

# **COUNTRY REPORT**

**By**  
**CHUAH BENG EAN**

# Country Report

## 1. General Report

Malaysia is a country situated in South East Asia, bordering on Thailand in the north, with Singapore and Indonesia to the south and the Philippines to the east. It is composed of Peninsular Malaysia and the states of Sabah and Sarawak, which are also known as East Malaysia on the north coast of the island Borneo. Its capital is Kuala Lumpur.

Malaysia's total area covers about 329,758 sq.km. Peninsular Malaysia is an area of forested mountain ranges running north to south. On the eastside of which are low-lying coastal plains. The West coast consists of mangrove swamps and mudflats separate into bays and inlets.

Malaysia is a multi-ethnic country, which consists of 13 states and 2 federal territories with a total population of 22,229,040.

Each Malaysian life expectancy is about 70 years. Education is compulsory for all Malaysian children at the age of 5. Their literacy rate averages about 78%. Most students at the age of 15 can read and write. Unemployment rate in Malaysia is about 4%. Malaysian economy recovered in 2000 with a growth rate of 8.5%.

Unfortunately, there is no law concerning with employment for special people, only on suggestions from the labor ministry to integrated 1% of the workforce for people with disabilities.

## 2. Situation of People with Intellectual Disabilities

Christian missionaries started services for the disabled people in Malaysia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The department of social welfare and several non-governmental organizations were established between 1940s and the late 1960s providing relief through institution-based charities for the disabled people. There has been no national census on disabled people and the appearance ratio of disabled people is estimated, based on sample survey of disabled people in 1958, is about 1% of the total population.

The Ministry of National Unity and Social Development which includes the department of Social Welfare, the main governmental agent responsible for the welfare of disabled people, defines disablement as "a condition in which any person is unable to ensure for himself/herself wholly or partly the necessities of a normal individual and social life in his/her physical or mental capabilities. There is no particular law concerned with disabled people, but several acts exist.

The education for the mentally retarded and or the intellectually disabled was provided by the non-governmental bodies until 1987, the Ministry of Education has actively started classes for pupils with learning difficulties, 152 special schools and integrated schools catered for children with intellectual difficulties in 1993.

Special education for the intellectually disabled in Malaysia started a series of discussion between the Advocacy Committee from the Selangor and the Federal Territory Mentally Retarded Association and the Ministry of Education in 1987. The first special education program for the intellectual disabled was started in 1988, in SRK (L) Jalan Batu 1, in Kuala Lumpur with 2 classes, 24 children and 3 trained teachers.

In 1990, the first trial diagnostic kit to identify the special individuals ( Ujian Percubaan Alat Penilaian Kelas Khas Bermasalah Pembelajaran) was used to test 200 children from the intellectually disabled programs in schools.

The first teachers` training course in special education for the intellectually disabled was held in 1991 at college level. In 1993, the Malaysian National University(UKM) started its first degree course in special education. In 1995, inclusive education is introduced. These special individuals who are able to follow normal mainstream curriculum and capable of talking examinations are placed in normal classes. The first secondary level for special education started in 1996, in two schools, SMK Yaacob Latiff, Jalan Peel and SMK Bandar Baru Sentl Kuala Lumpur.

Early intervention of special individuals is designed for young children with developmental delays from birth to 6 years old. This intervention is a program that provides a wide variety of services to eligible infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Medical staff of where the infants were born or where medical services are provided by hospitals does the medical services for diagnostic and evaluation purposes with. Early identification, non-governmental bodies catered for different types of disabilities provide screening and assessment services.

The service coordination services and instruction for the autistic children are catered by NASOM, the down syndrome children by Kiwanis Down Syndrome Centre, the cerebral palsy children by the Spastic Center of Selangor and the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur, children with epilepsy by Bethany Home. The Wisma Harapan of the Social Welfare Department provides services for children with mental or intellectual difficulties. The Malaysian Association for the Blind and the Society for the Blind in Malaysia catered for individuals with sight problems. The National society for the deaf is for individuals with hearing problems. Physical and occupational therapy including psychological services provided by the general hospitals, which have these services. These hospitals will refer parents and children who need speech therapy to the special

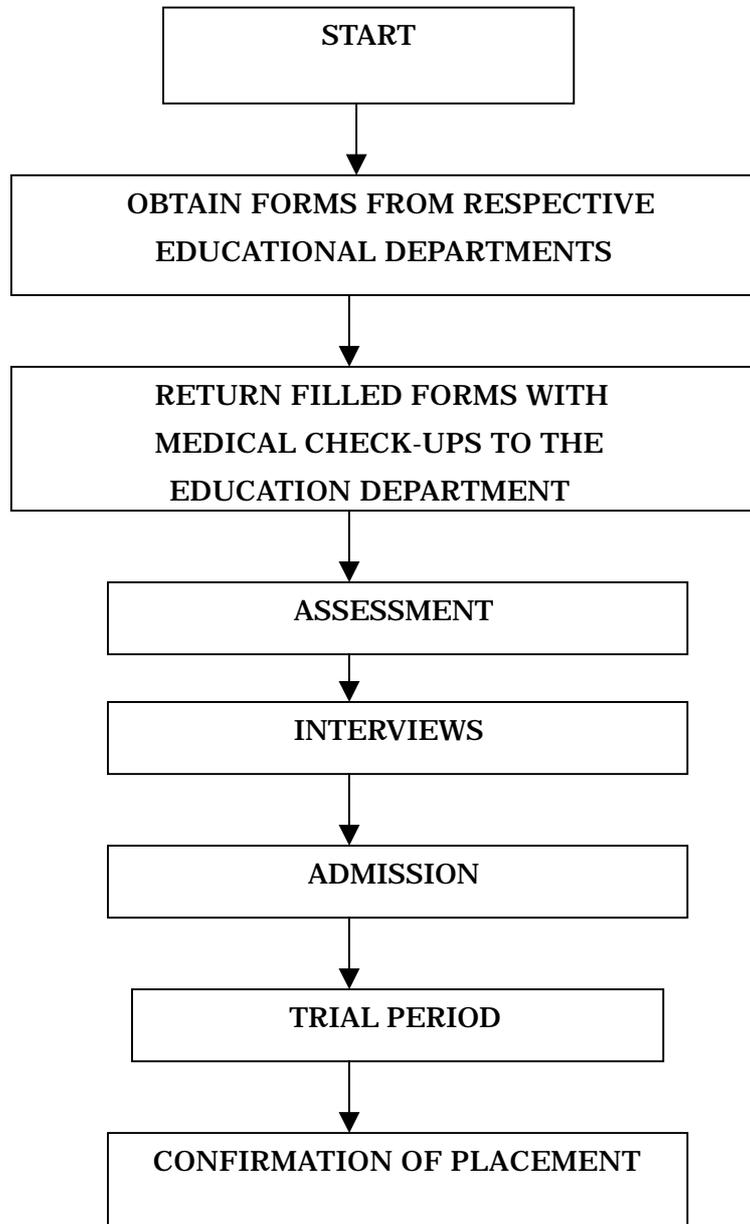
pathology and audiology department. The Social Welfare Department also provides special family training, counseling, home visits and parent support groups. Cheshire Homes or Malaysian Care provides either special training, sheltered workshops and home. These centers can be found in every district of every state.

After the age of 6, these special individuals with intellectual disabilities will be integrated into special education programs in government aided schools. Education for these individuals is free until the age of 21.

To enter the special programs, first, the parents of the disabled individuals are required to obtain admission forms from each respective district education department. Medical check-ups and confirmation is required when submitting these forms back to the educational departments. These children will then be assessed by a panel of educators that will be followed by a series of interviews of the individuals and his/her parents. An offer of placements into the special programs in their respective district will be given. These special individuals will then have to go a trial period of adjustment in the programs that have been assigned. After the trial period, the program concerned will issue placement confirmation.

Primary education for the disabled is from the age of 7 until 14, later continued in the secondary level until the age of 21. The special education programs cover five major areas that consist of communication, basic and independent living skills, creative and esthetic, recreation and health, religion and moral studies.

**THE FLOW CHART OF ADMISSION PROCEDURE INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS OF THE INTELLECTUALLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS**



Programs provided by the Ministry of Education are to enable special individuals to communicate, be independent, be able to function socially and required some vocational skills.

Disabled individuals who are not absorbed into the special educational programs in the government schools are created by the community rehabilitation centers (CBR). The Department of Social Welfare provides these CBR services. The first CBR was introduced in 1983 in Kuala Terengganu under the consultancy of WHO. A total of 275 disabled people were identified and 55 of them benefited from this program. By the year 1995, CBR was expanded into every district of every state. Non-governmental bodies also adopted CBR approached in their programs. The implementation of CBR is to establish a CBR committee at district level, and then provides funding assistance to this committee. The main aim to be able to rehabilitate the disabled, enable them to act as “normal” persons, raise awareness of the community of the existence of disabled people who need support within the community, provide information to the disabled people as well as include them in the community.

### **3. Organization Outline**

Education for children with intellectual disabilities began in 1988. The Education Act of 1996 defined children with special needs as children with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities. The Ministry of Education further defines children with intellectual disabilities as children with Down syndrome, children with autism, children with cognitive disabilities, children with behavioral and emotional difficulties, children with health problems and children with speech and language difficulties. The Act regards children with intellectual disabilities as educable but to be taught using a modified curriculum in special classrooms in regular schools.

As a special educator for the intellectually disabled, I am responsible for such special individuals in my programs. Every special educator plays an important role toward the learning process of these individuals. Each educator has to plan, modify teaching materials, find suitable teaching equipment/aids and use resources available to him/her for the maximum benefit of each individual under his/her care.

Special educators are required to:

- ◆ Detect each individual's weakness and strength to design and implement individualized education programs (IEP) for the individuals.
- ◆ Create a least restricted environment for optimum socialization and emotion support for special individuals with “normal” students and the surrounding

community.

- ◆ Ensure teaching strategies, techniques, materials and environment are interesting, beneficial to the special individuals including optimum learning opportunities.
- ◆ Monitor, assess and evaluate the development of the individuals ; make referral for the individuals which are suitable to their needs.
- ◆ Form networking partnership with parents, Social Welfare Department, medical services, non-governmental organizations and other related organization to collaborate and consult services to cater the needs of the individuals.
- ◆ Find fundamental and financial resources to help and support his/her special education programs to achieve target educational goals.
- ◆ To be informed, update and share information concerning special education to ensure progressive development of one's program.

In the Desa Perdana Secondary School where my program is situated, I am responsible for teaching English language as a communication and a social language to the intellectually disabled individuals. The curriculum used for the English language is based on

- ◇ Vocabulary of common nouns used in their surroundings
- ◇ Simple sentences used for communication(with grammatical accuracy)
- ◇ Understand and follow simple conversation
- ◇ Recognize situation and requesting for help
- ◇ Follow instruction, directions and complies with simple requests
- ◇ The usage of the language for recreation and religious purposes
- ◇ Language use in participation, planning and involvement in community activities
- ◇ Language use as a mobility aspect
- ◇ Language use in financial aspect
- ◇ Language use in job opportunities

The teaching strategies used consist of

- Word recognition (orally and written form)
- Computer-aided teaching and learning
- Language drill
- Conversation drill
- Real conversation
- Simulation of real situation

- Real situation
- Mobilization-visit to situation using public and private transportation
- Participating in school activities, community activities and activities organized by governmental and non-governmental bodies
- Use surrounding resources available

Besides teaching in the classroom, as a special educator, I am also responsible

- For the behavior and stress management of the special individuals
- To act as a facilitator, counselor, consultant and problem-solving support group for the special individuals and their families.
- To facilitate information concerning these special individuals with school administrators, the education department, Education Ministry, the Social Welfare Departments and other related NGOs.
- To provide assessment and evaluation report to concerning bodies when required.
- To share teaching experiences and knowledge with special educators concerning special individuals in my care
- To provide and presenting in-service opportunities for staff development
- To gather resources, disseminate and collaborate among the special educators` community.

As regard to adolescents with intellectual disabilities that I am guiding, I am needed to promote wide awareness and action to ensure they are included in the society and participate in the mainstreaming programs of the school and community. I need to coordinate and enhance opportunities in all fields available for them from the surrounding area.

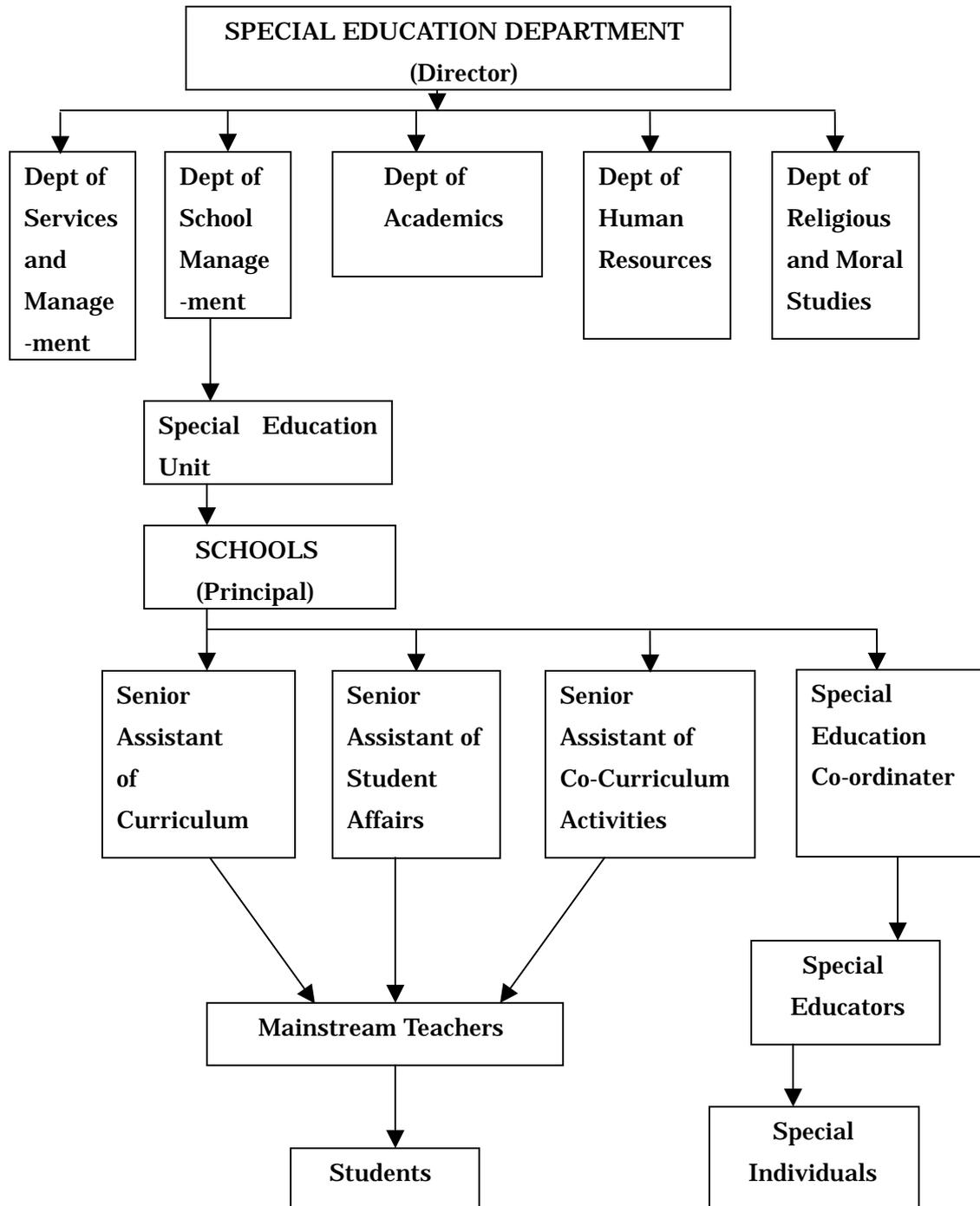
I need to find provisions of special pre-vocational or vocational training and rehabilitation programs that will coordinate with programs that I have in the school.

I have to make sure special individuals in my care have some financial and economic skills that will enable to handle monetary problems and be economically independent.

As a special educator, I am required not only to teach the subject I am assigned to but to monitor the holistic development of each and every individual.

ATTACHMENT 1

THE ADMINISTRATION STRUCTURE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN THE  
SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOLS



## ATTACHMENT 2

### MALAYSIAN EDUCATION ACT 1996 EDUCATION (SPECIAL EDUCATION) REGULATION 1997

In exercise of the powers conferred by section 41 of the Education Act 1996, the Minister makes the following regulations:

#### PART 1 PRELIMINARY

1. These regulations may be cited as the Education (Special Education) Regulation 1997 and shall come into force on 1 January 1998.
2. In these Regulations, unless the context otherwise requires –  
“pupils with special needs” mean pupils with visual impairment or hearing impairment or with learning disabilities;  
“special education programme” means
  - a) A programme which is provided in special schools for pupils with visual impairment or hearing impairment;
  - b) An integrated programme in regular schools for pupils with visual impairment or hearing impairment or learning disabilities and
  - c) An inclusive education programme for pupils with special needs and who are able to attend normal classes together with normal pupils

#### PART 2 SPECIAL EDUCATION

3. (1) For government and government aided schools, pupils with special needs who are educable are eligible to attend the special education programme except for the following pupils:
  - a) physically handicapped pupils with the mental ability to learn like normal pupils; and
  - b) pupils with multiple disabilities or with profound physical handicap or with severe mental retardation

- (2) A pupil with special needs is educable if he is able to manage himself without help and is confirmed by a panel consisting of a medical practitioner, an officer from the Ministry of Education and an officer from the Department of Welfare, as capable of undergoing the national education programme.
4. In implementing the special education curriculum, teachers may modify the teaching or learning methods or techniques, the time for and sequence of activities, the subjects and teaching aids in order to achieve the objectives and aims of special education.

Made 30 December 1997

[KP (PUU) S 10075/07/I/Jld. ;PN (P U<sup>2</sup>)569]