

COMPLETION REPORT

Comparison on Diagnosis, Intervention Strategies, Provision of Access Arrangements and Welfare Benefits for Students with Dyslexia and Other Learning Disabilities in Primary Schools in Japan and Malaysia

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In both Malaysia and Japan, a category called 'learning disabilities' is recognised by both governments as an official category of disabilities. Under this category are various developmental and learning disorders like Asperger's syndrome, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, auditory processing disorder, Tourette's syndrome, fragile X syndrome and others. In Malaysia, the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 protects the rights of all people with disabilities (PWDs) and that all PWDs will have the same opportunities as other people. There is no specific law for people with learning disabilities. In Japan, the Diet enacted legislation in May 2016 to boost support for people with developmental disabilities (including those with learning disabilities) to help eliminate social barriers in areas such as education and employment. It is the first revision of the law which has taken effect in 2005. The revised law encourages schools to compile individual learning plans for affected children and municipality offices to offer jobs to developmentally disabled persons so as to help their independence.

Both Malaysia and Japan recognise dyslexia as a learning disability that requires special attention in schools. Both countries require a clinical diagnosis of dyslexia from medical professionals. While in Malaysia, doctors in other related specialties like family health, psychiatry and even medical officers can diagnose a learning disability in primary school children, Japan mandates a paediatrician or child specialist for a diagnosis. In both countries, many doctors can diagnose autism spectrum disorders, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorders and other developmental disorders, but not many of them including paediatricians have been trained to diagnose dyslexia. As such, in Malaysia, the Ministry of Health published a section on assessment and diagnosis of dyslexia in its Paediatric Protocols for Malaysian Hospitals, 2012.

After a clinical diagnosis of a learning disability, registration with the Social Welfare Department (under the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development Malaysia) is encouraged, but not yet mandated, to obtain a Disability Card (*Kad OKU*). This card allows children and persons with disabilities, including dyslexia and other learning disabilities, to obtain a disability monthly allowance, placement in special education or dyslexia programs and access arrangements in national examinations. Persons with a Disability Card also enjoy free or special discounts in transportation, health, recreational and other services. Parents of children with a disability card enjoy rebate in their annual income tax. In Japan, there is no issuance of such a disability card. Children with dyslexia and other learning disabilities are given a note from the diagnosing doctor on type of disability. This note allows the holder to have access to special education or special schools. Until the revised Developmentally Disabilities Act in May 2016, there is no legislation to provide special educational services for children with learning disabilities in mainstream schools.

Both Malaysia and Japan have put in place special learning programs for children diagnosed with dyslexia and other learning disabilities. Malaysia has special schools for children with visual and hearing impairments only and integrated special education programs for children with learning disabilities. A minority of learning-disabled children is being placed in inclusive programs, usually without the services of learning support assistants (LSAs). The National Dyslexia Program in Malaysia commenced in 2004 in a few selected schools nation-wide. In Japan, there are special schools for children with visual, hearing and intellectual disabilities. One such school for children with intellectual disabilities is Aoyama Special Education Elementary School in

Minato-ku. Children with dyslexia and other developmental disabilities are placed in special education programs like in Konan Elementary School, also in Minato-ku. Those placed in inclusive programs will have the support of LSAs.

The research findings for both Japan and Malaysia affirm the principles laid out by international conventions, in particular, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) as well as the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), both of United Nations. Article 23 of the CRC states that a child with a disability should enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure their dignity, promotes self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. Article 23 also requires State Parties to recognize the right of the disabled child to special care, to render assistance free of charge whenever possible and to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development.

As both Japan and Malaysia are signatories to both these conventions, albeit with some reservations in the case of Malaysia, both countries have set in place several provisions in the form of laws, mandates and mechanisms to ensure the special needs of children with disabilities or difficulties are well-taken care of. However, more needs to be done in terms of implementation so as to uphold the principle of inclusion and no child left behind.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

No.	Date	Venue	Name of Conference	Title of Presentation	Presenter(s)
1	25 June 2015	Special Education Division, Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), Tokyo, Japan	Sharing session with special education officers of MEXT	Special Education in Malaysia	Ong Puay Hoon & Ong Puay Liu
2	11 June 2016	Workpia Yokohama, Japan	Asia-Pacific Dyslexia Festival and Symposium 2016	Education of Students with Dyslexia in Malaysia	Ong Puay Hoon
3	12 June 2016	Workpia Yokohama, Japan	Asia-Pacific Dyslexia Festival and Symposium 2016	Teaching of English Language to Students with Dyslexia in Malaysia	Ong Puay Hoon

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

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Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

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