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## HEADMASTER'S PRACTICE AND TEACHER READINESS ON INCLUSIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES

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### ABSTRACT

The implementation of the Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) in the mainstream education system is an effort carried out towards reducing the gap between special needs education students and mainstream students. However, there are issues related to headteachers role in improving mainstream teachers' skills in teaching students with special needs. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the relationship between the two variables. The results of this study are expected to provide input for headteachers to play a better role in improving mainstream teachers' readiness in implementing IEP. This survey used quantitative approach with a questionnaire as a research instrument and 82 primary school teachers as respondents. The data were analysed descriptively to determine headmasters' level of human resource management (HRM) and teachers' readiness, while inferential analysis was used to determine the relationship between the two variables. The results showed that overall, headteachers' level of HRM practices is at a moderate level, except for the practice to improve teachers' knowledge and skills, which is at a low level. Teachers' level of readiness is generally high, except for the language proficiency which is at a moderate level. Results also demonstrated a positive and strong relationship between HRM practices of the headteachers and the readiness of teachers for Programme. This study reveals the importance of the headteachers role in improving mainstream teachers' readiness to implement and involve in the IEP. This study is expected to provide input for the Malaysian Ministry of Education to implement appropriate training to improve HRM practices of headteachers and to enhance readiness of mainstream teachers in the implementation of the IEP. The limitation of the present study and how future research might resolve these limitations were also discussed.

### Introduction

Insufficient research has been carried out in the area of human resource management (HRM) for the IEP. Although some researchers have paid attention to HRM to increase teachers' ability in implementing education

policy, their interest in decision making, skills in communicating, job quality and performance (Moazzma et al., 2017; Nancy Singai & Jamalul Lail, 2017, Sabah et al., 2019), little is known about the relationship between headteachers' HRM with mainstream teachers' readiness to teach students with special needs. Previous studies mainly focused on whether special education teachers and/or mainstream teachers were sufficiently ready, knowledgeable, and skilful to teach students with special needs (Emine Ozel Eren et al., 2018; Marlina, 2017; Mohd. Mokhtar & Farhana, 2019; Nor Aniza and Anis Farahanim, 2017; Timo Saloviita, 2019; Yuzana, 2017). However, only few studies were focused on headteacher's role in improving readiness of mainstream teachers to engage and teach students with special needs in the same class with the mainstream students (Poon McBrayer, 2017; Stuart Woodcock & Lisa Marks Woolfson, 2018; Tingrui Yan & Meng Deng, 2018).

Among the best practices undertaken by headteachers related to human resources management is giving teachers the opportunity to involve in decision making and in allowing them to attend courses or trainings to improve their knowledge and skills. Such acquired advantages have been shown to significantly improve teachers' readiness in implementing the IEP (Poon McBrayer, 2017; Tingrui Yan & Meng Deng, 2018; Kim Fong Poon McBrayer, 2017). In Malaysia however, research into special education is still insufficient even though initiatives in this direction has been included in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025. Past studies have also given inadequate focus on the need for skills improvement in special education in order to increase the readiness of mainstream teachers in implementing the IEP. Findings from this study may help fill the gap in special education and assist headteachers in HRM to improve teachers' readiness in effectively implementing the programme.

The survey on 54 schools throughout Malaysia, revealed that the quality of the IEP was at a moderate level, whereas for the HRM among school leaders was at a low level (Board of Inspectors and Quality Assurance, 2017). This weakness in the teaching programme, as specifically related to special training, has become the main underlying reason to embark on the present study. This is especially so when the support given by headteachers to mainstream teachers in the implementation of the IEP, is also at a low level (Charalampous and Papademetriou, 2019).

The study also indicated that teachers involved in special training suggested that the IEP is not effectively implemented due mainly to insufficient support given by the headteachers. The paucity of training, encouragement and little opportunity to involve in decision making, are the main reasons for teachers to feel inadequate, both in knowledge and skills, to provide equal focus between mainstream students and those with special needs in the teaching programme. Preliminary investigation in a primary school in Sepang examined the effectiveness of the headteachers and others in implementing the IEP. Its findings were used to identify the objectives of this study as given below:

- To identify the level of human resource management practices of headmasters.
- To identify the level of readiness of mainstream teachers to implement the IEP.
- To determine the relationship between headmasters' human resource management practices and the level of readiness of mainstream teachers in implementing the IEP.

This paper has four parts. First it reviews the extant literature relevant to headteachers' HRM, specifically on information relating to teachers' readiness in implementing the IEP. This is followed by research methodology and discussion on data analysis techniques in the second part. The third part is the discussion on results and presentation of the summary. Finally, the paper concludes with a discussion on the theoretical and managerial implications and directions for further research.

### **Literature Review**

Human resource management (HRM) as implemented by headteachers is the first variable to be studied. The objective of HRM is to increase the creativity and productivity of manpower and at the same time to ensure their satisfaction is ensured while working in the organization (Appelbaum, 2000). The three main activities in HRM are in improving employees' knowledge and skills, providing incentives, and providing opportunities for them to involve in decision making. These are considered in the AMO Performance Theory, which is a HRM theory, developed by Appelbaum (2000). The theory comprises strategic practices of leaders to develop (Ability) and skills of employees through training. Additionally, leaders need to motivate (Motivation) employees by giving incentives and provide opportunities (Opportunity) for them to involve in decision making.

Headteachers should have the ability to encourage mainstream teachers to increase their professionalism through attending relevant courses and trainings. Among the knowledge and skills that mainstream teachers should have are the techniques to manage students with special needs, effective teaching and learning, ability to collaborate with special education teachers as well as sharing expertise that can contribute to effective implementation of the IEP.

The ability of headteachers in giving incentives are measured based on what is given and offered. These can be in the form of a reward as a result of the teacher's success in implementing the IEP, care taken on teachers' welfare, or of providing facilities and materials for mainstream teachers to assist them in teaching students with special needs in mainstream classes.

Sharing leadership (i.e., to provide opportunity for teachers to involve in decision making) is a measure based on the ability of headmasters to provide opportunities for mainstream teachers to play a role in implementing and making decisions related to the IEP. Among the practices undertaken by headmasters include encouragement for teachers to understand the purpose of the IEP, guiding teachers to plan for the strategic programme, giving teachers the opportunity to involve in problem solving, cultivating teamwork and giving teachers the opportunity to evaluate teaching effectiveness.

The second variable is the readiness of mainstream teachers to implement the IEP. The aim of the programme is to create opportunity for the students with special needs to study together with mainstream students in the same classroom, under the common curriculum. Mainstream teachers are those who are normally teach mainstream students in a mainstream class. The implementation of the IEP requires them to also teach students with special needs which are normally taught by special needs teachers.

Students with special needs refer to those who require special attention and care compared to normal students. These students are dissimilar or 'special' in terms of mental characteristics, sensory abilities, communication ability, behaviour

and physical appearance. In addition, they also require educational approach that suits their needs and shortcomings. These students receive their teaching and learning in mainstream classes, either fully or partially. Full education means studying together with mainstream students for all the designated subjects while in partial education the special-needs students will only partake in selective subjects only.

Stuart Woodcock and Lisa Marks Woolfson (2018) conducted a survey study on the experience and views of teachers who have implemented the IEP in three countries, namely Canada, England and Australia. The survey used a set of questionnaires, which included items to measure the level of support provided by school leaders and the success factors of the IEP implementation. The study showed that the support from leaders, who also double as good human resource managers, is the key to success. The leaders assist in promoting knowledge sharing through training and development programmes related to the IEP thereby increasing teachers' knowledge and skills in managing students with special needs. The study also found a close relationship between school leaders in HRM and teachers' willingness to implement the IEP.

A recent study by Kim Fong Poon McBrayer (2017) established a strong significant relationship between headteachers and their teachers. The former continuously gave encouragement for teachers to improve their knowledge and skills through the effectiveness of the IEP. Some past studies identified the three most effective practices that influence teachers' readiness in implementing the IEP. These included headteachers' support in developing knowledge and skills of their teachers, incentives given to them, and the opportunity for them to involve in leadership experience. These practices succeeded in increasing teachers' readiness in terms of attitudes, knowledge and skills.

A study by Tingrui Yan and Meng Deng (2018) in China showed that teachers who attended training for the IEP were more concerned on the success of the Programme compared to those who did not through similar exercise. Trainees benefited from the knowledge and skills gained which effectively helped them to understand better their role in implementing the IEP. Incentives given to the teachers will encourage skills improvement and increase their motivation to plan and implement effective teaching processes (Piety Runhaar, 2015). The cooperation between headteachers and the teaching staff is the key factor in increasing staff readiness to implement the IEP (Romanuck Murphy, 2018).

## **Methodology**

### **Research design**

This study employs non-experimental research design, especially survey research design, with a quantitative approach. In part, the quantitative data enable researchers in answering research questions. This method was chosen in order to collate measurable data to determine the level of HRM among headteachers, and also the level of readiness of other teachers in implementing the IEP, including the relationship between the two variables. According to Chua (2014), the survey method is a process of collecting detailed information in relation to a phenomenon that occurs, with the aim of using the data collected to verify the incident and actions done related to it.

### **Population and sample**

In this study, the researcher chose the administrative district of Sepang, Selangor, as the context of the investigation. The population comprised mainstream teachers engaged in the IEP in six primary schools. Approximately 82 mainstream teachers completed their questionnaires out of the total 83 mainstream teachers. The lone absentee was away performing his *umrah* (a minor Haj) at that time. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) the sample of 70 was statistically sufficient for the population of 83. Hence, the actual sample of 82 for the study was more than sufficient.

### **Instrument**

The instrument employed the questionnaire, which enabled mainstream teachers to evaluate HRM practices of the headteacher in their respective schools and conduct self-assessments on their readiness to implement the IEP. The questionnaire is the appropriate instrument for use if the researcher is aiming for large data collation to determine the mean value and standard deviation of the construct for a certain variable (Ghazali and Sufean, 2018).

The use of questionnaire for the purpose of data collection is convenient and rapid and with the possibility of high response rate (Ghazali & Sufean, 2018). Experts in the field of administration have been consulted to validate this research instrument. Content validity analysis was conducted to variously ensure soundness of the instrument spanning diverse aspects including its accuracy, format, comprehensiveness, usability of variables, consistency, adequacy and reliability of the items employed. The analysis should assist in understanding the instrument for the benefit of the respondents. The validity of the content thus refers to the ability and capability of the research instrument to source the required information or data based on the components or fields studied (Creswell, 2014).

The pilot study registered a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.74 and above thus placing the constructs evaluated within the range of high reliability level (Bond et al., 2020; Maat, S. M., & Rosli, M. K. (2016)). This implies that all items in the study have achieved high reliability constructs and can thus be accepted.

### **Data Collection Process**

A field work was carried out with a total of 83 sets of questionnaires distributed. A total of 82 sets were successfully completed and returned. Prior to the process, permission for the survey was given by the headteacher or the administrator of the selected schools. The headteacher gave a briefing on the study to all mainstream teachers ~~in the school~~ who participated in the IEP. A special education assistant teacher or a special education class coordinator, was appointed as the school representative to receive, distribute, review and return the questionnaires to the researcher. The teachers were allocated approximately two weeks to complete the questionnaires.

### **Data analysis**

In the subsequent data analysis, the survey information was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software programme version 20. In this process two types of statistics, namely descriptive statistics and inferential statistics were used. According to Gay and Airasian (2009), descriptive analysis is aimed at elaborating on the variables based on the value of frequency, percentage, mean and standard deviation. Whereas, inferential analysis is used to test the relationship between independent variables and

dependent variables as well as the contribution of the independent to the dependent variables.

Inferential analysis using Pearson Correlation test was then conducted to test the relationship between HRM practices of the headteacher against the readiness of mainstream teachers to implement the IEP. The test was used to suit the condition of normal data distribution in compliance with the conditions for conducting the test.

**Results**

A total of 82 mainstream teachers in six schools had provided feedbacks on all the items regarding their demography. This study had involved a total of 14 male teachers (17.1%) and 68 female teachers (82.9%). A total of 76 teachers (92.7%) had not attended specific courses related to the IEP and only 6 teachers (7.3%) did. This explained the fact that the majority of respondents had not attended courses related to the IEP.

With respect to service grades, 8 teachers (9.8%) were in grade DG29-DG38, 21 teachers (25.6%) in grade DG41-D42, while 53 teachers (64.6%) were in grade DG44-DG48. Further analysis related to professional qualifications showed that a total of 10 teachers (12.2%) possessed the Malaysian High Education Certificate (STPM)/Malaysian Religious High Certificate (STAM)/Diploma qualifications, while 29 teachers (35.4%) had Bachelor of Education qualification; 41 teachers (40%) took Postgraduate Education Course, and the remaining 2 teachers (2.4%) had Master's qualification. Based on teaching experience, a total of 4 teachers (4.9%) had seen service of 1 to 5 years, while the remaining 78 (95.1%) were teachers who had taught for more than 5 years. Results also showed that a total of 54 teachers (65.8%) had no experience of teaching students with special needs while 28 teachers (34.1%) had such experience.

As mentioned above in the methodology, the application of HRM by the headteachers were measured based on their performance in improving knowledge and skills of their teaching staff, and in giving incentives and opportunity to those involved in leadership positions. Descriptive analyses on mean, standard deviation, frequency and percentage was calculated to determine the level of human resource achieved by the headteachers and the level of readiness of staff teachers involved in the IEP. The mean score was categorised into five levels, namely very low, low, medium, high and very high (Megan and Christopher, 2004). Results were discussed to elucidate research questions 1 and 2. The findings for research question 1, “what is the level of HRM of the headteachers” is shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Levels of human resource management practices applied by headteachers

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
Improvement of knowledge and skills	2.43	1.11	Low
Incentives	3.23	0.91	Medium
Sharing leadership	2.72	1.00	Medium

Overall mean score	2.80	0.89	Medium
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As indicated in Table1 the overall application of HRM by headteachers in the study is categorised at moderate level (mean score = 2.80). Specifically, the constructs of “Incentives” and “Sharing leadership” scored medium level at respectively 3.23 and 2.72, whereas the “Improvement of knowledge and skills” construct was the poorest at low level of 2.43.

The results for the research question 2, “what is the level of readiness of mainstream teachers for the IEP is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Level of Readiness of Primary Stream Teachers for PPI

Construct	Mean	Standard deviation	Level
Attitude	3.92	0.68	High
Knowledge	3.72	0.84	High
Skills	3.26	0.83	Medium
Overall mean score	3.63	0.57	High

The overall high level of readiness was shown by mainstream teachers for the IEP with a mean score of 3.63. The analysis showed high levels of readiness for “Attitude” and “Knowledge” constructs scoring respectively 3.92 and 3.72. The “Skills” construct scored medium readiness with 3.26. In conclusion, the mainstream teachers are at a high level of readiness in their attitude and knowledge to implement the IEP, but moderately so for skills.

Results for research question 3, “Is there a significant relationship between the headteacher’s HRM practices with the readiness of mainstream teachers for the IEP?” are shown in Table 3. The hypothesis 1 (Ho1) to be tested by Pearson correlation is that, there is no significant relationship between HRM practices of the headteacher with the readiness of mainstream teachers for the IEP.

Table 3 Relationship between headteacher’s human resource management practices and mainstream teacher’s readiness for the IEP.

Human resource management practices of the headteacher	Teacher readiness	
	Pearson correlation	0.764**
Sig.(2-tailed)	0.000	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The Pearson correlation coefficient for the relationship is  $r = 0.764$  with very high level of significance of 0.000 ( $p < 0.01$ ). Since the significance level is smaller than 0.01, the null hypothesis 1 (Ho1) is rejected thus establishing that the headteacher’s HRM practices have a very significant and strong relationship with mainstream teacher readiness for the IEP.

### Discussion

Based on the results, it can be summarised that the general level of HRM shown by headteachers in Sepang district is moderate. The headteachers can thus share their leadership practices with their subordinate teachers while simultaneously providing them with incentives although at a moderate level. However, the construct in improving knowledge and skills need to be strengthened to enable them to fully perform their role in managing human resources as suggested by the Malaysian School Principals Competency

Standards (Aminuddin Baki Institut, Ministry of Education, 2006). The Standards had listed out practices that should be complied with by the headteachers to ensure efficient, effective and continuous human resource development management not only for themselves, but also for enhancing professionalism among their subordinate staff particularly the teachers.

The findings of the study parallel those in Mary Haryati (2017) who discovered a moderate level of HRM performance among the head teachers as related to the IEP, thus confirming these good practices. Conversely however results of inspection conducted by the Board of Inspectors and Quality Assurance Report (2017), showed a low level of performance among headteachers surveyed. The contradiction between the two findings may be attributed to difference in the size of sampling population. In this study only six schools were surveyed, all confined to the Sepang district whereas, the study conducted by the Inspectors' Board involved 54 schools nationwide.

The results also differed with those by Kiran Hashmi (2014) who suggested that HRM strategies in schools are still at a low level. Three other studies however indicated a moderately high level of HRM accomplished by school leaders (Nancy Singai, 2017). In one study headteachers produced a high level achievement thus demonstrating elevated awareness on the importance of effective HRM (Alwiya Allui & Jolly Sahni, 2016). Bity Salwana and Azlin Norhaini (2018) also demonstrated similar high level achievement in knowledge and skills construct for HRM among headteachers studied. The variation in results may be an artefact of the investigation process. Higher level achievement appears related to the evaluation of school leaders as conducted by mainstream teachers involving their core subjects. Conversely, when the evaluation was conducted by teachers for their special tasks, the school leaders scored low achievement. It is thus suggested that the methodology needs careful review to detect any possible flaws so as to ensure more consistent and reliable results.

Another possible factor causal to the low level achievement among headteachers, in terms of poor encouragement to mainstream teachers to attend IEP courses, is their lack of appreciation on the importance of having appropriate knowledge and skills to teach students with special needs. Results from the study recorded that 92.7% of the mainstream teachers have never attend any IEP courses or training.

The poor attendance for IEP courses could also be attributed to the erroneous perception by headteachers that collaboration with special education teachers is sufficient enough for mainstream teachers to acquire the required knowledge and skills. This low awareness on the part of school leaders poses a serious limitation on special needs education due to the constraint imposed on most mainstream teachers to hone their IEP knowledge and skills (Cammy, 2018). Even though special education has become a focus in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, there are school leaders who are still unaware of their role in its process, namely to realise the stated initiatives effectively and efficiently. Other studies have however shown that there are school leaders who are aware of and care about this shortcoming and the need to focus on increasing knowledge and skills of mainstream teachers in implementing the IEP (Azharuddin et.al, 2016; Mariani et al., 2016).

The study showed that headteachers in Sepang were rather stringent in awarding incentives to mainstreams teachers involved in the IEP. In the survey



conducted a total of 37 (45.1%) respondents replied that their headteachers did not grant any incentives to them. This gesture is in contrast to findings of some past studies where headmasters scored high level in management practice for providing incentives to their teachers (Mariani et al., 2016); Agus Susanto & Udik Budi, 2017; Noor Asma & Mohamed Yusoff, 2017). In consequence, headteachers in Sepang were requested to be more sensitive to excellent achievements by some mainstream teachers who were more effective and efficient in implementing the IEP.

Results of this study also contradicted those of some past studies which revealed that school leaders were excellent in their management of leadership sharing (Nurul Huda & Azlin Norhaini, 2017; Anis Salwa & Siti Noor, 2018). A total of 21 teachers (25.6%) in Sepang responded that their headteachers did not give them the opportunity to involve in strategic planning for IEP.

In the second variable studied the mainstream teachers in Sepang were found to be at high level of readiness to implement IEP especially so in terms of attitude and knowledge (Table 2). The teachers however felt deficient in skills to teach their students with special needs. According to Thorndike's Law of Readiness (1913), the important requirements to take into consideration before implementing the programme is the readiness in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills.

As preparation for the teachers, the Teacher Professionalism Development Training Module (Inclusive Education) was issued by the Special Education Division, Malaysia Ministry of Education, to provide basic exposure to mainstream teachers regarding the IEP. The module explains the teaching guidelines on policies, goals, objectives, definitions and approaches that are common to both mainstream students and those with special needs. The results of this study are similar with those of Marlina (2017) and Timo Saloviita (2019) who found that mainstream teachers have a high level of readiness to implement the IEP. These teachers did not object to the presence of special need students in their class, and indeed they always try their best to be effective in their teaching and learning process. This result is as expected since most teachers were commonly found to have special affection and compassion towards their special charges.

The mainstream teachers in Sepang also demonstrated a positive attitude towards the IEP. The finding paralleled those from previous studies where teachers expressed their willingness to accept and implement IEP despite not given the opportunity of attending the special courses or training (Yuzana & Azliha, 2018; Nor Aniza & Anis Farahanim, 2017; Nur Izzaty, 2015).

Some past studies however achieved different results on the readiness in implementing the IEP. For example, Norliah et.al (2016), Anwar (2017), and Norhasni (2015), Mohd. Mokhtar and Farhana (2019), found that the mainstream teachers studied had only moderate level of readiness and they needed additional knowledge and skills for the IEP. Further, these teachers showed poor understanding on the concept of the IEP, and tended to perceive negatively on any related issues. They also lack collaboration with special education teachers, and in understanding of their role in implementation the programme.

The medium level achieved for skills readiness in the study contradicts the results established by Nurul Husna and Nik Suryani (2016) and Emine Ozel Eren et al. (2018). The researchers found the skills of mainstream teachers to

implement the IEP was at a low level. Most of the teachers admitted that they lack the skills to communicate with special need students. They also have difficulties in managing the students' behaviour such as in cognitive level, and in creating the best environment for the inclusive students. The profile of respondents in this study showed that 92.7% did not receive any training on special needs students. This deficiency in training seems to have a strong influence on the level of teachers' readiness in implementing the IEP.

The study established that management practices have a significant and strong relationship with the readiness of mainstream teachers to implement the IEP. It also concurs with the AMO Performance Theory (Appelbaum, 2000) that HRM practices have a relationship with a person's willingness to perform a given task. Such practices can produce employees who are willing to take on the responsibilities entrusted to them.

The results also agree with that of Woodcock and Woolfson (2019) who concluded that HRM practices by school headmasters possess a relationship with the willingness of their teachers to implement the IEP. The study discovered that, among the major factors causal to the success of the IEP is support from leaders. This support comprises encouragement for knowledge and skills development, giving incentives and opportunity for leadership sharing.

For the successful implementation of the IEP, headteachers are required to improve their HRM practices including improving knowledge and skills of their teachers, giving appropriate incentives and practicing leadership sharing. In short, this study explains that these management practices implemented by the headteachers have an impact on the readiness of mainstream teachers to effectively implement the IEP.

## **Implications**

### **Theoretical implications**

The main reference for this study is the HRM theory by Appelbaum (2000). The results established that HRM practices are important and exert influential impact on teachers' readiness to perform tasks, and are thus in full support of the theory. Analysis on the relationship of such practices by headteachers according to the construct stated by the theory also showed that each construct, namely the improvement of knowledge and skills, incentives and sharing leadership has a relationship with readiness for implementing the IEP among mainstream teachers.

The study confirms the importance of the construct, as proposed by the human management theory, in increasing readiness of mainstream teachers to perform their task. The practice of improving knowledge and skills through professionalism development programmes for example, was shown to exert a significant impact on mainstream teachers and help to prepare them in terms of attitudes, knowledge, and skills to implement the IEP for special needs students. They become more inclined through incentives to increase motivation and willingness to perform their duties, and through sharing leadership, to encourage mainstream teachers to work cooperatively with their headteachers and to generate positive feelings towards decisions that are forged together.

The study also supports Thorndike's (1913) theory of readiness which states that an individual can take responsibility in implementing education policy effectively if one is prepared in terms of attitude, knowledge and skills. The high readiness of mainstream teachers directly motivates them to be committed to performing the task entrusted upon them despite not having knowledge and skills related to the task. Readiness that starts from a positive attitude will motivate mainstream teachers to seek knowledge and acquire the subsequent skills needed to implement the IEP efficiently. Therefore, the continuous efforts by headteachers, based on the proposed HRM theory, is expected to help increase the readiness of mainstream teachers to implement the IEP in terms of attitudes, knowledge and skills.

### **Implications on school management practices**

In general, this study shows that the HRM practices of head teachers play an important role in fostering the readiness of mainstream teachers to implement the IEP. Headteachers are the main drivers in the success of the IEP. However, results of this study showed that headteachers do not satisfactorily manage human resources. Therefore, it is proposed that PPD, JPN and KPM provide exposure to headmasters on the importance of knowledge and skills to improve implementation of the IEP. Next, headteachers need to conduct courses or workshops for mainstream teachers to increase the understanding of their role for the IEP.

The headteacher can propose to create an inclusive programme committee at the school level, to plan and monitor the programmes together. The committee for example may comprise the school headteacher as chairman, senior assistant teacher 1 as assistant chairman, programme coordinator as secretary and relevant teachers involved in the teaching and learning process in the classroom as members. This is to ensure that the IEP is implemented in accordance with the guidelines that have been provided. The information obtained from the monitoring process is discussed in the committee meeting for the purpose of continuous improvement. Mainstream teachers found to excel in implementing the IEP, can be specifically motivated by the headteacher through giving incentives. Additionally, through monitoring, mainstream teachers can volunteer their views and suggestions to implement the IEP effectively.

### **Limitations**

The scope of this study is limited to HRM practices among headmasters based on the constructs of knowledge and skills improvement, incentives and sharing leadership. In addition, the study also includes the assessment of readiness of mainstream teachers which is limited to aspects of attitude readiness, knowledge and skills. Further, the sampling is focused on mainstream teachers involved with IEP implementation in integrated primary schools in Sepang district, Malaysia. The results are thus confined to a single district in the country and are associated small sampling size. The findings therefore cannot be generalized because of two reasons. First, this study is specifically and geographically confined to six primary schools in a single administrative district, Sepang. The second reason is that the sampling size is too small to be representative of the whole country.

### **Recommendations for future research**

Future comprehensive studies are recommended with samples from larger populations. This will ensure the results to be more representative of the actual situation. Future research should also add to the demographic data of the

headteachers. This should be more interesting and allow for analysis on different HRM practices based on demographic factors. Further, the study can also use different study designs. For example, advanced research can adopt qualitative designs to explore the views of mainstream teachers on the headteacher's HRM practices through a series of open-ended interviews and questions.

### Conclusion

The issue on the implementation of the IEP underlies the reason for this study which was designed to measure the relationship between HRM of headteachers and readiness for the IEP implementation by mainstream teachers. These results showed that the management practices of headteachers are at a moderate level, while teachers' readiness are at a high level. The theoretical and managerial implications of the study were discussed along with its limitations and recommendations for future studies.

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