

The Level of Implementation of Co-Teaching and its Differences Among Teachers Teaching in Inclusive Classrooms

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Abstract The co-teaching approach has been practiced in inclusive classes in several countries globally, but its implementation in developing countries such as Malaysia is still early. Therefore, this study aims to survey the implementation of co-teaching components in inclusive classrooms. This quantitative study adapted the questionnaire from Hussin administered to 20 mainstream teachers and 20 special education teachers in a district in the state of Selangor, Malaysia. The entire items have a reliability level of 0.908. The data analyzed using descriptive analysis and inference analysis. Vygotsky's Constructivist Theory underlying this study and the model of co-teaching by Friend and Cook were adapted. The findings showed that the implementation level of the co-teaching components was at a moderate level (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.42), and there was no difference between teacher categories towards the implementation of the co-teaching components with $t(38) = -0.387, p = 0.701 (p > 0.05)$. Those findings indicated that the co-teaching components' implementation level could be further enhanced through the teachers' training and professional development. The initiatives can improve the teacher's understanding of the co-teaching components for more effective implementation. In addition, the combination of field expertise and an equivalent commitment from mainstream and special education teachers will positively impact the teaching and learning process in the inclusive classroom. In conclusion, the tremendous implementation of co-teaching components can improve teaching quality in inclusive education classes and fulfill the special education students' needs and access to education.

Keywords: co-teaching; special education; inclusive education programme; teaching approach.

INTRODUCTION

The Inclusive Education Programme (IEP) is a program that provides special education needs (SEN) students opportunities to learn in mainstream classroom with typical students. The idea of implementing IEP is very consistent with the increased awareness of the access rights of education for Children With Disabilities (UNESCO, 2009). This situation can be seen clearly in the international special education conventions that often discuss inclusive themes such as the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO 1994), Biwako Millenium Framework Oshi Japan 2002, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNESCO, 2009) and Incheon Strategy. Malaysia is also no exception to the basic determination of education policies through the Ministry of Education (MOE) Malaysia which confirms the implementation of IEP such as the Special Education Regulations 2013, the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (MOE 2013).

However, implementation of IEP is not simply put SEN students in the inclusive classroom. Ainscow (2007) states that IEP requires collaboration and cooperation from various parties such as the schools administrative and stakeholders to ensure effective

implementation. This includes ensuring that the teaching approach is appropriate and meets SEN students' requirements. Thus, a co-teaching approach is seen to compensate the requirements for SEN and typical students in inclusive classrooms. According to Friend (2008b), Murawski (2008) and Scruggs et al. (2007) IEP should be resolved by implementation of co-teaching approach (CTA) and this approach also provides more consistent benefits to the SEN students (Rytivaara, 2012).

Co-teaching approach concept, The Co-Teaching approach (CTA) is frequently debated approach in education and has been practice in several countries where this approach started in the mainstream (Friend et al, 2014). The concept of team teaching in the mainstream began around the 1950s and 1960s as a precursor to the sustainability of CTA implementation (Reid & Lieenemann, 2006). The idea of combining two teachers in a teaching session was a learning style at the time and reached a high level and was one of the most successful educational method (Vinzi & Amato, 2010).

CTA is a continuous collaboration between two or more educators with the primary goal of organizing, teaching, and assessing the same group of students

(Gately & Gately, 2001). Mastropieri and Scruggs (2006) argue that in the common co-teaching practice, a mainstream education teacher (MET) paired with a special education teacher (SET) in a typical and SEN student classroom. The effectiveness of this approach is based on teamwork from several teachers who have expertise in different fields (Gerlach, 2017).

Problem statements, Although the concept of CTA has long been introduced, the effort to integrate the concept of cooperation and co-teaching are still relatively new globally as these concepts are not widely discussed in the education sector (Ghazzoul 2018). For example, the CTA is seen as still requiring more experimentation to achieve the objectives of inclusive in order to adapt in the Indian context (Bharti 2016). Delkamiller & Leader-Janssen (2014) also found that the implementation of CTA did not reach an effective level even though SETs are said to be aware that planning and communication are the most important aspects of co-teaching. This is consistent with the findings of Dieker and Murawski (2003); Welch (2000) which explains that communication and planning in a CTA has not been implemented effectively.

The practice of CTA in Malaysia is still relatively new and this teaching approach has yet to be implemented extensively (Hussin 2017). The review of Gaik et al. (2015) proves that the teachers are less likely to apply a various approaches, strategies, methods and techniques in teaching and learning process to meet the diversity needs of individual in the classroom. Hussin (2017) stated that there was no CTA execution due to the constraints such as expertise of SET and MET in assisting the diversity of SENS in the classroom.

The limited collaboration between MET and SET is also a barrier to meet the needs of SEN students in inclusive classroom in the Malaysian context (Khairuddin, Dally & Fogget, 2016). Noorafiza and Rosadah (2017) also show the level of collaboration between MET and SET is at a moderate level and needs improvement. This gives the impression that the teachers have not mastered the CTA component properly and this will make it difficult for effective implementation of CTA.

The study of Khairuddin, Dally & Fogget (2016) also claims that inclusiveness is rare and if there is, there are few or almost no direct cooperation between SETs and METs. There are special education novice teachers who feel less knowledgeable about the content being taught in inclusive classes (Shin, Lee, & McKenna, 2015). This is one of the reasons that a study found that SET as assistive teacher in the inclusive classroom was not existed throughout the teaching and learning process (Zuki & Rahman, 2016) while the IEP Guidelines outlined that schools with SET should play the role of co-teachers (MOE, 2013).

Teaching issues in the inclusive classroom describe that the teachers involved have yet to grasp and understand the concept of co-teaching. Sharing the same goals and philosophy and having responsibility to all students in the inclusive classroom will make the values of co-teaching to be understood and dominated by the teachers (Shin, Lee, & McKenna, 2015)

(Kilanowski-Press, Foote, & Rinaldo, 2010) stated that CTA is the most effective inclusive model but least widely practiced although it is seen to support SENs in the mainstream education environment (Friend et al. 2010) and to enhance student access right of education (Solis et al., 2012). Therefore, there is a need for teachers to master and understand the components of the CTA to teach effectively and to solve problems or issues that often arise in the implementation of inclusive classes. The main obstacle to implementing any educational program is the teacher factor and it is a critical challenge in the success of IEP in Malaysia (Cheong, 2017).

Theory of constructivism, Social constructivist theory underlies this study. The role of teachers in forming interactions and proximal developmental zones pioneered by Vygotsky (1978) implicates the teaching practice. Vygotsky (1978) states that the implementation of social constructivist teaching will help teachers to understand each student's needs. This is related to the concept of CTA which the teacher's role will contribute to the learning development of SEN students (Friend, 2008b).

Components of co-teaching approach, This concept of CTA is a combination of teaching expertise in inclusive classrooms that will create a better learning environment for SEN students and typical students. Components of co-teaching are needed in implementing CTA, as proposed by Friend (2008a); (2008b) which are: (i) a philosophical basis, (ii) individual prerequisites, (iii) the professional relationship, (iv) classroom dynamics, (v) external supports.

The combination of these aspects will create a more meaningful teaching approach in the inclusive classroom.

Research objectives, The studies to review the implementation level of the CTA components need to be carried out so that improvements can be made based on the Malaysian education setting. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: (i) Identify the implementation level of co-teaching approach components in inclusive classroom. (ii) Identify the difference of implementation level of the co-teaching approach components based on the categories of teachers who teaching in inclusive classroom.

Table 1. Interpretation Mean Score

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.01 hingga 2.00	Low
2.01 hingga 3.00	Moderately Low
3.01 hingga 4.00	Moderately High
4.01 hingga 5.00	High

Source: Nunnally & Berstein (1994)

Table 2. Respondent's Demography Profile

Gender	Mainstream Education Teacher		Special Education Teacher	
	(f)	(%)	(f)	(%)
Male	7	17.5	6	15
Female	13	32.5	14	35
Total	20	50	20	50

Table 3. Score Mean of Implementation Level of CTA Components

Dimension	Mean	S.D.	Interpretation
Philosophical	3.99	0.51	Moderately High
Individual Prerequisites	3.65	0.48	Moderately High
Professional Relationship	3.87	0.51	Moderately High
Classroom Dynamics	3.99	0.48	Moderately High
External Support	3.99	0.52	Moderately High
Implementation Level of CTA Components	3.90	0.42	Moderately High

METHOD

Research design, This quantitative study using survey instruments to obtain data on the implementation level of CTA components in inclusive classroom. Survey study is a procedure in which a sample or entire population is surveyed to reveal the attitude, opinion, behaviour, or characteristics of the population performed by the researcher (Creswell 1994).

Population and sample, In this study, the population are METs and SETs who teaching in the inclusive classroom of primary schools in a district in Selangor, Malaysia. Sampling involved 20 SETs and 20 METs. All samples were randomly selected. Simple random sampling is a sample selection process where individual from a population have the same opportunity or probability to be chosen and each subject is independent (Creswell 2012). The selected samples have a same feature, which is teaching in the inclusive class.

Research Instrument, The instrument adapted from Hussin (2017) which is divided into two sections. Each section has a separate guide, Part A consists of the personal information that respondents must fill out. Part B requires respondents to answer 20 items divided into 5 main dimensions namely philosophy, personal nature, professional nature, dynamic classroom and external support.

The reliability of the questionnaire shows how well the scores obtained for each item are consistent or stable when tested multiple times (bin Darusalam & Hussin, 2016). The reliability of the items was tested through the Reliability Analysis Statistic, Cronbach's Alpha value = 0.906. According to George et, al (2003); Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) Cronbach's alpha value of 0.6 is sufficient to be used for research purposes. The instrument used has been through the validity of the content by three experts who determine the suitability of items against the construct. This is in accordance with the number of suggested expert panels enough between three to ten people (Lynn, 1986). Overall, the expert panel confirms that the items in the research instrument are capable of measuring the aspects to be measured.

Analysis of data, Items were analysed using five-point Likert scale rating, 1 indicating strongly disagree, 2 indicating disagreement, 3 indicating disagreement, 4 indicating agreeing and 5 indicating strongly agree on the items being measured.

Descriptive analysis involving mean scores and standard deviations was used to identify levels of implementation of CTA components after considering Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) who recommended that the levelling of a study dimension using Likert scale be easily indexed by involving mean scores and standard deviations as shown in Table 1.

Inference analysis also used t-test of independent samples. According to Pallant (2007), the test is used to compare two mean when there are two groups or two independent data sets.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data obtained were data on demographic factors and data on the level of CTA among METs and SETs who involved teaching in the inclusive classroom.

Respondent's Profile. Table 2 shows the demographics of the respondents involved in the study. The study involved a balance of 20 METs and 20 SETs in the Petaling Perdana area of Selangor teaching in an inclusive classroom. The data showed that both categories of teachers were dominated by female teachers with a total of 27 (67.5%) compared to 13 male teachers (32.5%).

Table 4. Mean Scores for The Implementation of CTA Components Based on The Category of Teachers Who Teach In The Inclusive Classroom

	Levene's Test		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	p	Mean Differences	Std. Error Differenece	95% confidence interval	
								lower	upper
Implementation Level of CTA Components	.041	.840	-.387	38	.701	-.053	.136	-.327	.222

At significant level 0.05

Implementation Level of CTA Components. The implementation level of the five CTA components are detailed by interpreting the following mean score table:

Table 3 shows that the implementation level for CTA components among teachers as a whole is moderately high (Mean = 3.90, SD = 0.42). Philosophy Components (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.51), Dynamic Classes (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.48) and External Support Components (Mean = 3.99, SD = 0.52) are seen as important in the implementation of CTA components where all three constructs have highest mean followed by the Components of Professional Relationship (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.51), and the Individual Prerequisites (Mean = 3.65, SD = 0.48).

In general, the results of this quantitative analysis explain the implementation of CTA in inclusive classes. The respondents indicated an increasing understanding of the CTA components. This finding describes the gradually implementation of CTA and become as alternative in teaching approach for inclusive classrooms in Malaysia. Implementation of the CTA is also seen as the basis for the continuation of the Zero Reject Policy implemented by the MOE in early 2019. This is also in line with the recommendations in the Teacher Professional Development Training Module (Inclusive Education) that emphasize CTA to be used in the teaching and learning process in the IEP. SETs and subject teachers are encouraged to collaborate for appropriate teaching and learning process based on the capabilities of the students in the inclusive classroom (Special Education Division, 2018). This positive development is consistent with the findings of Hussin and Hamdan (2016) which suggest that teachers are ready for CTA on the instructional factors that require inclusive education. Teachers readiness includes a sense of shared responsibility, commitment, and willingness to take on additional tasks. It also showed a positive correlation between the readiness and the components of CTA, which also proves that teachers are prepared to implement CTA in inclusive classes.

Although the overall level of implementation of CTA components is at a moderately high level

and is believed to be increasing, the Individual Prerequisites Components and Professional Relationship Components, which have lower mean than other components, are urging some things to be considered. These components emphasize the personal and professional qualities that teachers need to have in implementing CTA. Based on the needs of these elements, teachers should strengthen their ability and willingness to implement the CTA while maintaining the professional relationship in order to conduct an inclusive classroom. Teachers should show individual prerequisites that do not conflict with their professional views on the implementation of CTA (Friend, 2008b). According to Murawski (2012) the traits that teachers need to have in CTA are to fully understand the ethics of teaching and to respect each other's roles.

Difference of Implementation Level of The Co-Teaching Approach Components Based on The Categories of Teachers. A comparison of mean scores between METs and SETs was performed using t-test analysis. In more detail, Table 4 shows the mean scores for the implementation of CTA components based on the category of teachers who teach in the inclusive classroom.

The above mean score analysis showed that the mean score for SETs (Mean = 3.93, SD = 0.434) while for METs (Mean = 3.87, SD = 0.425). Analysis of the data that has been shown to indicate that $t(38) = -0.387$, $p = 0.701$ ($p > 0.05$) was not significant for the implementation of the CTA component between METs and SETs. This significance level was greater than 0.05 ($p = 0.05$). Therefore, difference in the level of implementation of the CTA component based on the category of teachers teaching in the inclusive classroom is not significant.

Effective implementation of CTA requires a balanced engagement of METs and SETs. Mastropieri et.al. (2005) stated that MET is considered an expert in the subject matter and SET is an expert in pedagogy and teaching for SEN students. The collaboration of these two categories of teachers will have a positive impact on the teaching and learning process in the

inclusive classroom, especially on SEN students. The situation revealed in the inference test that there was no difference between the categories of teachers toward the implementation of CTA in the inclusive classroom. This finding is consistent with the study by Malian & McRae (2010); Gebhardt et al. (2015). Every teacher plays an important role in CTA where without the active participation from SETs and METs, efforts to place SEN students in the mainstream will face many challenges (Ainscow, 2007). Co-teaching that meets the components outlined will meet the requirements of the SEN students in obtaining educational rights as well as assist students in improving academic performance. Active teacher engagement can be demonstrated as a result of training and professional development. Most studies agree that teachers will show positive emotions if they are successful and have sufficient skills.

Implication of study. The entire of this study consistent with Vygotsky's social constructivist theory. The role of teachers in developing interactions in inclusive classroom can improve student achievement and social engagement. In addition, the emphasis on the concept of zone proximal development can also be enhanced as changes made by teachers in forming aspects of learning from students' classmates can influence them in social life. The teacher's role as facilitator is strongly emphasized in the implementation of CTA.

However, combining two teachers in one class requires patience as each teacher has a different personality, teaching style and attractiveness. Teachers also need to know to balance their role in the classroom so that an element of parity exists between the two teachers. Effective co-teaching will positively impact student academic achievement and meet the needs of students in educational access. Professional development training is crucial in ensuring that the teachers involved can reinforce their understanding of the CTA component and understand what role they should play. Lack of proper training and professional development will cause teachers less confident in their teaching effectiveness in connection with lack the knowledge and skills needed (Dillon & Gallagher, 2019).

CONCLUSION

This study reviews the level of implementation of CTA components and its implementation difference based on the categories of teachers in Malaysia. The implementation level of the CTA component as a whole shows a moderately high level and there is no difference between SETs and METs in the implementation. This affirm that the balance of support and teacher involvement is crucial in determining the

level of success of the CTA. Professional training and development need to be enhanced from time to time in order to strengthen teachers' knowledge and skills in implementing CTA. In addition, exposure and training related to CTA for teachers will further expand the practice of CTA in Malaysia. However, the findings of this study are very limited because it only focuses on one factor related to teachers other than the three technical elements of the study, namely sampling design, data type and location of study. Further studies can use qualitative design in order to explore deeper into the implementation of CTA components. Nonetheless, this study was able to be part of the preliminary study that will be a continuation for better learning outcomes in inclusive classroom settings in Malaysia.

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