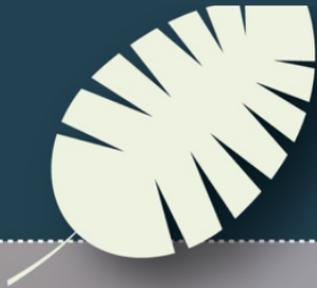




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JABATAN PENDIDIKAN KHAS
KEMENTERIAN PENDIDIKAN

SPECIAL EDUCATION FRAMEWORK



*SUPPLEMENT TO THE
SPECIAL EDUCATION
POLICY GUIDELINES 1997*

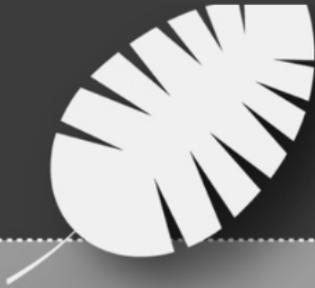




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Glossary

Adaptations

Adaptations are teaching and assessment strategies especially designed to accommodate a student's needs so he or she can achieve the learning outcomes of the subject or course and to demonstrate mastery of concepts.

Assessment

This is a systematic process of gathering information in order to make appropriate educational decisions for a student. It is a collaborative and progressive process designed to identify the student's strengths and needs, set goals, and results in the identification and implementation of selected educational strategies.

Centres of Excellence

These centres are essentially local mainstream schools that have been fitted out with the appropriate infrastructure and facilities, resources and learning equipment as well as the provision of Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers and teacher assistants according to the needs of students based on their diagnosis.

Community

Community refers to individuals or groups of individuals within a given catchment area who may be involved in supporting the needs of students with special educational needs. They may include but not limited to school leaders, teachers (regular and SEN), parents and peers.

Disability

The International Classification of Functioning (ICF) defines disability as “the outcome of the interaction between a person with impairment and the environmental and attitudinal barriers he/she may face”.

Diversity

People's differences which may relate to their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, language, culture, religion, mental and physical ability, class, and immigration status. (UNESCO, 2017)

Equity

It concerns fairness with regard to, and importance of equal opportunity and access to education for all learners. (UNESCO, 2017)

Human Resource Competency Framework (HRCF)

Human Resource Competency Framework (HRCF) provides the platform to support individuals to develop their skills and behaviours to reach competencies that are required to uphold their respective positions in addition to fulfilling competencies beyond the required level.

Individual Education Plan (IEP)

An IEP is a documented plan developed for a student with special educational needs that describes individualized goals, adaptations, modifications, the services to be provided, and includes measures for tracking achievement.

Impairment

A medically identified condition or long-term limitation of a person's physical, mental, cognitive, communicative and sensory function.

Inclusive Education

A system of education which allows all students to access and fully participate in learning alongside their peers in regular educational setting within the neighborhood. The learning is tailored to their individual needs in order for them to achieve their potential.

Resource Teachers

Resource Teachers are teachers who assist in the adaptations / modifications of the curriculum so that students with special educational needs can have access to learning. They also develop various resources and appropriate teaching aids to support a distinct group of students such as dyslexia, hearing impairment or visual impairment. Resource teachers have attended relevant basic training in the respective areas and have also been provided with continuous professional development to equip them with the necessary skills.

Special Education Needs (SEN) Teacher

A Special Education Needs (SEN) Teacher is a specially-trained qualified teacher with relevant specialist skills and knowledge in the field of special education. A teacher can become a SEN Teacher if he/she attends the Master of Teaching in Inclusive Special Education programme at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. SEN teachers are the key teaching staff in the delivery of special education programme for students with special educational needs in government schools.

Special Education Programme

Special Education Programme is an education programme for students who have been identified as having special educational needs requiring a curriculum that is modified or/and adapted and/or differentiated according to their ability.

School Based Team

A school-based team is an on-going team of school-based personnel which has a formal role to play as a problem-solving unit in assisting classroom teachers to develop and implement instructional and/or management strategies and to coordinate support resources for students with special educational needs within the school.

Stakeholders

Those who play a role towards achieving the goal of inclusive education. This includes teachers, departments, Government agencies, Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs), industry and international partners.

Students with special educational needs

These are students who have additional or different learning needs that often require modification and adjustment in terms of the curriculum teaching and learning methods, resources or facilities, and may require the services of specialists and other professional agencies. Such students may have one or more of the following characteristics:

- Display learning ability that is significantly lower than average intellect (e.g. Intellectual Disability);
- Have a physical and/or sensory impairment (e.g. Visual Impairment or Hearing Impairment);
- Exhibit behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties;
- Have speech, language and communication difficulties; and
- Have medical or health conditions that debilitates their everyday function.

Support services

These refer to services that are typically deployed to assist in facilitating the teaching and learning of students with special educational needs. These may include one or more of the following:

- Assessing learning needs;
- Consultation with parents/schools;
- Intervention and therapy;
- Developing teaching and learning aids;
- Conducting professional development; and
- Attending school review meetings.

Transition

The process of students moving from an education level to the next, for instance from primary to secondary or from secondary to post-secondary.

Whole School Evaluation (WSE)

The process of self-evaluation by a school in order to ensure the school's action plans conform with its short- and long-term strategy, systematic and focused on aspects that needs improvement that help the school and Ministry of Education to achieve their targets.

Universal design

Universal design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. (<http://universaldesign.ie/What-is-Universal-Design/>)

Foreword

The Ministry of Education (MOE) recognises the importance of special education as a key driver to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education are attainable for students with special educational needs.

The MOE's Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 incorporates a vision statement which calls for "Quality Education Dynamic Nation". This vision will be achieved through the provision of equal and equitable access to quality education that is accessible and relevant to the lives of all children including those with special educational needs.

To make this a reality, we have endeavoured to revise the Special Education Policy Guidelines which was implemented in 1997. A supplement to the existing policy guidelines was produced from this, and hereinafter will be referred to as the Special Education Framework. This Special Education Framework was developed through the active participation of our key strategic partners and represents a consensus of stakeholders on the provision of special education in Brunei Darussalam. Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers, formerly known as SENA teachers, Home-Room teachers (HRT), resource teachers, Learning Support teachers (LST), school leaders, as well as representatives from various departments in the MOE and the community were among the key contributors in developing this revised document.

This framework addresses some of the critical issues which determine the delivery of inclusive quality education for students with special educational needs. It also addresses issues of equity and improvement of learning environments in all formal and non-formal centres of learning. This will ensure that inclusive education becomes a reality and consequently improve the participation and involvement of people with special educational needs in national mainstream development activities.

I would therefore urge all school leaders, principals, headmasters, teachers and parents to utilise the Special Education Framework in their continuous endeavour to implement a holistic approach to education in order to achieve their students' fullest potential.

Permanent Secretary (Core Education)
Ministry of Education, Negara Brunei Darussalam

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview of Brunei Darussalam's Education System

The mission statement stipulated in the Ministry of Education's Strategic Plan 2018 to 2022 aims to "deliver holistic education to achieve fullest potential for all". This is achievable through the active participation of all students in education. To this end, the Ministry of Education (MOE) is continuously working to ensure quality of education is provided for all students including students with special educational needs. Such students will contribute to the country's nation building and promote sustainable development as espoused in the Brunei Vision 2035, which aims to transform Brunei Darussalam as a nation widely recognised for the accomplishment of its educated and highly skilled people.

In light of this, the Ministry published the Special Education Policy Guidelines (based on the principles of inclusive education) in 1997. The 1997 policy guidelines provided the initial framework for the development of an education system which responds to the needs of students with special educational needs. It states among others, that all children are able to learn when they are provided with an appropriate learning environment which includes a regular schooling system with an inclusive orientation that can respond to their unique individual needs.

The National Education Policy (1993) provides the legislative framework for 12 years of education for a child from the age of 6, that is a year of pre-school, 6 years of primary school, 3 years of lower secondary education and 2 years of upper secondary, or vocational / technical education. The Education Policy also states that appropriate provisions should be put in place in government schools in order to respond to the diversity of needs. Such provisions are a distinct feature that is based on the principles of inclusive education. The principles are rooted in the concept of inclusive education and are incorporated and reinforced in the Compulsory Education Act of 2007.

Similarly, inclusive orientation is a strong feature in the National Education System for the 21st century (SPN 21) that was introduced in 2009. SPN 21 provides multiple pathways to accommodate the diverse learning needs of learners. It allows students choice in various programmes according to their individual capabilities, interests, inclination, growth and development. The curriculum is designed to be broad-based and offers a seamless pathway to higher education from mainstream schools and vocational institutions.

1.2. Special Education in Brunei Darussalam

In line with global trends towards inclusion in education, Brunei Darussalam embraced the concept of Inclusive Education in 1994. The Ministry of Education recognises this as part of the national policy agenda and acknowledges the need to adopt special education as one of the education provisions to achieve inclusion in education, specifically for students with special educational needs.

The first step taken by the MOE to uphold inclusive education was the establishment of the Special Education Unit (SEU) in the same year. SEU was set up to assist in the planning, co-ordination and implementation of special education programmes and services within schools for students with special educational needs. The inception of SEU marked a significant milestone in the Ministry of Education's endeavours to promote an inclusive learning environment for children with special educational needs within the Sultanate.

This was followed by the publication of the Special Education Policy Guidelines in 1997. Based on the principles of inclusive education, the 1997 policy guidelines allowed provisions to be made for the inclusion of students with special educational needs in mainstream schools at the time. The 1997 Special Education Policy Guidelines was further reinforced by other national education policies and legislation, including a number of notable regional and international agreements that have been effective in promoting inclusive and equitable quality education for all. On 1st June 2021, SEU was upgraded to A Special Education Needs Department (AScEND).

National Policy on Education and Legal Context

The education system in Brunei Darussalam strongly promotes access to education for all children regardless of their ability, which is reiterated in the following national policies and legislation:

- i. The 1993 National Education Policy stipulates that every student be provided with 12 years of education. The policy advocated 7 years in preschool and primary, 3 years in lower secondary and 2 years in upper secondary.
- ii. The Education Act, 2003 stipulates that the Ministry of Education "... shall provide special education in such government primary or secondary schools as he thinks fit and in any special school established by the Minister ..." (Brunei Darussalam Government Gazette, 2003, p. 1000).
- iii. Under the Compulsory Education Act, 2007 a child of compulsory school age, that is, "a child above the age of 6 years who has not yet attained the age of 15 years", shall attend school regularly as a pupil. There are exceptions for children with profound and complex needs who may be required to attend specific learning centres run by Non-Government Organization (NGO). Such children will be channelled to appropriate centres accordingly after having gone through the proper process of assessment.
- iv. The National Education System for the 21st Century (SPN 21), which was implemented in 2009, provides students with multiple pathways according to their individual capabilities, interests, inclination, growth and development, thereby catering to their needs.

1.3. Regional and International Conventions and Declaration

Over the last two decades, there has been an increasing worldwide awareness and commitment to education for persons with disabilities and this has subsequently led to a series of Declarations and Conventions. Brunei Darussalam's continuous endeavours to uphold its commitment to inclusive and equitable quality education for all is reflected in the following regional and international conventions and declarations.

- i. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education in 1994 urged all governments to adopt, as a matter of law or policy, the principles of inclusive education and ensure that "schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions" (p.6). In 1994, representatives from 92 governments, including Brunei Darussalam, and 25 international organizations attended the *World Conference on Special Needs Education* in Salamanca, Spain (Norjum, 2002). The countries represented became signatories to *The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action in Special Needs Education* (UNESCO, 1994).
- ii. ASEAN Human Rights Declaration (AHRD) in 2013 stipulates "the rights of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, and vulnerable and marginalised groups are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of human rights and fundamental freedoms". Article 31 states that every person has the right education and that basic education shall be free.
- iii. The Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action in 2015 highlights the importance of inclusive education for students with disabilities and "therefore is committed to making the necessary changes in education policies and focusing our efforts on the most disadvantaged, especially those with disabilities, to ensure that no one is left behind".

- iv. SEAMEO Education Agenda 2015-2035 encompasses 7 priority agendas: Early childhood care and education; Addressing barriers to inclusion; Resiliency in the face of emergencies; Promoting technical and vocational education and training; Revitalizing teacher Education; Harmonizing higher education and research and Adopting a 21st century curriculum. The Annual Governing Board members meeting organised by SEAMEO Regional Center for Special Education Needs (SEN) in Malaysia, have been held regularly since 2013 to promote teacher’s capacity building, increasing awareness as well as to connect and build networking partnerships among countries, institutions and non-profit organizations.
- v. Article 24 of The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UN CRPD) recognises “the right of persons with disabilities to education”. State Parties shall “ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning”. Brunei Darussalam ratified UN CRPD in 2016.
- vi. United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (UN SDG) 4. “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” is at the heart of the 2030 SDGs and imperative for the success of all SDGs (UNESCO, 2017).

2. Rationale

Brunei Darussalam’s Special Education Policy Guidelines was implemented 24 years ago. Since then, significant changes in the field of special education have taken place and documented throughout the world in terms of both policy and practice. They also appear in several resolutions in international agreements that Brunei Darussalam have subscribed to and ratified. It is therefore timely to revisit and revise the first edition with the view to reflect and accommodate new insights and development in the field of special education. Among others, the rationales for this move are that:

- i. The Special Education Framework will help to re-conceptualise and identify the key elements in the provision of special education to ensure continued access, participation and achievement of students with special educational needs.
- ii. It will serve as an updated source of reference for the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of special education programmes and support services to students, parents, teachers and relevant stakeholders.
- iii. It ensures that current practices in special education are relevant and in line with national, regional and international policies, legislation and declarations on promoting the principles of inclusive education (see section 6).

3. Achieving Inclusion in Education with Special Education

3.1. Inclusion in Education

Inclusion in education or inclusive education is a concept and process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners. It is essentially about access, participation and achievement of all regardless of their disability, gender, ethnicity, religion or geographical location.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) recognises that inclusion in education is not simply about enrolling children with disabilities and other learning needs into regular schools. It is not always about physical access and their placement, but about ensuring that all children actively and sustainably participate in the learning and work process, feel welcome and accepted, as well as achieve academically and socially in learning environments that is most appropriate to them.

The MOE recognises that special education is one of the education provisions under MOE that can assist to fulfil access, participation and achievement of students with special educational needs.

Generally, special education refers to any appropriate adjustments, supplemental instructions, or a different education provision put in place specifically for students with special educational needs. The following education settings depict how special education in Brunei Darussalam is being and could be delivered:

- i. In regular classrooms with an adapted or modified curriculum or additional teaching support such as a Teacher Assistant (TA).
- ii. Small classes within a regular school such as in the Learning Assistance Centre or Pre-Vocational programme with an adapted or modified curriculum.
- iii. Placement in a specialised setting such as a centre for students with profound and complex needs.

Special education provisions in the form of programmes have been made available by the MOE through AScEND to include students with special educational needs in education. A special education programmes should be customised to address each student's needs. Special educators provide a continuum of services, in which students with various disabilities receive multiple degrees of support based on their individual needs. It is crucial for special education programmes to be individualised so that it addresses the unique combination of a student's needs.

Two programmes, in particular, have been implemented in regular primary and secondary government schools:

- i. The Learning Assistance Programme (LAP) is a whole school-based approach to provide learning assistance to students with special educational needs in the majority of government primary schools.
- ii. The 5-year Pre-Vocational Programme (PVP) in government secondary schools nationwide is an alternative pathway that provides opportunities to students with special educational needs who may have varying cognitive and learning needs.

These are students who require a curriculum that is modified and/or adapted according to their ability to enable them to acquire various independent living skills and basic vocational skills which can empower them to become independent adults.

The MOE also emphasises on the important role that resources play in ensuring that the inclusion process is effective for students with special educational needs. These resources may include but are not limited to special educators and trained teachers; adequate funding; learning aids and specialised equipment and statistical information, which can be accessed through stakeholders (refer to Figure 3).

The MOE recognises that achieving inclusion in education for students with special educational needs and/or other learning needs will require the school or centre of learning to strengthen their collaboration with its strategic partners (stakeholders) in order to enhance shared accountability in the development of teaching and learning.

It should be highlighted that promoting inclusion in education for students with other learning needs (refer to Figure 1) will be under the responsibility of the relevant departments at the MOE. For example, disadvantaged and at-risk students are supported by specific departments through the distribution of basic school materials from Year 1 to Year 13. These include school stationaries, workbooks, uniforms, night classes, school fees exemptions, breakfast, hostel accommodation and transportation through the *Miftaahun Najaah* Scheme since 2011, the *Riayah Wa Mahabbah Programme* since 2014 and the *Harapan Programme* since 2018.

3.2. Students with Special Educational Needs

Students with special educational needs in the context of Brunei Darussalam refer to students with disabilities, one of many subgroups of students under the comprehensive scope of inclusive education. Figure 1 represents the various subgroups of students/learners under the concept of inclusive education.



Figure 1: Subgroups of students / learners that fall under inclusive education

Students with disabilities are students who may have one or more of the following impairments based on the diagnosis given by a qualified medical practitioner with the exception of learning difficulties/disabilities that are identified subsequent to assessments by qualified psychologists:

- Display learning or cognitive ability that is significantly lower than average intellect;
- Have a physical and/or sensory impairment (e.g. *Visual Impairment or Hearing Impairment*);
- Exhibit behavioural, emotional and/or social difficulties;
- Have speech, language and communication difficulties;
- Have medical or health conditions that debilitates their everyday function.

Such students may require changes to any or all of the following:

- Regular curriculum
- Staffing
- Instructional and evaluation strategies
- Material resources
- Facilities and equipment

The MOE acknowledges that every child is special and unique given his/her individual differences. Every child has his/her own individual rate of physical, emotional, social, and intellectual development regardless of their diagnosis. For instance, no one child with hearing impairment is the same because each one may differ from one another in their learning, communication and interaction needs or behaviour, emotional and social development. It is therefore, important to examine beyond the child's diagnosis to determine their actual needs.

3.3. Categories of Needs

The needs of children diagnosed with a particular disability may be classified under one or more categories/areas as below:

- i. Cognition and Learning
- ii. Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development
- iii. Communication and interaction
- iv. Sensory and/or Physical
- v. Medical and health

3.3.1. Cognition and Learning

3.3.1.1. Learning Difficulty (IQ score of 80-90)

Children with learning difficulty tend to have a slower learning pace than children of the same age group. They will have difficulties in acquiring basic literacy or numeracy or understanding concepts even with appropriate support. They will

require specific programmes to develop and evaluate their literacy and numeracy skills. Practical activities are needed more to support the development of abstract concepts. The level of support needed will depend on their cognitive abilities and any related needs that may affect them in accessing the curriculum. They may also have other difficulties such as speech and language delay, under-developed social skills and low self-esteem.

3.3.1.2. Severe Learning Difficulty (IQ score of 70-80)

Children with severe learning difficulty have significant intellectual or cognitive impairment. They are more likely to require support in all areas of the curriculum. They may also have difficulties in communication, acquisition of self-help skills, mobility and coordination. Support for them will be in terms of teaching self-help, independent and social skills.

3.3.1.3. Profound Learning Difficulty (IQ score of <70)

Children with profound learning difficulty have severe and complex learning difficulties. They may also have other significant difficulties such as physical disabilities and sensory impairment. They may also require sensory stimulation. Their curriculum will need to be modified. They will require a high level of adult support for educational needs and personal care.

3.3.1.4. Specific Learning Difficulty

A child with specific learning difficulty (SLD) has difficulties in one or more aspects of learning. A discrepancy between achievement and general intellectual ability may indicate that a child has one or more of the following types of SLD.

- Dyslexia – difficulties in reading, writing and spelling
- Dyspraxia – difficulties in movement and fine and/or gross motor coordination
- Dyscalculia – difficulties in learning or comprehending arithmetic
- Dysgraphia – difficulties in writing ability

3.3.2. Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development

Children with behaviour, emotional and social needs have a wide range of difficulties. These can vary from mild to very severe and present a barrier to their learning. They will not respond to the usual range of rewards/consequences approaches and will require special educational needs provisions to progress.

Some children may display behaviours such as isolation or become withdrawn. Some may display lack of social skills. Others may lack concentration or behave in ways that disrupt the class.

3.3.3. Communication and Interaction

Most speech and language difficulties will be identified before school age. Some may have complex speech and language difficulties and will have learning difficulties once they start schooling. These difficulties may affect progress in school and may also lead to emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Children with speech and language difficulties may have difficulty:

- Understanding and/or making others understand information through spoken language; and
- Learning speech and language skills (theirs may be significantly behind their peers).

Children with language impairments may:

- Find it hard to understand and/or use words in context;
- Use words incorrectly;
- Possess limited vocabulary;
- Find it hard to recall words;
- Find it difficult to express ideas to others; and
- May see or hear a word but is unable to understand its meaning.

3.3.4. Sensory and/or Physical

Many children with sensory and physical difficulties require minor adaptations to the curriculum and/or the physical environment. They would also require special educational provision to enable their access to learning.

3.3.4.1. Visual Impairment

The term Visual Impairment covers a range of difficulties. It may affect one eye or both eyes. Some types of visual impairment are mild and can be corrected by prescribed glasses or other devices. Others are severe and may cause partial or total blindness. These children are likely to require support and equipment to access school and the curriculum. A significant visual impairment can hinder progress in learning.

3.3.4.2. Hearing Impairment

The term Hearing Impairment covers a range of difficulties. It may affect the use of one ear or both ears. Some types of hearing loss may be mild or temporary, such as glue ear. Others are severe and result in permanent deafness. These children are likely to require support and equipment to access the curriculum and sometimes adaptations to the classroom are needed. A significant hearing impairment can hinder progress in learning.

3.3.4.3. Multi-Sensory Impairment

These are children who have a combination of visual and hearing impairment. They are mostly identified before they start school. They would require support, equipment to access the curriculum and adaptations to the classroom.

3.3.4.4. Physical impairment and/or Disability

There is a wide range of disabilities. Some children will have been disabled since birth while others may become disabled, perhaps after an accident. Children with physical disabilities are more likely to require on-going support and equipment to access the school and curriculum.

3.4. Special Educators

The following provides a brief description of the various special educators who teach and support students with special educational needs:

A Special Education Needs (SEN) Teacher is a qualified teacher with relevant specialist skills and knowledge in the field of special education. They are the key teaching staff in both primary and secondary government schools and they play a key role in developing and maintaining individual education plans, as well as providing curriculum adaptations and individualized instruction for students with special educational needs.

Resource Teachers are teachers who specialise in one area of special needs. They assist with adaptations/modifications/differentiation of the curriculum so that a specific group of students with special educational needs, such as those with dyslexia, can access their learning. They also develop various resources and appropriate teaching aids to support these specific groups of students. Resource teachers have attended training in their respective areas, either in hearing impairment, visual impairment, autism or dyslexia, and have also been provided with continuous professional development to be equipped with the necessary skills to address the needs of these distinct groups of students.

Home Room Teachers (HRT) are trained teachers who support a wide range of students with special educational needs under the Pre-Vocational Programme in government secondary schools. These are students who do not follow the mainstream pathway and are not in the regular classroom setting. HRT attends induction training sessions that are focused upon the essential practices in special education, such as teaching strategies, classroom management, assessment and evaluation, educational visits, school-based work training sessions and job placements.

Special Education Needs Support Educators (SENSE) are teachers from public or private schools who have completed a brief in-house training session conducted by AScEND under the Ministry of Education. Their primary responsibility is to plan and implement

appropriate learning intervention programs for students with special educational needs in their respective schools. SENSE teachers are typically recruited to fill vacancies in government schools that do not have sufficient SEN teachers.

Teaching assistants are non-teaching staff members of the school who support and foster independence by assisting students with special educational needs in increasing their knowledge, comprehension, and skills. Students they typically assist are those who may otherwise struggle to learn independently or to complete the tasks assigned to them.

4. The Special Education Framework

This Special Education Framework provides a pictorial overview on the essential elements that are required in the provision of quality special education in order to ensure the access of students with special educational needs so that they can fully participate and achieve their potential. The framework is presented in Figure 2.

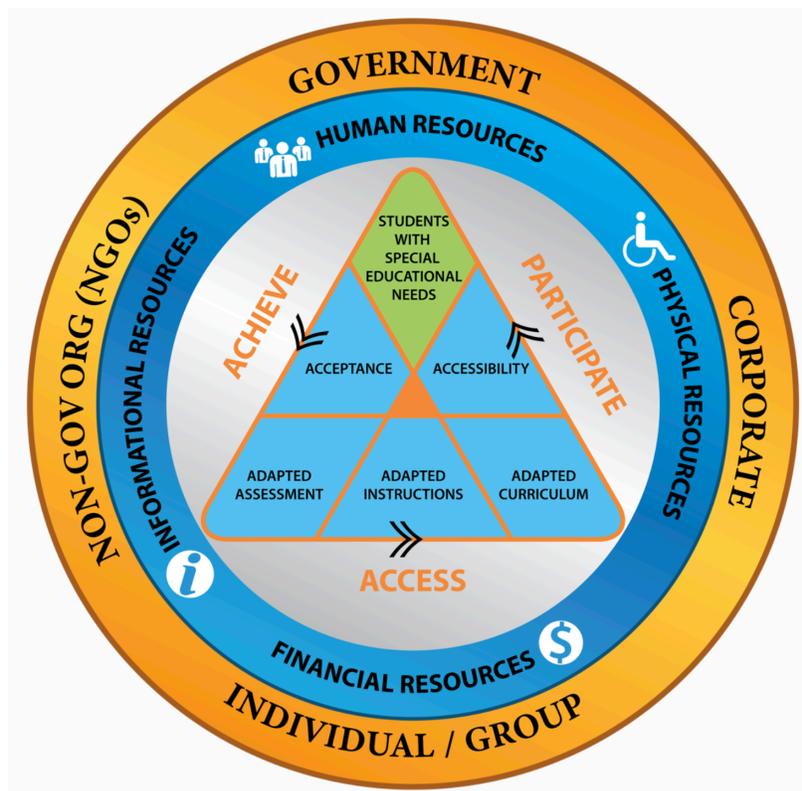


Figure 2: The Special Education Framework

4.1. Elements of the Special Education Framework

The following is a description of each element of the Special Education Framework.

4.1.1. Within the Learning Environment

The diamond at the top end of the triangle represents the students with special educational needs, while the 5 surrounding shapes within the triangle represents the different but inter-related aspects of inclusive education (5As) that must be in place at the school level:

4.1.1.1. Acceptance

All members of the school community or centre of learning are able to look at disability as a form of human difference rather than human deficit. In other words, being different or having a disability is not beneath the norm but rather an integral part of human diversity. This is specifically focused on the student with special educational needs who is at the core of this framework.

4.1.1.2. Accessibility

Schools and other centres of learning are to be built with reasonable adjustments, based on the concept of universal design to promote accessibility as well as creating a conducive learning environment for students with special educational needs.

4.1.1.3. Adapted Curriculum

Adapted / Modified curriculum that is flexible and responsive to a wide range of learning needs. This will be a vital component whether the student is learning in either a mainstream setting or a specialised setting. For instance:

- The Learning Assistance Programme (LAP) is a whole school-based approach to provide learning assistance to students with special educational needs in the majority of government primary schools.

- The 5-year Pre-Vocational Programme (PVP) in government secondary schools nationwide is an alternative pathway that provides opportunities to students with special educational needs who may have varying cognitive and learning needs. These are students who require a curriculum that is modified and/or adapted according to their ability to enable them to acquire various independent living skills and basic vocational skills which can empower them to become independent adults.

4.1.1.4. Adapted Instructions / Teachings

Teaching or instructions that can be differentiated to support most, if not all, students' needs and abilities. This relates to the ability of regular teachers to adapt their teaching which is largely dependent on the availability of professional development sessions from AScEND's officers / professionals as well as its strategic partners (e.g. BDTA, UBD, Pusat Ehsan etc.).

4.1.1.5. Adapted Assessment

Modifications or adaptations on assessment for learning in either the mainstream pathway or special education pathway which will be necessary to track the students' learning progress, as well as to ensure equity and equal opportunities for them to achieve their learning objectives.

4.1.2. Access, Participation and Achievement

The desired outcome of putting in place the above key elements will ensure Access, Participation and Achievement for the student with special educational needs.

4.1.2.1. Access

Access in this context refers to access to education. This is often taken literally to mean learning in formal schools when in fact it could also happen outside the formal education system, as well as in formal school environments (inclusive

education can happen in learning spaces that are non-formal, alternative, community-based, etc., with learners from young children to elderly adults).

4.1.2.2. Participation

Participation involves ensuring that students have an active learning experience. This is the second vital phase in the process of inclusion and it requires changing the education system and/or centres of learning through the 5As so that they are flexible enough to accommodate a wider range of learning needs.

4.1.2.3. Achievement

In the context of special education, achievement is the culmination of having in place an accessible as well as a conducive learning environment. Students achieving their learning objectives as stated in their individualised education plan is an achievement in itself and a sure indicator that inclusion is successful.

4.1.3. Resources

The 5As altogether play a vital role in ensuring access to either formal or non-formal education, participation and achievement. However, equally important are the resources such as trained teachers and specialist, budget, learning aids and specialised equipment, as well as statistical resources which are factored into making inclusion work. The following resources can be seen as the pre-requisites that are needed to be present before the 5As can be fully put in place. Therefore, the encapsulating inner circle in Figure 2 will represent the vital 4 resources needed to facilitate the processes in the triangle (human resources, physical resources, informational resources and financial resources):

4.1.3.1. Human Resources

- i. Professionals and specialists shall continuously be enlisted and equipped with latest skills and knowledge in the field of special education. These professionals are expected to provide support and specialised services that may include but not

limited to access arrangements, formal assessment, therapy, specialist intervention and/or assistive technology.

- ii. Special educators such as Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers, Home Room Teachers (HRT), Resource Teachers (RT) and any Teacher Assistants (TA) who are skilled in various fields such as Visual Impairment, Hearing Impairment, Autism or Dyslexia will continuously be recruited and deployed to support the wide range of needs particularly in teaching strategies, adjustments, modifications and/or differentiation. These are required to ensure that students have access to both the curriculum and instructions as well as to promote an active learning experience in the classroom.
- iii. Also important is the leadership of school leaders who play an important role in promoting a culture and shared values of inclusive education, particularly in increasing opportunities and removing barriers towards inclusion. The school leader is instrumental in uniting and leading everyone at the school level to ensure inclusion works for the student through the School Based Team (SBT).
- iv. The SBT plays an important role as key drivers in ensuring the access, participation and achievement of students with special educational needs in all aspects of educational settings. Members of SBT consists of school leaders, regular teachers, special educators, teacher assistants, a team of professionals, specialists and parents/caregivers.

4.1.3.2. Physical Resources

Specialised learning resources ranging from learning aids, augmentative and alternative communication, assistive devices such as wheel chair, adapted furniture, work station, screen reader, FM system, assisted keyboard, lap top with assisted soft wares will be provided according to students' needs.

4.1.3.3. Informational Resources

- i. A reliable statistical database to facilitate processing, analysis, calculating indicators which could then be interpreted into a meaningful form in order to enhance decision making for future planning and projection.
- ii. This leads to planning, continuous monitoring and evaluation through Whole School Evaluation (WSE) to improve the quality of inclusive practices.

4.1.3.4. Financial Resources

Inclusion in education is undeniably a very costly venture. Funding must be made available to train teachers, procure assistive technologies, conduct research and set up infrastructures built with accessibility in mind. It is therefore necessary for the relevant authority to weigh the cost and benefits of certain inclusive practices and decide the optimum and socially justified way to mobilise resources accordingly.

4.1.4. Stakeholders

The abovementioned 4 vital resources are obtainable from key members of the community, namely, the stakeholders. The outer circle of the framework represents the engagement of these stakeholders at the community level. At the community level, stakeholders consist of individuals / groups / institutions that may include but not limited to government agencies, corporate bodies, voluntary sector organisations and members of the community. They collaborate to enhance capacity building, enable development and support implementation of programmes as well as provide professional services to ensure students are able to learn with appropriate resources.

4.2. Framework Statement

Students with special educational needs will be able to attend their local schools within their catchment area or appropriate centres of learning, access and participate in quality education as well as engage in learning alongside their peers. In order to achieve their potential, such student shall be provided with an Individualised Education Plan (IEP)

detailing the appropriate special education programme and support services or appropriate accommodations based on their age, level and needs.

There are however, exception cases for children with profound and complex needs who may require attending specialised learning centres usually run by voluntary sector organisations or Non-government Organisation (NGO). Such students will be channelled to these appropriate centres through a proper process of assessment. It is the responsibility of schools and centres of learning to ensure that reasonable adjustments are put in place to meet student's individual needs.

4.3. Framework Objective

This Special Education Framework being based on the principles of inclusive education aims to ensure that students with special educational needs are able to access inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels; pre-school, primary, secondary and post-secondary. All relevant departments overseeing the different levels of education within the MOE shall therefore strive to ensure access to inclusive and equitable educational practices are embedded in their policies. Special education will also be adopted as one of the essential education provisions in their department / section / unit to achieve inclusion specifically for students with special educational needs at every level of education. This is further highlighted in one of the strategic initiatives of MOE Strategic Plan specifically to “improve inclusion of disadvantaged and at-risk learners at every education level”.

5. Referrals, Assessments, IEPs and PLs

5.1. Referral Process

Students with disabilities or medical diagnoses will be referred to AScEND by schools or agencies, such as the Child Development Centre (CDC) of the Ministry of Health.

For students without a medical diagnosis but is suspected to have difficulty in learning and not achieving the level of proficiency according to their grade level, the school will need to conduct appropriate interventions to help the student overcome their learning difficulty. If the intervention does not yield any progress (based on the students' assessment results), the school should then consider referring the student to AScEND.

Referral forms must include signed parental consent to ensure that parents are informed of, and agree, to their child being referred to AScEND for specialised support services. Referral forms must also include relevant information and supporting documents based on requirements set by AScEND (where applicable), such as:

- Student's birth certificate or identity card;
- Parents' / guardian's identity cards;
- Student's and parents' / guardian's information;
- Headmaster's / Headmistress' / Principal's signature;
- Official school stamp;
- A medical report of the student's disability, diagnosis or health issues (where applicable);
- Diagnostic or screening test results (where applicable);
- Teacher and/or parent reports;
- School assessment results;
- School attendance records;
- Outcomes of previous school intervention programmes relating to the student's learning attainment levels;
- Evidence of intervention (for students without medical diagnoses).

The flowchart for AScEND Referral Process can be found in Appendix A.

5.2. Assessments

Assessments are conducted to determine suitable educational goals, instructional strategies and specialised support services to support the learning of students with special educational needs as well as maximise their learning potential in schools. Continuous assessments are utilised to indicate and monitor the student's progress in Individualised Education Plans (IEPs).

A ScEND professionals conduct specialised assessments and discuss the results in relation to programme planning recommendations (outlined in IEPs) with parents/caregivers and teachers. These assessments include but are not limited to:

- Psycho-educational assessments by the Educational Psychologists (EP);
- Speech and Language assessments by the Speech and Language Therapist (SLT);
- Fine and gross motor assessments and environmental accessibility assessments by the Occupational Therapist (OT); and
- Dyslexia assessment by the Specific Learning Difficulties (Dyslexia) Specialist Support Services.

Assessments are used to:

- Integrate information from a number of sources (health, socio-emotional status, developmental history);
- Assess overall intellectual functioning, specific cognitive abilities, pre-academic or academic skills and socio-emotional status;
- Assess learning strengths and weaknesses, and their implications on learning; and
- Contribute to the process of planning and evaluating IEPs.

5.3. Designating Priority Levels (DPLs): Optimising Resources and Services for Students with Special Educational Needs

Students with diagnoses are likely to have special educational needs and require varying levels of support in schools and other aspects of their daily living. The use of Designated Priority Levels (DPL) can be used to identify the needs of the students in five specific domains: learning support, curriculum adaptation, physical adaptation, specialised resources and access arrangements. Their identified needs are scored to indicate severity and the overall score then determines whether students are designated with Priority Level 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5.

The five Priority Levels which indicate a student's level of needs are: Priority 1 (Diagnosis Only), Priority 2 (Mild), Priority 3 (Moderate), Priority 4 (Severe) and Priority 5 (Profound). Primary school students on Priority Levels 1 and 2 are able to follow the school curriculum and placed in mainstream classes with minimal or regular support from their class and subject teachers (Escoto-Kemp & Matzin, 2019). Students with moderate needs or on Priority Level 3 (and in some special cases, Priority Level 4) are best placed in a Centre of Excellence (CoE) mainstream primary school to ensure their specific needs are adequately supported with appropriate, skilled human resources, required physical adaptations and specialised resources. Primary school students with severe and profound needs (Priority Levels 4 and 5 respectively) would be selected for placement in special schools.

When students from Priority Level 3 (and in some special cases, Priority Level 4) enter the secondary level at Year 7, some of them will be selected to enroll in the Pre-Vocational Programme instead. Their needs are classified into five categories: independent living skills, self-care skills, functional academic skills, physical adaptation and specialised resources. These, together with a special curriculum, will help to ensure they develop the required skills to achieve and independence in life and where possible, enter paid employment or establish a business which contributes to Brunei's economy.

It should be reiterated that the primary responsibility for designating Priority Levels will be with members of the School-Based Team (SBT) which include the Headmaster / Headmistress, Principal, teacher(s) involved in teaching the student, parents and professionals from AScEND. Ideally this is carried out prior to setting up the Individualised Education Plan (IEP).

5.4. Individualised Education Plans (IEPs)

Individualised Education Plans (IEPs) are formulated after determining the students' Designated Priority Levels (DPL) and implemented for every student with identified special educational needs. IEPs set out to build students' strengths while remediating or compensating for identified areas of specific needs.

The SBT is tasked to ensure that IEPs are prepared, implemented and evaluated regularly.

Similar to DPL, the primary responsibility for developing an IEP rests with members of the SBT which include the Headmaster/mistress, Principal, teacher(s) involved in teaching the student, parents, professionals from AScEND, and where appropriate, the student.

The following essential information are included in an IEP:

- Assessed level of educational performance;
- Relevant medical and background information and areas of specific needs, long-term goals and short-term objectives;
- Special education and related services to be provided;
- Required classroom accommodations (any changes to expectations, instruction and evaluation);
- Recommended strategies, materials, resources, facilities or equipment;
- Transition plans (if required);
- Review dates to discuss progress and further planning.

The IEP process generally include the following:

- A formal review of IEPs with parents / guardians, teachers and AScEND professionals every 3 months, 6 months or as required, which may arise due to changes in students' needs or circumstances;
- Consultations with parents to determine the most appropriate and enabling program placement for students with special educational needs;
- Agreed learning outcomes for the students;
- Re-assessment and revision of student programmes and placements. This may include alternative assessment procedures, rather than currently used standardised examination practices;
- Implementation of programmes in accordance with goal expectations and services specified in IEPs.

6. Principles of Inclusive Education

There are nine principles of inclusive education adapted from the United Nations, which provide the framework to facilitate and support the teaching and learning process of all students including those with special educational needs. The nine principles are listed below:

1. Strengthening Governance;
2. Proactive Leaders;
3. Ensuring a Sustainable and Competent Work Force;
4. Advocating Community Engagement;
5. Reinforcing Whole School Approach;
6. Embracing Inclusive Practices: Curriculum, Assessment and Instructions;
7. Optimising Resources;
8. Accessible Learning Environments; and
9. Established Monitoring and Evaluation System.

These nine principles together with the corresponding objectives and suggested strategies are embodied in the different levels ranging from class, school, the MOE's departments and members of the community or stakeholders. These principles also reflect the strategic focus areas and key initiatives as stipulated in the Special Education Strategic Plan (2018 – 2022).

6.1. Strengthening Governance

National legislation, policies and guidelines on education incorporates the concept of inclusive and equitable education for all students, including those with special educational needs.

Objective

To put in place a robust and effective mechanism that can ensure and promote learning opportunities at all levels within their respective pathways to enable students with special educational needs to achieve their fullest potential. The levels range from pre-school, primary, secondary to post-secondary.

Strategies

- Removing barriers and promote access and participation of students with special educational needs in education at all levels through various policies and guidelines;
- Enhancing special education programmes and support services for students with special educational needs in schools and centres of learning by stipulating procedures in manuals and other guiding documents; and
- Strengthening collaboration with centres of learning in providing specialized support and services to expand learning opportunities for individuals with profound and complex learning needs, in line with whole of nation approach.

6.2. Proactive Leaders

Leaders at all levels within the MOE, departments and education settings will strive to implement inclusive and equitable education. Such leaders will adopt special education as one of the essential education provisions in their department / section / unit to achieve inclusion specifically for students with special educational needs.

Objective

To promote a culture of accepting individual differences and shared values.

Strategies

- Promoting equity and equal opportunities at every level of education for all students particularly students with special educational needs;
- Improvising and providing directions to the teaching community to support inclusive and equitable practices;
- Proactively identifying and removing barriers to participation and learning;
- Ensuring special educators and teachers' involvement in continuous professional development in special education;
- Organising educational staff and other school resources to meet the learning needs of all students including those with special educational needs;
- Promoting the understanding of inclusion as a collaborative effort and the need to work together with relevant stakeholders;
- Ensuring teachers are accountable for the monitoring of student progress in learning through different modes of assessment.

6.3. Ensuring a Sustainable and Competent Work Force

Professionals, specialists, school leaders and teachers, particularly, special educators shall continuously be recruited as well as trained with the current skills and knowledge in the field of special education. Good practices based on evidence-based research and documented cases shall be shared, supported and encouraged.

Objective

To ensure a viable pool of professionals and specialists as well as special educators are available to meet the increasing educational demands of students with disabilities and other learning needs.

Strategies

- Ensuring all personnel have appropriate education qualifications, adequate training, relevant work experience and personal qualities that favours towards accepting difference;
- Developing Human Resource Competency Framework (HRCF) for professionals and specialists at AScEND and special educators in schools;
- Promoting professional development for professionals, specialists and special educators by establishing a systematic career progression plan and pathway;
- Developing competency assessment tool and a system / process to monitor and evaluate performance for professionals, specialists and special educators working in educational settings;
- Equipping specialised skills and knowledge on special education by investing in learning and training through capacity building programmes;
- Collaborating with relevant ministries and organizations locally and abroad to promote opportunities for continuous professional development in special education;

- Facilitating deployment of adequate special educators such as SEN teachers, HRT and Resource Teachers in education settings that have students with special educational needs; and
- Developing relevant scheme of service for professionals and specialists.

6.4. Advocating Community Engagement

All members of the community particularly concerned stakeholders shall be involved to assist with the implementation of education programmes and provision of professional services as well as learning resources for students with disabilities and other learning needs.

Objective

To establish new as well as strengthen existing partnerships in special education among relevant stakeholders.

Strategies

- Promoting awareness on the different roles the community play in achieving the goals of inclusive education;
- Actively encouraging parental engagement and involvement through various strategies and mechanisms;
- Enhancing inter-ministries and government agencies to support the access, participation and achievement for students with special educational needs;
- Promoting support and collaborations from non-government organisations to expand learning opportunities for individuals with profound and complex learning needs.

- Enhancing and sustaining international collaborations to ensure best practices using UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UN Sustainable Development Goals as guiding framework; and
- Engaging strategic partnerships with corporate private sectors to prepare students with special educational needs with relevant and marketable work-related skills.

6.5. Reinforcing Whole School Approach

Members of SBT consisting of school leaders, teachers, special educators, teacher assistants, a team of professionals, specialists and parents are instrumental in ensuring students with special educational needs are able to access, participate and achieve in all aspects of social and educational experience.

Objective

To promote active participation and cooperation between members of SBT in order to ensure students are provided with the necessary support and resources.

Strategies

- Clarifying and defining the roles of every member of the SBT;
- Promoting teamwork whilst working collaboratively to address students' needs; and
- Enhancing ways to foster active involvement / engagement of parent / guardian.

6.6. Embracing Inclusive Practices: Curriculum, Assessment and Instructions

Modified and adapted curriculum, adapted teaching / instructions and adapted assessment will be vital in ensuring access, participation and achievement of all kinds of students including those with special educational needs.

Objective

To enhance the adaptation /modification / development of curriculum, assessment and instruction that is flexible to meet the diverse learning needs of students.

Strategies

- Improving the quality of curriculum packages in areas relating to functional academics, communication skills, motor skills or life skills;
- Enhancing teachers' skills and knowledge to modify and adapt and/or expand instruction as well as curriculum to cater for the different areas included in the curriculum package;
- Promoting the use of differentiated teaching such as various teaching strategies and techniques to cater for students' diverse learning needs;
- Promoting equal opportunities for students with special educational needs to participate in all activities, including co-curricular activities such as sports and recreation;
- Promoting access for students with special educational needs during tests / assessments / examinations without altering / changing the standards / contents such as extra time, scribe, separate room; prompter, rest breaks and etc;
- Improving and facilitating transition of students with special educational needs in a new education setting;
- Conducting proper assessment to determine appropriate placement for educational interventions;
- Improving continuous assessment to track students' progress and provide reports to parents / guardians on a quarterly basis; and

- Recognising students with special educational needs for their accomplishment(s) through awards and/or a showcase of their achievements.

6.7. Optimising Resources

Mobilising human resources, physical resources, informational resources and financial resources to facilitate access, participation and achievement of students with special educational needs.

Objective

To enhance resource management and a sustainable supply of professional and support services to respond to the diversity of students with special educational needs.

Strategies

- Prioritising financial support for programmes and projects in special education;
- Allocating funds to procure specialised resources in a timely manner that is required for students with special educational needs;
- Establishing designated mainstream schools as Centres of Excellence (COE) that will be equipped with appropriate infrastructure and resources;
- Enhancing the deployment of skilled special educators to support students with special educational needs through apprenticeship and immersion programme under Department of Educators Management; and
- Producing and disseminating useful informational resources such as print media, visual audio contents as well as social media on inclusive practices with the aim to promote awareness to the general public.

6.8. Accessible Learning Environments

All relevant parties will incorporate reasonable adjustment based on the concept of universal design in the infrastructure of educational settings in order to promote accessibility and conducive learning environment for students with special educational needs.

Objective

To create a safe, friendly and accessible learning environment for all students including students with special educational needs.

Strategies

- Ensuring all learning environments adopt the standards in compliance to Health, Safety, Security, Environment (HSSE);
- Optimising resources to make schools / centres of learning barrier-free for students with special educational needs in line with national standards as outlined by the Ministry of Development in the Different Abilities Design Guidelines (DADG:2018);
- Enhancing accessibility and safety for students with special educational needs in schools / centres of learning particularly walkways, corridors, doors, washrooms and toilets. Ramps, railings, special toilet and lift are in place to enhance the mobility of students with special educational needs;
- Ensuring students / staff accommodation are designed and built with accessibility features in line with national standards as outlined by DADG:2018; and
- Ensuring that all schools and centres of learning have a safe environment that is disabled friendly to students with special educational needs.

6.9. Establish Monitoring and Evaluation System

A system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and the provision of support services as well as resources for students with special educational needs.

Objective

Tracking progress in a consistent manner to gauge the efficacy of inclusive practices.

Strategies

- Improving and developing a more efficient data management system for students with special educational needs and special educators;
- Developing reliable instruments to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of special education programmes (such as students' progress and teachers' competencies) and the impact of deployed support services;
- Documenting the efficacy of special education programmes / interventions through evidence-based research;
- Enhancing continuous assessment of students with special educational needs through various modes of assessment such as assessment for learning;
- Enforcing Whole School Evaluation (WSE) to improve the quality of inclusive practices in collaboration with relevant stakeholders; and
- Evaluate the effectiveness of Special Education Programmes by conducting school review on an annual basis.

7. Education Pathways

The MOE aims to achieve quality education and intends to nurture our students' all-round development through the provision of multiple pathways which allows students to choose education programmes that suit their capabilities, interests, inclination, growth and development. The various pathways aspire to provide learning opportunities at various levels to enable students with special educational needs achieve their fullest potential.

Figure 4 shows the progression of student from pre-school to post-secondary / higher education / employment.

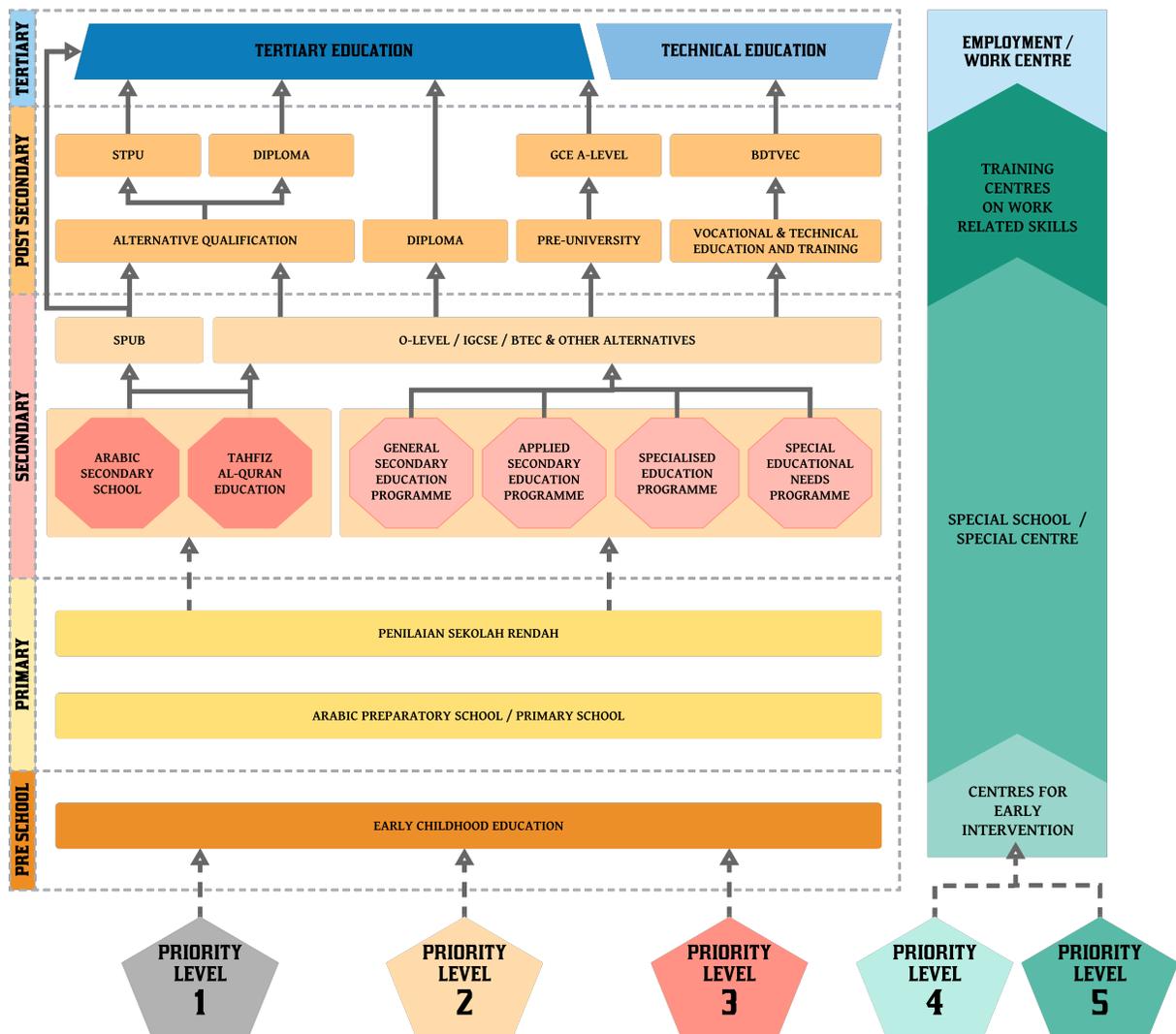


Figure 3: Education Pathways

Children with moderate and severe needs educated in centres of learning may have the opportunity to attend regular schools and/or technical education based on the assessment and recommendations of the MOE.

Centres of Learning

There are exception cases for children with profound and complex needs who attend centres of learning run by Non-government Organisation (NGO). These are students who require high level of support, specialised facilities as well as unique equipments and resources. Proper process of assessment will be conducted to channel such children to appropriate centres accordingly.

8. Success Measures and Targets

In the field of education, improved inclusion of individuals with special educational needs is defined and measured through improvement in quality access, participation and achievement, through various aspects or domains such as:

- i) Reinforcement of the Special Education Framework
- ii) Availability of quality special educators and support professionals / specialists
- iii) Infrastructure, teaching & learning resources
- iv) Curriculum-Pedagogy-Assessment-Intervention
- v) A culture of acceptance towards difference and diversity

For students, participation levels and success rates can be in both academic and non-academic fields such as technical and non-technical, arts and science, literacy and numeracy and sports, etc. These can be monitored and documented at all education levels (pre-school, primary, secondary, post-secondary), which can be reported at schools, cluster division, regional and international levels, where appropriate.

8.1. Target for Students

The targets to determine the students' participation levels and success rates are as follows:

- Sustained attendance;
- Increased attainment in specialised skills based on their special educational needs (motor skills, self-help skills, social skills, communication skills, orientation mobility skills etc.);
- Increased attainment in literacy skills;
- Increased attainment in numeracy skills;
- Increased participation in public examinations (PSR, O Levels, A Levels);
- Increased attainment in public examinations;
- Increased participation in non-academic programmes based on academic ability or age group;
- Increased graduation rate with Certificate, Diploma, Higher National Diploma, Degree, Masters, Doctorate, and specializations; and
- Increased employment for *students* in post education based in employment sector, fields, and posts.

These targets are dependent on the availability of quality special educators and support professionals / specialists.

8.2. Target for Special Educators and Support Professionals / Specialists

The targets for special educators and support professionals / specialists are as follows:

- Improved ratio of trained educators (in general special education and specific areas in special education) to students with special educational needs;

- Increased percentage of quality / competent Special Educators achieving expected BTS TPA;
- Ratio of accredited professionals (trainers of accredited special education courses, curriculum professionals modifying and adapting curricular content, and monitoring and evaluating the implementation of special education) to students with special educational needs population;
- Increased percentage of competent Professionals / Specialists in the field of Special Education achieving expected Human Resource Competency Standards.

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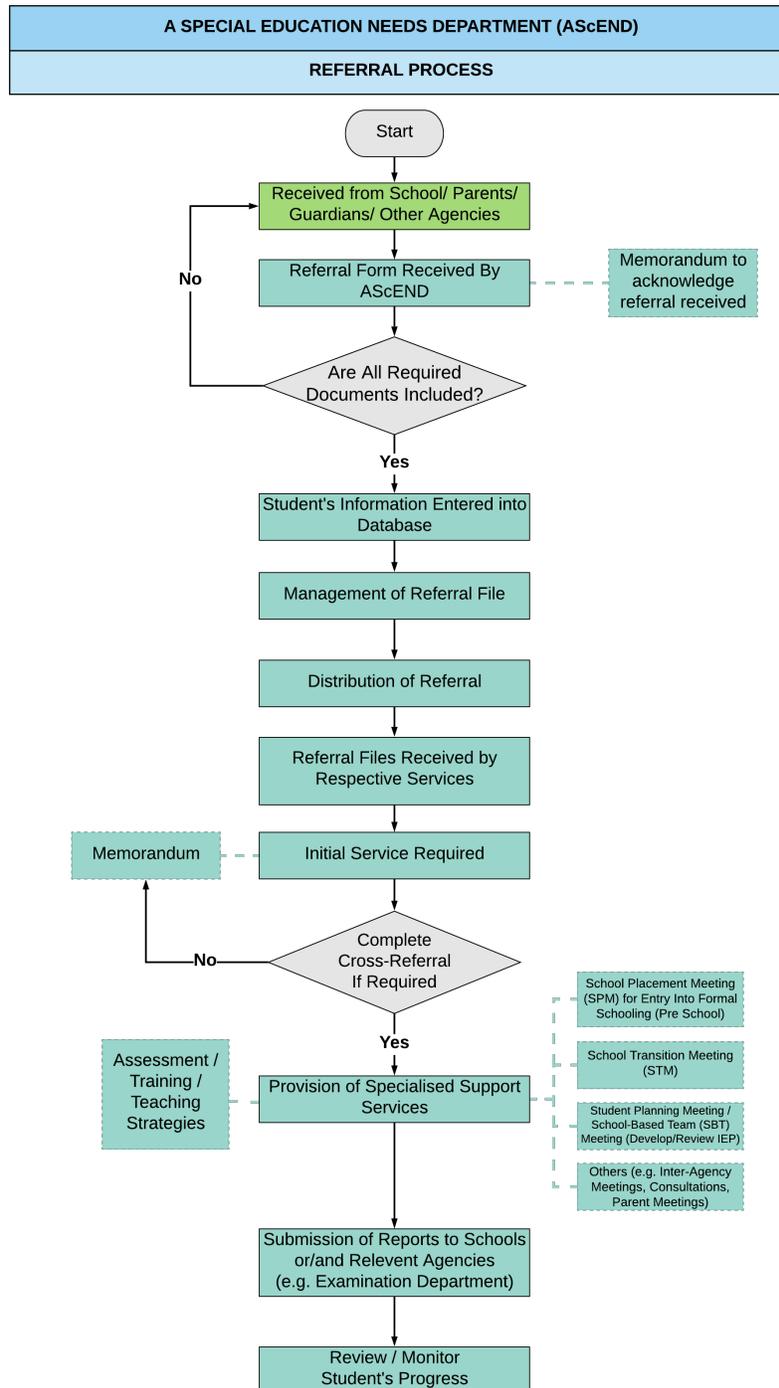
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Appendices

Appendix A – Referral Process



NOTE:

The information contained in the above flow chart is provided "as is" and for general guidance on the referral process of students with special educational needs only. Given the high priority AScEND sets on being responsive and sensitive to students' needs, alterations or omissions in the information illustrated in this flow chart may be required. Hence the application and actual process may vary slightly as time and circumstances dictate.



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