily basis.  There are also a lack of documentation about the collaborators visits in details.  Nor are there records detailing activities of collaborators. Currently they recorded details about the EPP in annual reports and the learners' progress report in IEP.	This is problematic in instances where there may be a particular incident which needs to be documented for future reference as currently all recorded experiences/incidents involving EPP participants are scattered across many different documents, e.g. annual reports, IEP, diaries etc.  None of the 5 case studies schools have a record of issues pertaining to emotional or psychology concerns.  Cases of bullying special needs learners are dealt with as school disciplinary problems and, as such, there remains no appropriate strategy for dealing with the psychological and emotional consequences resulting from this issue. Also, when the teacher asks such questions as <i>Are you ok? Are you happy?</i> this does not adequately address the problem because learners are often very adept at hiding their true feelings.
Document analysis: Areas to improve	Visitors and suppliers are meant to sign in and out when entering the premises. Out of 5 schools, only 2 schools used signing in to indicate their presence. 2 other schools didn't follow this procedure. The teacher	Poor record keeping showed how disorganised EPP management was. This was probably because EPP is still not a compulsory programme and is susceptible to errors.

	<p>who visited the restaurant located outside of school grounds also did not use the practice of signing in/out.</p>	
<p>Teaching approach SEIP2: Bakery Teacher: SET3</p>	<p>The teacher was already in the room waiting for the learners to arrive. The learners looked very confident when they entered the bakery room because they all knew what to do as they were very well prepared. All learners removed their shoes before entering the bakery. One by one, they washed their hands with hand wash. There were clear hygiene instructions posted on the wall next to the sink. The learners then got their aprons on and were ready for the lesson. All learners showed enthusiasm for the lesson.</p> <p>The learners greeted the teacher. The teacher responded with a smile and then introduced the task for the day (muffins making). The teacher introduced the menu and the implements needed for the recipe. The teacher then demonstrated the task to the learners. The learners were then divided into pairs to complete the task. The teacher noticed one of the learners accidentally dropped the flour while weighing and measuring.</p> <p><i>Teacher: It's ok. It's all part of learning. These things happen sometimes. All we need to do is keep trying. Be calm, think firstly about what you need to do and how to solve the problem.</i></p> <p><i>Do you need help? Are you alright?</i></p> <p><i>Learner: I am ok. (Smile) Sorry teacher but I didn't see properly. I was rushing</i></p>	<p>The teacher created a pleasant learning atmosphere in the room. It was clear that the learners had carried out these tasks on a regular basis as they seemed confident when setting about their work. The hygiene poster gave clear step-by-step instructions, using pictures to illustrate the importance of cleanliness in the workspace. This method made it easier for the learners to understand and remember what they needed to do in order to proceed. With the exception of 2 students, all other learners showed great enthusiasm for the lesson, confirming that they made the right choice of career, which they seemed to love and wanted to continue pursuing. However, the fact that there were two other learners who were autistic and who decided to opt out of participating in this activity is something that needs to be addressed. No learners should be excluded from these tasks. The teacher did not take any steps to approach these 2 learners. This seemed to be a regular occurrence. This was something of a shock to the researcher as these learners are all from a high functioning class. In all probability, these learners have different capabilities. The teacher just does not know the best strategy to approach them, which is why she failed to include these learners in the lessons.</p> <p>On the other hand, the way the teacher dealt with the incident of the learner dropping the flour was excellent. Here, the teacher used this as an opportunity to instil thinking skills amongst the learners to help them solve problems independently.</p> <p>This, along with motivational words, helped to build confidence in the students. From this observation, we can conclude that</p>

	<p><i>too much.</i></p> <p>The teacher then continued to monitor all other learners and, when needed, helped them. Two learners did not participate in the lesson. Instead, they just sat and looked at all of the other learners for the entire duration of the lesson. All other 12 learners industries about the pastry focus on their task carefully and very confident with minimum support or assistants. The task involve weighing the flour, making dough, preparing the tray and basting. Then, setting the timers on the ovens. By this time their lessons over but the and all learners remove their aprons, thanked the teacher, put the shoes back on and returned to their own classroom. The remaining pastry work which is still on the ovens were continued by the teacher assistant.</p>	<p>the objective of the lesson is not completely achieved due to the above reason. Added to this, one hindrance identified by observing this lesson is the issue of time constraints. This seems to be particularly problematic for teachers as the total time of 90 minutes is still not sufficient for making pastries and packaging the products. This leads to other parties such as teaching assistants having to complete the task.</p> <p>Traditional approach: Questioning and answering is still practice this days</p>
<p>Academic Background knowledge and skill mastering SET10 Teaching approach: Team teaching</p>	<p>SEIP5 : Bakery Team teaching There are two teachers in the bakery session. It's a combined class which includes 15 learners. One of the teachers arrived on site early and prepared the necessary baking utensils, whilst the other teacher collected the learners and brought them to the room. The learners removed their shoes and looked for a place to sit in the bakery. The learners greeted both teachers. The teacher began by introducing the baking tasks for the day. The teachers begins to test the memory of the learners to see if they could recall the previous lesson and how it related to today's activities. More than 2/3 of the</p>	<p>Very impressive work style practice in this session. Teachers showed a very firm but maintain a good relationship with the learners. All learners participate in this setting. The teachers used team teaching approach by combining the class and they have total 120 minutes to complete all the tasks involved in their donut making efforts. The learners</p>

learners raised their hands and answered with confidence.

All of the learners maintained eye contact with both teachers. Next, the teachers presented pictures of the items they were going to prepare along with the day's recipe. Learners immediately knew what they were required to do. The teachers continued to ask the learners about the step-by-step procedure of baking the donut. Most of the learners raised their hands and the teacher allowed them to answer one by one. Next, the learners were asked to wash their hands, put their aprons on and prepare to start. The class was divided into five equal groups. They then began to start using the baking utensils which had been prepared by the other teacher. The teacher established the ground rules which needed to be followed by all of the learners. These included no shouting, respect each other, focus on work, keep your workspace tidy and make sure you work as a team. The learners showed great confidence and tried to follow all of the instructions given by the teachers. The teacher also demonstrated the task from time to time, whilst the other teacher monitored the groups. Each group's leader was able to read the recipe given.

The learners sought clarification about any doubts they had. Teachers, along with all other five groups, managed to prepare the ingredients before they were placed into the oven. Each tray took around 10

	<p>minutes to bake. Then, after the donuts were removed from the oven, they were left for 15 minutes before being packaged. The teachers concluded the session and praised all of learners for their good performance. Then later still, the learners brought the donuts to sell in the staff room and the school canteen.</p>	
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Teaching Approach	Description Content	Evidence	Reflection Content
<p>: Use of local accent during lessons</p>			
<p>1. SET1 M. Ed (Special Education)</p> <p>2. SET10 B.Ed. (Special Education) (bakery)</p> <p>DONE</p>	<p>Using simple vocabulary and speaks clearly and fluently in malay language.</p> <p>Using national language well</p>	<p><i>Hari ini kita akan bersama-sama bergotong-royong mengemas dan membersihkan sekitar ruang ini.</i></p> <p>Translate: Today we will work together to clean and pack this space.</p>	<p>All the students understand the instruction. This includes both high function, moderate and low function learners. All student able to understand and follow the lesson</p> <p>Learners are from multi race; Malay, Chinese and Indian. Not all learners able to understand the instruction given to carry out. E.g. There was no reaction to the given instruction from one of the Chinese learner did not response when the teacher question.</p>

			(Learner's face looks confuse). Then later the other Malay learner/colleagues repeat and explain to this Chinese learner before react
SET5 B.Ed. (Accounting), 1- week Special Ed Course  DONE	Speaks quickly using 'Malaysian local accent' during the lesson.	Accent: <i>Mei bah ini bkul</i> ...  Meaning: Can you please hand me the basket?	Learners are from multi race; Malay, Chinese and Indian. Not all learners able to understand the instruction given to carry out. E.g. There was no reaction to the given instruction from one of the Chinese learner did not response when the teacher question. (Learner's face looks confuse).  Then later the other Malay learner/colleagues repeat and explain to this Chinese learner before react.

	Description Content	Evidence	Reflection Content
Teaching Approach : Teaching aids used for instructions by SET			

<p>SET9 B.Ed(Special Education), Dip. English (hidroponic)</p>	<p>Picture diagram used with clear instructions. SET9 avoid vague instructions. The sentences were printed and the information diagram is laminated. SET9 was well prepared with appropriate materials before deliver his lesson.</p>		<p>By providing the picture diagram along with clear instructions, this enables the learners to understand the instructions and shows the actions needed to solve this given task with minimum support.</p>
<p>SET3 BA Household Mgmt., 3-day Special Ed. Course (bakery)  DONE</p>	<p>The recipe was not written out neatly on the whiteboard. Even though the high function learners were able to read and understand the recipe, this lack of clarity made it difficult for some of the other special needs learners to follow the instructions</p>		<p>Participant SET3 lacked awareness of how best to deliver clear instructions while delivering her lesson. This may have had the adverse effect of causing the learners to copy the untidy writing style as referring what is displayed, how they are being taught and would therefore view the displayed writing style as being the accepted norm</p>
<p>SEIP1 SET1: Rearing Quails</p>	<p>The first laminated card illustrated all of the equipment needed for the task. The second card, third card onwards showed the step-by-step guide to the particular task</p>	 <p>Attached sample checklist</p>	<p>The learners followed the guidance displays using an illustrated picture printed on laminated cards, which detailed each of the required step fix to the front of each individual</p>

	<p>and activities of quail incubation in chronological order</p>	<p>Related Theory: Bandura's social Learning Theory</p>	<p>section essential to the task to be carried out. As the learners have a tendency to forget complex instructions, the reminder card method helps them to retain information regarding these set tasks. The special needs learners then just followed the illustrated instructions. Each of the cards corresponded to the particular station. Once these particular task or activities had been completed, the learners used a checklist to tick off each of their completed tasks</p> <p>These method of simplifying the tasks if carry out on a daily basis, enables the learners to become acclimatised to the similar setting in a real world working environment. The learners were also actively encouraged to work in a team, which helped to establish a sense of shared responsibility and by engaging and helping with each other</p>
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Teaching Aid	Description Content	Reflection Content
SET1 M. Ed( Special education)	Using Model Friendly user. the model is shared to new comer and the relief teacher.  All the steps involved is simplified into the smaller task where any level of learner should be able to understand clearly	The learners does not depend on this teacher. If the teacher absent/ transfer/ attend courses the replacement/ relief teacher able to conduct the lesson
SET2 BA History, 1-week Special Ed. Course	Preparing a model	Very experience teachers from different academic background is still learning from the special education teachers
SET3 BA Household Mgmt., 3-day Special Ed. Course (bakery)		Learners are from multi race malay, Chinese and indian. Not all learners able to understand the instruction. Learner 1(chinese): did not response when teacher question. Face looks confuse. Then later the colleagues help to explain again and now the learner response.

#### Other themes identified in observation session

Category for Observation	Descriptive content	Reflection content
Leadership and Management Principal's supervision	The Principal touring the school ground, including the chilli plantation settings, at 11:25am	This can be interpreted as principal awareness of the activities or programmes carried out by principal from SEIP3.
Leadership and Management	EPP: Restaurant Operation Incident: One of the	SET7 was at school and was therefore unable to assist the

<p>Teacher as a programme leader</p>	<p>learners was greeting a customer during the lunch service. Whilst taking the order, the customer noticed that the waitress was disabled. Although the customer was not rude, he made a polite excuse and left the restaurant.</p> <p><i>Customer: Oh, can I cancel the order please? I have important things to do and I'm rushing ....sorry.</i></p> <p><i>Learner: It's ok (her facial expression showing that she is sad and upset)</i></p> <p><i>The mentor in this restaurant (representing Labour Department) approached the learner.</i></p> <p><i>Learner: He left because he didn't like me...</i></p> <p><i>Mentor: No, it's not like that. Maybe he left because he has got something important to do. He wasn't rude to you.</i></p> <p><i>Learner: I really hope so.</i></p> <p>The mentor then tried to lift the spirits of the learners and offered encouragement.</p> <p>About an hour later, SET7 arrived at the restaurant.</p> <p><i>Teacher: is everything ok? Do you like to work here?</i></p> <p><i>Learner: Yes (didn't look at the teacher but smiled while answering.</i></p> <p><i>Teacher: Ok, very good. Today you can go back early. Will you come tomorrow?</i></p> <p><i>Learner: hmmm..... I'd like to continue and finish my work. I don't want to go back home now.</i></p> <p><i>Teacher: That's the spirit. Well done! (giving the learner a thumbs up).</i></p>	<p>learners at the restaurant. This programme was being conducted especially to train people with disabilities. The way the mentor boosted the morale of those in the work environment was excellent. The first indication that the learner was demoralised was when she avoided eye contact with SET7. She was clearly upset, as she interpreted the customer's actions as being hurtful and directed at her personally, even though there was no concrete evidence that this was the case. Her response to what had happened indicated that she believed this incident to be a sign that people were not accepting her for who she was. Although she was upset she showed maturity, both by the way she handled the situation and also by the way she was determined to continue with her work regardless. Based on the learner's response to the teacher, i.e. the word 'really hope so' and 'hmmm', she believes that there is still a stigma amongst some members of the public.</p>
<p>Leadership and management : Strategic Plan; Individualised target based approach</p>	<p>In the restaurant operation programme, each learner's task is clearly set out within a particular time-period and once they reach</p>	<p>Each special needs learner was trained according to their capabilities or the level at which given tasks were achievable. In this way, those who are very active,</p>

	<p>the target which has been set, a new target, in the form of a task to be mastered, is written out in their own IEP.</p> <p>Evidence</p> <p>‘Venue : SEIP2: Restaurant operation Specialist : Inter-government’s specialist supervisor Date and time : 7th September 2015 (7:30-8:30 am) Learner A in charge of cooking fried noodles for customer independently.</p> <p>Learner B in charge of making drinks for the customer independently.</p> <p>Learner C in charge of taking orders from the customer.</p> <p>Learner D in charge of cleaning and wiping the customer’s table.’</p>	<p>displayed a natural aptitude and who easily understood the skill requirements without any support are given a more challenging task in the restaurant operation. Whereas the special needs learners with less aptitude, who need additional support, are given further guidance along with more flexibility, regarding time limits set for each task to master the particular skills</p>
<p>Leadership and Management: Casual supervision by HoD  done</p>	<p>The head of department closely monitored the EPP lesson for approximately 15 minutes.</p> <p>The HoD also conversed with learners to gather their feedback (Norwood). (Learners are busy packing their produce). <i>HoD: Do you like to do this job?</i></p> <p><i>Learner: Yes I like it very much. ...it’s easy. (smile on his face)</i></p> <p><u>Level of principal support:</u> Principal tours the entire school grounds including EPP site (Kremlin).</p> <p>Did not see other schools’ principals or departments’</p>	<p>By ensuring that the learners are satisfied with their choice of EPP programme, the HoD provides support to these learners by talking with them and gaining feedback regarding any difficulties and/or dissatisfaction they may have with the programme.</p> <p>This is proof of the level of support given by the HoD in making sure that the learners are satisfied with the choices they make within EPP. Also, by monitoring any dissatisfaction they may express whilst undertaking the EPP.</p> <p>As part of the principal’s duty, casual observations of all activities within the school grounds are carried out by touring the entire site. What can be gathered from this is that there is a level of support from the principal regarding ensuring safe</p>

	<p>head touring the grounds whilst observations took place. However principal's touring is not the focus of this study.</p>	<p>implementation and operation of all programmes within the school, including EPP.</p>
<p>Leadership and Management</p>	<p>Support from State Education Department</p> <p>Unable to observe the support provided the State Education Department due to time constraint (3 month) allocated for data collection.</p> <p>Support can be witnessed by visiting their official online Website which openly encourages vocational skills involving collaborators in secondary schools.</p>	<p>Documentation does not provide evidence of attendance or visits made to the school during the initial implementation of EPP. However, it was only when EPP became fully established that it was visited by representatives of the state education department.</p> <p>Encouragement alone is not sufficient. However the educators initiative and constant efforts leads to the success of the programme.</p>
<p>Leadership and Management</p> <p>Learner as leader</p>	<p>SET1 in his session encourages the teacher This would enable greater responsibility to make sure all team members are able to complete the task.</p>	<p>Students were tailored to lead the activities in a team. This way there is a belief that it could enhance and instil leadership characteristics in the students development. This would enable greater responsibility to make sure all team members are able to complete the task. At the same time the leader of the team helps the less capable colleagues to learn the task.</p>

Appendix D: Data Analysis

ii. Employment Preparation Programme's Site Synthesis

Category for Observation	Descriptive content	Reflection content
Physical setting	<p>1. SEIP1 a. Livestock Quail (A) b. Livestock Fish (B)</p> <p>2. SEIP2 a. Bakery Operation (A) b. Mango Plantation (B)</p> <p>3. SEIP3 a. Mushrooms Cultivation (A) b. Chillies cultivation (B)</p> <p>4. SEIP4 a. Restaurant Operation (A) b. Needlework (B)</p> <p>5. SEIP5 a. Hydroponic (A) b. Bakery Operation (B)</p>	<p>Although every school was conducting a different EPP, the strategies used were all very similar. The decision about which particular EPP to implement was founded on the interests of the learners, based upon discussions held between their parents, educators and the learners themselves. Even though bakery and needlework were part of the special education curriculum, the difference was that these schools developed the programme with additional support of collaborators with the aim of promoting skilled individuals and entrepreneurs amongst the learners.</p>
Physical Setting	<p>Venue Site</p> <p>a. <u>SEIP1 and SEIP3</u> EPP is located behind the last block within the school grounds (SEIP1: Livestock Quail A; Livestock Fish B, SEIP3: Mushrooms cultivation A and chillies cultivation B)</p> <p>b. SEIP2 EPP is located at the boundary of the school compound (SEIP2 : Mango Plantation B)</p> <p>c. SEIP4 EPP is located within 2 miles of the school (SEIP4: Restaurant Operation A)</p> <p>d. SEIP2 Bakery Operation A</p>	<p>Location of the site is very far from the main entrance of the school. The site lies far from the school's mainstream block thus mainstream teachers rarely get to see the work/efforts of their special education colleagues. This only serves to reinforce the stigma associated with special education teaching.</p>

## Appendix D: Data Analysis

### iii. Initial Coding

Statement	Initial coding	Focused coding
Teacher encouraged the learner to speak clearly	-Motivation -Encouragement	Learners participation
Teacher patiently wait until the learner complete his/her sentences	-Teacher behaviour matters -Learner feel confidence and	Role/ characteristics of the Teacher
Teacher making sure the learners understand what is being demonstrated	Check for understanding	Demonstration of the task/ content/ context
Teacher allow the learner to think and make decision	Thinking skill developed	Decision making skills increase
Discussion with parents and learners about their interest and ambition for future independent life	Allow them to make the choice Allow independency Learner involve in their decision making Allow Learner to take responsibility for their decision	Student building their personality
Face expression Smile Happy face excited	Learners increase confidence	Happy with the EPP teaching and learning

Table 5: Initial coding

# Appendix D: Data Analysis

## iv. Coding, categorisation and finalising the themes

Main themes	Sub themes	Codes	Interview Quotes/ Observation Field notes/ Document/Literature Review
Leadership and management	Leader's role	Encouragement/attitude/leading/ designing/planning/strategic pla	HoD5: We should carry out an attitude of patience. As we are NOT going to handle normal student. HoD3: The strategic plan for annual and long-term between 5 years is crucial, as I have to answer for any failure of the programme HoD2: Encouragement from the state department of the relationship with supplier since 2012. D: To expand employment or entrepreneurship preparation programmes through partnerships with inter-government and industry LR: Special education leaders should ensure the planning and implementation in developing an innovative transition plan for EPP (Petchu et al., 2014)
	Principal supervision and participation	Monitoring/ leading the meeting/ support	SET2: Principal often touring our settings HoD2: Each special needs student has a unique talent and capability. They're also at different stages of achievement so EPP doe is why, in my school, we focus on each of the learners individually, which is why they all have their own education and transition plan HoD4: Although the EPP is one major programme, we set up an individual target, which can be achieved within a set period of tim progress and performance or achievement in their individual education plan. It's revised and discussed with their parents every thr D:pre-vocational preparation in secondary schools helps the students with disabilities to be confident in participating in society an Blueprint, 2013-2025: 192.
	The influence of the educators as a leader (HoD/S	Leading/ responsibility/individualised target approach/goals/aim	SET1: I prefer to instil the leadership ability amongst the learners. This approach is designed for high capable learners to lead and in a team. D:Teacher should provides an opportunity for the special needs learner to take on leadership roles whenever possible (Malaysian 10. FN: Students were tailored to lead the activities in a team. Theory: Learners perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006).
	Learners as leader	Decision making capabilities/ confidence	HoD3: Other department heads receive an allowance. Heads of department in special education get nothing.
	Level of authority amongst HoD	Hindrances/ inattention/trust/planning/ authorise/ success/ failure/s	SET4:There's too much paperwork and this, in turn, can discourage potential collaborators.
	High level of bureaucracy system	Hindrances/overload paperwork, unnecessary document/ health a	SET1: The principal did not appreciate our EPP from the start. Just after 2014, he began allowing us to renovate school premises
	Lack of appreciation	Hindrances/ motivation/ behavior/ demotivated/ evidence base ap	HoD2: Mainstream teachers/ education staff have different perception about special education... they probably don't have faith in
	Stereotyping special educators	Hindrances/ mainstream teachers/ stigma/skills/ ability	HoD3: The State Department of Education and Ministry of Education put the pressure upon teachers and expect the best outcome
	Absence of thorough supervision and joined-up th	Hindrances/commitment/poor relationship	SET6:I have a non-educational background academically. I did a one-year diploma in Special Education. Initially, I was shocked to
Academic Background K	Recruitment of special Educators with an appro	qualification/ experience/ background knowledge/ special educati	SET1 speaks clearly and fluently in Malay language. FN: SET9:By providing the picture diagram along with clear instructions, this enables the learners to understand the instructions ar
	Teaching Approach	usage of local accent	Reason 1: SET/HoDs having a family member with special needs SET3: I have a child with special needs so that has motivated me to explore this field. SET2: The reason is I have son with autism. HoD2: I have a special needs child therefore I intend to focus on vocational skills for his benefit.
	Teaching aids	picture diagram/ clear instruction/ whiteboard	Reason2: Newcomer to special education, was unable to continue the programme he had instigated due to a lack of relevant inter HoD2: I established mango juice production in my previous school but once I transferred to my current school, no one replaced tha have started the same production in this current school, which is all very well, but what this entails is me having to start completely f secure funding
	Switching the field (Mainstream to Special educat	Motive behind the switching field of specialisation/lack of contin	HoD4: I feel ashamed to discuss our syllabus , which was designed in the 1988s as a Special Education Programme for small groups of s
	Periodically Updating a relevant Curriculum	backdated curriculum/ traditional skills/ technology	SET1:I maybe transferring to a vocational school next year. I hope that my programme will be continued by the replacement teacher, as m
	Designing Own Module and teaching environment	standardised document/ handover	

Table 6: Coding, categorisation and finalising the themes

Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP1 : Livestock Rearing Quails



Bred quails skills



cleaning water trap



Cleaning the cage



quail meat for sale



Packaging (Proses membungkus)



Marketing (Pemasaran)

Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP2 : Pastry and bakery lesson provided by Integrated Secondary School  
for special needs learner



Kneading dough



Mixing ingredients



Baked Pastries



Special needs learners working on top crusts and decorations in Integrated Secondary school setting



pastries labelled, well packed and ready for sale



entrepreneurship pastry booth



pastry preparation in booth

## Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

### SEIP3 : Mushroom Cultivation



### Making mushroom compost



Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP3 : Mushroom Cultivation (con)



Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP4: Chillies Plantation



Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP5: Hydroponics Project



Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP5: Hydroponics Project (con)



Appendix E : Employment preparation programmes

SEIP5: Needlework; Sewing, Embroidery, Stitching, and beading



Sewing machine



Sewing and stitching machines



Embroidery machine



Mini Sewing machine



Beading product



Seam produced by students



Embroidery