The inclusion of deaf children in Malaysian primary schools: Experiences of parents, staff members and children

A thesis submitted to the University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2018

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Abstract

In response to the global trend to promote equitable and inclusive education for all children, the government of Malaysia is committed to eliminating discrimination against people with disabilities. It aims to ensure that 75% of all children with disabilities are included in mainstream schools by 2025. However, there are only approximately 1% of deaf children being educated in the official government Inclusive Education Programme. An increasing number of deaf children are now able to speak, due to the availability and affordability of cochlear implants, digital hearing aids and specialist intervention, which enables them to be placed in mainstream classrooms.

This study is the first of its kind in Malaysia. The research question: “What are school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion?” was developed as a guide to this study. This study used a qualitative exploratory design informed by a framework developed in the UK to guide best practice of educating deaf children in mainstream schools and focused specifically on the learning environment. Data were collected through individual semi-structured interviews. Thirty seven individuals participated in this study – five school leaders, five mainstream teachers, five specialist teachers, three teaching assistants, seven parents, seven deaf children and three classmates, in three primary schools in Selangor state, the most developed state in which the capital of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, is situated. The perspectives of two deaf adults with experience of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Malaysia were also included. All recorded data were transcribed and analysed with computer assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) Nvivo 10. A thematic analysis approach was applied to identify patterns through a rigorous process of data familiarisation, data coding, and the development and revision of key themes.

Findings revealed that school leaders and mainstream teachers are not trained to support deaf children. Only a small number of trained teachers of the deaf are employed to support the inclusion of deaf children and they do not have the necessary expertise to check and maintain hearing aids and cochlear implants or with teaching using sign language. The parents do not have informed choice on complex issues such as communication options or education to take an active role in meeting their child’s educational needs. Including deaf children in the linguistically diverse, exam-oriented school system of Malaysia is challenging because of the difficulties they face in developing effective language and communication skills, even though some children are developing spoken language as a result of being included in school and the majority had established friendships. However, due to the lack of maintenance of assistive technology and limited home-school communication, the children are not gaining the full benefit from this technology. Despite these difficulties, the study found promising signs of positive teacher attitudes, teacher collaboration and parent advocacy for their children’s inclusion.

There are several contributions to knowledge in this thesis: the engagement of deaf children in reflecting on their experience of inclusion; the development of a series of inter-related and coexisting dimensions of inclusion of deaf children in the educational process - curricular, organisational, social, acoustic and linguistic dimensions of inclusion. In summary, this study has demonstrated that it is critical to learn from the experiences of school stakeholders to inform the further development of inclusive practices in education and wider society in Malaysia. It represents the beginning of a longer term and more complex evaluation of educational environments in Malaysia. School stakeholders, including policy makers, will need help in understanding that it is not enough to simply ‘include’ deaf children in a classroom environment. To include deaf learners in all the dimensions of inclusion will require inter-ministerial collaboration, as well as a step change in the awareness of professionals about disability and deaf equality in education.
Declaration of Original Contribution

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.
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## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMKT</td>
<td>Bahasa Melayu Kod Tangan [Hand Code of Malay]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HRNHS</td>
<td>High-Risk Newborn Hearing Screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>Individual Education Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute-HEARS</td>
<td>Institute of Ear, Hearing and Speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSL</td>
<td>Malaysian Sign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NatSIP</td>
<td>National Sensory Impairment Partnership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDCS</td>
<td>National Deaf Children’s Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OKU</td>
<td>Orang Kurang Upaya (People with Disabilities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIS</td>
<td>Participant Information Sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPKI</td>
<td>Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi (Special Education Integration Program)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEIP</td>
<td>Special Education Integration Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOD</td>
<td>Teacher of the deaf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNCRPD</td>
<td>United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHS</td>
<td>Universal Newborn Hearing Screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPSR</td>
<td>Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah [Primary School Achievement Test]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WFD</td>
<td>World Federation of the Deaf</td>
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Acknowledgements

I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my supervisors Dr Susie Miles, Professor Wendy McCracken and Dr Steve Jones for all their patience and commitment; their constructive feedback has supported my development as a researcher.

I am also grateful to the thirty-seven (37) participants who shared their views and experiences.

I would like to thank the Malaysian government and the University of Manchester for giving their permission for this study to be undertaken, and the Ministry of Education and the Ear, Hear and Speech Institute (Institute-HEARS) in Malaysia for providing key information. Thank you to Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia for the opportunity to continue my studies.

I would like to especially thank Babah and Mama; Khairuddin Majid and Dasimah Ahmad for their continuous support and prayers. Thank you to my siblings and in-laws for sharing beautiful photos and videos of Airil, Anaqi, Aqira, Aiman, Asyraf, Ainan, Anas, Arman to brighten up my days. I look forward to meeting them all!

Thank you to friends and colleagues for their presence during the lonely process of writing up of this thesis. Thank you!
Chapter 1  Introduction to research

1.1 Research background

This thesis reports on a study carried out in Malaysia, my home country. The Malaysian government supports the inclusion of children with disabilities in education in line with United Nations initiatives, however the main focus so far has been on children with physical and learning disabilities. This study focuses on the inclusion of deaf children, where improved access to hearing aids, including cochlear implants, has led to more deaf children developing spoken language and being included in mainstream classrooms. Little is known in low and middle-income countries about the status and development of inclusive education in primary schools for deaf children, their parents and the education stakeholders involved. The Malaysian context provides a particularly interesting case study because of the rapid increase in the availability of technology which is enabling the inclusion of larger numbers of deaf children in mainstream schools.

Educating deaf students in separate settings has traditionally been enabled through signed communication in Malaysia (Yusoff 2014a). Most deaf students are educated either in residential schools for the deaf or special education units in mainstream schools, known as the Special Education Integration Program (SEIP). Improved access to hearing aids has led to more deaf children developing spoken language and being included in mainstream classrooms in Selangor, in which the capital city, Kuala Lumpur, is situated. Yet teachers of the deaf are only trained to use sign language in their teaching of the national curriculum to deaf children.

The term ‘inclusive education’ tends to be understood in high-income countries in a broad context in which there are social, economic, political and pedagogical implications for all children, not just those identified as having disabilities or special educational needs. In Malaysia inclusion is in its infancy. There is no word in the Malay language which means ‘inclusion’ but the term ‘inklusif’ is used mainly to mean the placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. Little is known about deaf children’s experience of education within the high-pressure exam-based system of Malaysia. This research examines the experiences and
views of the inclusion of deaf children in primary mainstream schools from the viewpoint of school stakeholders, including the deaf children themselves. The research question developed as a guide to this study is as follows: “What are the school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion?”

### 1.2 Personal and professional motivation

My personal background and professional experience have influenced the writing of this thesis and so it is appropriate to include a brief description of my own journey, describing how I became passionate about deaf education and inclusion.

My involvement with deaf education began when I decided to study for a degree in Education (Special Education - Deafness) at the *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (National University of Malaysia) in Selangor. I had always wanted to become a teacher, but the field of special education was new to me. I wanted ‘to make a change’, and do charity work for people with disabilities. I believed education could empower people with disabilities to contribute to society. I chose to specialise in deafness because I wanted to learn sign language – an additional skill that is appealing to me. The training I received to become a teacher of the deaf involved four years study to become a secondary school teacher and mainly focused on the delivery of the national curriculum to deaf children using sign language. At the same time, the separation between the training of specialist teachers and mainstream teachers reinforced the division between the world of special education, where specialist teachers teach in separate settings from the teachers in mainstream education.

When the term ‘inclusive education’ was taught during the training, the emphasis was on the placement of children with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms with little attention paid to the process of transforming education systems to include all children. Ironically, ‘inclusive education’ was only taught to specialist teachers, under the topic of ‘educational provision for children with disabilities’, and was not taught to mainstream teachers. The main understanding of inclusion in Malaysia was about location.
After I graduated in 2011, I was appointed as a special education teacher and taught in the SEIP of a mainstream secondary school in Selangor state. There were 40 children with learning disabilities and two deaf children being supported by four special education teachers. None of the deaf pupils had been included in the mainstream classrooms apart from attending the school assembly with other mainstream pupils and teachers. They were not included because they had low academic attainment and limited language and communication skills. It was not considered possible or appropriate for them to participate independently in a mainstream setting with its rigid examination-oriented curriculum. Sometimes we participated in school events such as Sports Day, but we would assemble among ourselves with little interaction with the mainstream teachers and children. I thought that was sensible because we had many pupils to manage, some had behavioural issues and the two deaf children needed me to communicate with other people who did not know sign language.

A year later, I was offered a scholarship from the Malaysian government to do an MA Special Education degree, in the Centre for Special Education and Disability Studies at the University of Newcastle, Australia. I completed a dissertation that focused on the issues, challenges and support for novice special education teachers in Malaysia. The dissertation involved a survey and interviews conducted in five out of fourteen states in Malaysia (Khairuddin 2014). Two key findings relate to my current understanding of inclusive education. Firstly, there was little or no mention of collaboration between mainstream teachers and special education teachers to ensure children with disabilities were included in the mainstream classrooms. Secondly, the majority of the specialist teachers reported that the locational separation of the SEIP created a physical barrier to their participation and engagement with the rest of the school community. From this research, I learned that the development of inclusive education in Malaysian schools had more complex and multi-faceted issues than the placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms.

Under the same scholarship, I moved to the University of Manchester. During my first year, I was fortunate to participate in two international conferences; International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) in Athens, Greece,
and the Inclusive and Supportive Education Congress (ISEC) in Lisbon, Portugal, both in 2015. For the first time in my life, I learned about disability and inclusion on a global scale: not only about deafness and educational placement, but also I learnt widely about the diverse conceptualisation of inclusion. I have used these experiences in Chapter Two to illustrate the debates about inclusive education in the literature. At these conferences I learnt that there are some seemingly unresolvable issues and difficulties in inclusive education and deaf education which were highly debated at the conferences, because participants came from diverse understandings and experiences of deafness and disability. Gaining direct access to such debates and experiences enabled me to reflect, analyse and challenge my own thinking about deaf children’s inclusion. Challenging my own assumptions is an on-going process as I continue to learn and reflect on my experiences and the research evidence.

1.3  Rationale of Study

This study focuses on the interconnections between the fields of ‘deaf education’ and ‘inclusive education’. There has been little research on the inclusion of deaf children especially in middle-income countries, such as Malaysia. Most of the available literature focuses on high-income countries and is not directly relevant, because of the assumptions made about sufficient resources being available, including the latest technology. The limited number of studies conducted on inclusive education for deaf children means that the concerns of deaf children in mainstream settings are underrepresented. Currently less than 1% of deaf children are reported to be educated within mainstream schools (Special Education Division 2013a).

In the context of the Malaysian government’s implementation plan that seeks to ensure that 75% of all children with disabilities will be educated in mainstream classrooms by 2025 (Ministry of Education 2013a). The rationale of this study is to better understand the experience of all stakeholders involved in inclusive education provision for deaf children. There is no evidence to suggest that the Malaysian government’s education policy has taken into account, the contentious global debates about the education of deaf children and the complexity of the
support required, to enable deaf children to fully benefit from attending mainstream schools.

I was sent by the Malaysian government to undertake a doctoral study in the inclusion of deaf children in my home setting. However, my training as a teacher of deaf children in Malaysia (2007-2011) focused on teaching deaf children using sign language in specialist settings, and I did not receive any guidance on how to support deaf children in mainstream schools. I am therefore interested in the education of deaf children in inclusive settings.

The purpose of this study is to explore the practice of Malaysia’s inclusion policy by documenting the views of those currently implementing, supporting and experiencing different forms of educational provision in Malaysia. I wanted to be informed by teachers, school leaders, parents of deaf children and deaf children themselves as they are most affected by current practice and the inclusion agenda. Parents tend not to be consulted on their experience of, and attitudes towards, their children’s education, and deaf children’s views are rarely heard.

Outline of the thesis
The structure of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction to research sets up the background, my personal motivation and the rationale of conducting this study.

Chapter 2: Tracing the arguments in deaf children’s inclusion explores the developments and debates in the literature on the discourse of inclusion and deaf education internationally. The chapter also outlines some of the school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion reported in previous studies and finally looks at the literature on ‘the deaf inclusion dilemma’.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology presents the methods employed in the study. It begins with the development of the research question that guides this study. Then, it discusses the research design and the framework for the study. This is followed
by presenting the methods for data generation, processes of gaining permission and data analysis.

Chapter 4: *Research context* presents the Malaysian context, focusing in particular on relevant aspects of the government policies and education system. It also describes the three primary schools included in this study.

Chapter 5: *Perspective of ‘successful’ deaf/Deaf adults*, the first data chapter, examines two deaf adults’ experiences in three stages of life; identification and intervention experiences, primary and secondary school experiences and post-school experiences. Then, the chapter discusses their experiences in relation to current policy debates about the education of deaf children in Malaysia and internationally.

Chapter 6: *Perspectives and experiences of deaf children and their classmates*: this chapter discusses findings from the seven deaf children and three hearing children who participated in this study. The chapter explores the deaf children’s experiences in the different educational settings including, the Special Education Integration Programme, Inclusive Education Programme and mainstream school without specialist support. The chapter also discusses the classmates’ experiences with the deaf children.

Chapter 7: *Understanding, deciding and experiencing the inclusion of deaf children* presents findings from five school leaders, five mainstream teachers, five specialist teachers and three teaching assistants. This chapter discusses the different views and approaches to deaf children in the three schools. Then, it presents the experiences of the staff members in relation to their roles in the school.

Chapter 8: *Parents’ experiences of their child’s inclusion* presents findings from seven parents of deaf children. The chapter begins with brief introductions of the parents and children included in this study. I then provide an overview of the parents’ profile describing their age, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, level of education and occupation. Stating the different starting points of the
parents sets the background of their experiences. I conclude by exploring the major themes identified from interviews with these parents, highlighting the issue of time lost, and delays, limited information and their assumptions of special education.

Chapter 9: *Discussion: Addressing the deaf inclusion dilemma* builds upon the findings from chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8, focuses, in more detail, on the debates within the literature covering the field of inclusive education, deaf education and disability. This chapter also discusses issues that are beyond school settings reflecting on the bigger picture of education and inclusion as a whole.

Chapter 10: *Conclusion* – this chapter draws conclusions from the overall research findings. It presents personal reflections, contribution of the study, limitations of the study and the implications for policy, practice and research.
Chapter 2  Tracing the arguments in deaf children’s inclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature from 1990 onwards which underpins the topic of inclusion and inclusive education, and to contextualise some of the debates relating to deaf children’s inclusion specifically. This is a huge undertaking, given the prolific literature on education, and the multifaceted nature of the contextual factors that have shaped various interpretations, including historical, economic, social and cultural influences. The chapter is divided into four parts. The first part considers the historical development of international initiatives to improve education globally. The second; discusses deafness, the field of ‘deaf education’ and the small amount of research focusing on the education of deaf children in inclusive settings. The third; explores the experience of school leaders, teachers, parents and children, as it relates to deaf children’s inclusion. Finally, this chapter discusses the ‘deaf inclusion dilemma’.

2.1 Literature search strategy

Given the complexity of ‘inclusion’, and the various ways of defining ‘inclusive education’, conducting a literature review was an iterative process that involved revisiting the databases to build the main arguments related to deaf inclusion within the literature.

Literature search was conducted reflecting on; 1) What is the relevance of disability discourse to the inclusion of deaf children? 2) What can be learnt from deaf education literature, to inform the study of the inclusion of deaf children in mainstream school? 3) What is the relevance of current inclusive education debates to the inclusion of deaf children? 4) How is the deaf education literature positioned in relation to inclusion of deaf children? Reflecting on these questions, this review draws out instances of scholarly work which I consider would suggest the intersections of literature.
Research of the literature for this review was conducted using several search strategies. Firstly, the keywords of ‘disability’, ‘deafness’, ‘deaf education’ and ‘inclusive education’ were used to identify the main sources of literature. However, in keeping with terminologies prevalent in the field, derivations of the terms were also used such as ‘hearing impairment’ for deafness and ‘integrated education’ for inclusive education. Through the method of citation, related materials cited in recent narrative reviews of these articles were also included. Further to the identification of the literature sources, I narrowed my search using more specific keywords within the journal. For example, I used ‘deaf’ as keyword and search within the Disability Studies Quarterly journal. The approach was repeated with other literature fields.

While researching the relevant literature to the study, I made notes of the differences between contexts, where appropriate, because the approaches to discuss certain issues are closely embedded within the local context, incorporating the historical, economic and socio-cultural assumptions of the country. For example, the term inclusive education has different meanings in different countries and therefore, it is important to note the distinctions. In a similar way, scholars also differ in research on deaf children as some only focus on profoundly deaf children while others may focus on all levels of unilateral and bilateral hearing loss.

### 2.2 International agenda to improve education for all

The beginnings of a global commitment towards building a better world recognised education as a right to which all human beings are entitled (United Nations 1948). Current international efforts to provide every child with access to quality education began with widespread concern about the inadequacies in education systems around the world. In 1990, leaders of 155 countries and representatives of 160 governments, international organisations, educators and development professionals came together in the first World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand (UNESCO 1990). Ten years after Jomtien, the world's leaders met again in Dakar, Senegal to review progress and set new targets for 2015. Many countries were far from having reached the EFA goals (International Consultative Forum on EFA 2000). The declaration of Dakar Framework for Action
reiterates the commitment to achieve Education for All goals by 2015 (UNESCO 2000). It focused broadly on the education spectrum, encompassing early childhood care, primary and secondary as well as adult learning. The UN Millennium Development Goals were launched in the same year, with Goal 2 (MDG2) focusing on primary school education which limited global efforts to focus mainly on primary school attendance and gender equality in education.

Despite the concerns raised at the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education in 1994 about the educational needs of children with disabilities, this group of learners were largely neglected. Education for children with disabilities has been relegated to a secondary system of education, separated and marginalised from mainstream educational provision (Muthukrishna and Schoeman 2005). The negligence on the part of these global initiatives towards supporting children with disabilities within the existing educational system, as well as the domination of mainstream education, has resulted in significant disadvantages for disabled learners in general (Rieser 2008).

In response to the global pressure to increase the participation and learning of children with disabilities within the mainstream educational arrangements, many countries have policies with greater emphasis on inclusive education, in line with the Salamanca Statement (Thomas and Vaughan 2004). In fact, inclusive education has been recognised as a right of learners with disabilities in Article 24 of the Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, imposing greater obligations on state parties (United Nations 2006). More than 170 countries have ratified this Convention but the conflicted discourses and fragmented policies led to the lack of progress toward EFA for children with disabilities (Mittler 2012). The claims made in the Salamanca Statement about mainstream schools being the most effective settings for children with disabilities have been seen as over simplistic, as the availability and adequacy of support required by targeted children were not investigated (Lindsay 2003). The academic achievements of children identified as having disabilities have not been measured relative to the level of support accessed, nor have recommendations been made to improve services (Peters et al. 2005).
The EFA 2000-2015 reports provide mixed results (UNESCO 2015a). On the one hand, there has been significant progress in increasing the enrolment rate. On the other hand, those who are included are not meeting the intended outcomes due to the insufficient support. Moreover, the children’s retention rate continues to be poor globally. Having a particular impairment has continuously been reported to increase the risk of educational exclusion and low academic attainment (Groce and Bakhshi 2011). Despite several decades of conventions and declarations concerning the improvement of education, the EFA policy documents and MDG2 have not yet resulted in providing increased equity in the manner that was intended for children with disabilities (Sandland 2017). This reinforces and exacerbates the inequality inherent within the society. Disability advocates have pointed out that none of these goals can be reached if disabled people are not explicitly included within the implementation programmes (Mittler 2012; Rieser 2008; Norwich and Koutsouris 2017).

In 2015, the United Nations reiterated a commitment to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” as a stand-alone goal in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Goals 4 (SDG4) (UNESCO 2016b). While previously associated with children with disabilities, the term ‘inclusive education’ has evolved to mean ‘holistic and lifelong learning opportunities for all’ perspective (p. 11, ibid). Publication of the Education 2030 Framework for Action aims for a more holistic approach to individual learners’ development extending to cognitive, social and emotional dimensions. Inclusion and equity are emphasised as the foundations for quality education. Since school enrolment is not the only priority, equitable and effective learning outcomes are taken into accounts in a more explicit way.

The SDG4 creates crucial opportunities for positive synergies between initiatives addressing social inequalities and catering to special needs. As a unified approach, SDG4 has the potential to counteract inequalities and build an educational system that caters for the needs of children with disabilities at the same time as the general educational goals are pursued (Rambla and Langthaler 2016). Ainscow (2016) commented that the Education 2030 Framework for Action emphasises the need to “address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation,
disparities and inequalities in access, participation, and learning processes and outcomes” (p. 4). Although this demonstrates international commitment to a rights-based educational agenda, it is an ambitious target given the complexity involved in including all learners and ensuring that each individual has an equal and personalised opportunity for educational progress. The SDG4 guidance papers only recognise the renewed focus of inclusion to be seen more broadly targeting those underserved, vulnerable and disadvantaged, but less attention has been devoted to address the complexity in the contested discourse of inclusion and its implementation into practice (Rose 2017). Inclusion, as applied to education, connects with various social, political and economic principles that have long-standing debates (Thomas and Vaughan 2004). The following section discusses the different conceptualisation and application of inclusion within existing literature.

2.3 Diverse views of inclusion

The growing international commitment to the notion of ‘inclusive education’ makes research in this area particularly timely. Although the use of ‘inclusion’ language in educational policies has emerged quite recently, there is an absence of common understandings of the key terms and concepts related to inclusion. Instead, Dyson (1999) attributes the diverse views surrounding the term to various nature of inclusions than a single form of inclusion. Clark et al. (1999) also noted that, “The attempted realisation of inclusion … demands an engagement with the complexity and contradiction which come from its own nature as a resolution of a (necessarily bipolar) dilemma and from the complex nature of schools as organisations” (p. 173). Bearing in mind this view about inclusion, I argued that understanding the different views of inclusion have a major role to play in the study of deaf inclusion.

Many countries, including Malaysia, define inclusive education from a placement perspective, as related to educating children with disabilities within mainstream classrooms. Inclusive education has been argued to have a longer history and broader reach, as in the Salamanca Statement:

“Regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective measures of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming
Jarvis (2002) presented the case of the physical inclusion of a deaf child in a mainstream classroom without sufficient support, which also promotes the child's exclusion from the lesson. In a similar way, Greenstein (2014) argues that the ‘exclusion’ of children in separate classrooms can be considered to promote inclusion. In these two cases, children’s participation and engagement in lessons and school activities are not guaranteed by simply attending regular or mainstream settings. Miles et al. (2018) demonstrate the importance of contextual factors in promoting equal participation.

Inclusive education is also defined in terms of transforming schools. Schools were traditionally conceived as elite institutions, attended by rich, privileged citizens from a high social class, did not consider to include all learners and therefore were not designed for children on the margins of society (Sayed 2002). In addition, traditional understandings of teaching and learning in classrooms as teacher-centred, emphasising content rather than learners’ needs, mean that schools are often not responsive to individual needs (Loreman 2017).

Although there is no agreed definition, there is a consensus that inclusive education calls for a fundamental reorganisation of regular schools and classrooms in order to cater for a greater diversity of children's needs in the community. UNESCO (2017a) defines inclusive education as a ‘process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners’ (p. 7). In this approach, there is a need to change the way school is organised and the culture in practice, in order to provide the right conditions for learning of all children (Dyson and Millward 2000). This social model of inclusion focusses on identifying and removing the barriers to children’s participation and learning in school, moving away from identification of personal limitations (Booth and Ainscow 2002). It concentrates on the ‘organisational paradigm’ of inquiry which highlights the need to focus on identifying features within schools that facilitate responses to diversity (Clark et al. 1995).
At first glance, addressing the structural factors within schools that hinder the participation of children with disabilities in education appear straightforward. If a teacher only focuses on delivering the curriculum and does not consider whether children understand the lesson, it clearly disadvantages children. While careful accommodation made by teachers in classrooms may improve the learning condition in general, children’s specific needs also determine their level of participation and learning. Significant strides in medical technology, research, disease and treatment have improved children’s survival as well as their quality of life. This means that schools are educating children that are not only diverse in demographic information but also with a range of health-related conditions (Molloy et al. 2003).

Research found that while many teachers are highly supportive of the principles underpinning inclusive education, they are also particularly anxious about how best to support the learning of those with disabilities and special needs (Avramidis and Norwich 2002). Focusing on the structural barriers within school is useful however it is insufficient to understand the difficulties that children experience in school. Miles (2009) argued that understanding of inclusive education also includes ‘examination of the threats to equity which may exist in a particular context’ for all learners (p.22). It has been widely reported that the disadvantages in social status, gender and health conditions are often magnified by having a disability (Groce and Bakhshi 2011; Shakespeare and Watson 2002). Other factors such as a consistent lack of material resources, an extensive power and wealth imbalance, as well as the persistence of negative social attitudes often relegate the educational needs of children with disabilities to the background, especially in low- and middle-income countries (Singal 2010).

2.3.1 Different approaches to inclusive education

Tensions in the definitions of, and attitudes to, inclusive education are also intensified with the complexity of the notion of disability. Consequently, educational provision for children with disabilities differs within and across national systems. Waitoller and Thorius (2015) noted that while some countries such as England is considered to have developed inclusive education practices gradually, countries
such as the United States of America (USA) have ‘hopscotched’ over advocacy processes and radically applied inclusive education policy within its existing educational system.

Peters (2003) divided the different approaches to inclusive education into three categories namely, one-track, two-track and multi-track system (p.10), though she noted that the differences are not necessarily obvious due to the ambiguities in defining inclusion. Countries such as Italy and Portugal are regarded to have adopted a one-track system where all children are expected to attend their local school and no special school is provided - this means that mainstream schools should be prepared to include all children including children with disabilities (Meijer et al. 2003). Some countries are regarded as having adopted a twin-track approach where the education system for children with disabilities is considered to be separate from the mainstream system. Unlike one-track approach, special provisions are allocated to enable access to specialist support. This approach is regarded to focus on improving the mainstream educational system and, simultaneously but separately, makes progress to improve the provisions for children with disabilities (Rieser 2008).

However, Miles and Singal (2010) have warned of the danger of this parallel approach as a compromise position could undermine mainstream teachers, promote further divisions between mainstream and special education system and therefore obstruct the process of inclusion. According to Peters (2003), the ambiguities in determining the differences between educational provisions for children with disabilities internationally mean that most countries are considered to have more than just one-track or two-track approaches. The multi-track approach provides a range of educational placements for children with disabilities that school stakeholders can consider (Meijer et al. 2003; Norwich 2008). Regardless of the approaches adapted by national governments, prioritising resources for children with disabilities is key to ensure education provided is inclusive and equitable. As stated in the Salamanca statement:

“Within inclusive schools, children with special educational needs should receive whatever extra support they may require to ensure their effective education”. (p.12)
Similarly, SDG4 have mentioned that governments are expected to provide the necessary budget for this expenditure on education, as a priority, including:

“Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”. (UNESCO 2016, p.14)

Specialist equipment and human support that many children with disabilities require, are expensive. In the case where insufficient financial investment is made, those with low socioeconomic status often bear the most consequences (Mont and Cuong 2011). Profound commitment to inclusive education by gradually developing adequately resourced, large-scale programmes, including strategies for curriculum reform and teacher training such as those adopted by the government in Vietnam, has been demonstrated to yield positive outcomes (Global Campaign for Education 2014).

2.3.2 Identification of disability and stigma

Indeed, it is unethical to make plans without appropriate implementation. Brissett and Mitter (2017) explore the danger of oversimplifying the needs of children with disabilities and suggest that specific objectives are important to assess who truly benefits from the general educational transformation to move towards inclusive practices. There are dilemmas in fulfilling this goal due to the opposing views about the implication of identification of children’s disabilities.

In what follows I illustrate some of the tensions and contradictions in the literature on inclusive education and deaf education through a series of three short accounts. The dialogue has been reconstructed from my research journal. Although it is difficult in such short examples to identify the impact of political, economic, socio-cultural and other external influences on the arguments, the dialogue highlights some major disagreements.

The first example is the dialogue between two participants, an academic and a parent activist with experience of working at national level to promote inclusive education, which I witnessed in July 2015, at the 8th Inclusive and Supportive
Education (ISEC) conference, Lisbon, Portugal. This was a heated exchange of opposing ideas about inclusion in education:

**Parent activist:** It is not economically sustainable to have special classes for children with disabilities in the rural areas of South Africa. Labelling children is a basic tool of control and exclusion.

**Academic:** But it is necessary to recognise and identify individual needs so that support can be provided. Teachers have to be trained with specialist knowledge to support children in classrooms adequately.

**Parent activist:** No!! Identifying disability has created stigma and means that children with disabilities aren't accepted in mainstream schools.

Here the parent activist and academic disagreed on a subtle, but important, difference of practice to supporting children with disabilities in schools. Where there is no specialist help such as in remote and rural areas, the entitlement to be educated in specialist classrooms based on children’s disability was regarded to entail the dangers of stigma which consequently impacts the acceptance of children with disability within mainstream educational setting (Wedell 2008).

This is partly based on the long history of negative stereotyping and marginalisation of those with disabilities who for far too long have been ignored, discriminated against and excluded from the broader society (Cole 2006). On the other hand, shaped by pragmatic concerns about the implementation of inclusion into practice, the academic highlighted the importance of identification of disability as enabling support to be effectively provided to meet children’s educational needs. Disability theorists have warned of the danger of oversimplifying the various facets of specific circumstances of impairment and difficulties experienced by those with disabilities as their different needs are not easily addressed or comparable to diversity in ethnicity, gender and background (Shakespeare 2013; Vehmas and Watson 2014). Shakespeare (2013) argued that it is necessary to address the complex and intersecting forms of inclusion and exclusion at the intersections of personal differences, engagement with social, cultural, moral, political and economic circumstances.
This section highlights that inclusive education is a contested concept and its implementation has been problematic. In fact, diversity within the discourse of disability is often overgeneralised to all children with disabilities. These general plans and policies in inclusive education are jeopardising the educational experiences of those with specific needs such as deaf children. Indeed, Bakhshi et al. (2013) reported that a majority of research on the approaches to improve accessibility of education for learners with disabilities were mostly carried out in higher-income countries and those with learning disabilities and autism. Past research on the inclusion of children with disabilities has mainly focused on researching teachers’ attitudes, and evidence on its implementation is scattered and inconclusive (Howgego et al. 2014). The following section discusses the issues in developing inclusive education for deaf children.

2.4 Deaf education debates

The previous section has illustrated the multi-faceted discussions of inclusion and its application to children with disabilities, one of the most marginalised groups globally (UNICEF 2014). Among these are deaf children who are often mistaken for being stubborn, rude, and naughty or as having learning disabilities (Marschark 2007). The invisibility of deafness allows some deaf children to ‘pass’ as hearing children and as a result, their needs tend to be overlooked (Harmon 2013). Based on a review of 42 population-based studies carried out up to 2010 estimated that 466 million people have disabling hearing loss, 34 million of these are children (WHO 2011) and the majority of the deaf population live in developing countries where access to health-care related is sometimes limited or unavailable. It is also estimated that by 2030 there will be nearly 630 million people with disabling hearing loss globally (WHO 2018b).

Deaf children form a large and extremely diverse group. They are a particularly heterogeneous population with many variables to account for, including aetiology, age at diagnosis and amplification, cognitive ability, socio-economic status, parental support, communication preference, and educational history. Usage of audiological devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implantation has added yet more variables including the age of hearing aid fitting and implantation, type
and quality of devices, and management of the intervention system (Archbold and Mayer 2012). The following section discusses the opposing views about deafness and the approaches to support deaf children.

2.4.1 Different conceptualisations of deafness

There are differences of opinion on what it means to be deaf and the approach to support deaf children is still an area of long-standing debates. Deafness from a health-related perspective is defined as having hearing loss or hearing impairment (WHO 2018b). Most people will have some level of deafness, but those with disabling deafness may affect their optimal functioning in interaction with their environment. The level of disabling deafness vary internationally, but the World Health Organisation refers it to those with hearing loss greater than 40dB in the better hearing ear in adults and a hearing loss greater than 30dB in the better hearing ear in children (WHO 2013).

In this second short account, I illustrate how the concept of deafness can be conceptualised from a social perspective. It was in July 2015, at the 22nd International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) conference when Dr Sue Archbold, a prominent researcher, gave a keynote presentation on the advancements in deaf education (Archbold 2015b). The presentation included the audiological developments which have provided significant opportunities for deaf children to learn to speak:

Keynote speaker: Cochlear implants have improved the quality of spoken language for deaf children – they can now hear spoken language at an early age, establish proficient speech and so participate in mainstream classrooms.

Deaf participant: (asked to comment through an interpreter’s voice over with an angry face expression) I am offended by the presentation (repeated twice). Sign language is the right of all deaf people – it should be promoted instead of speech.

For many Deaf individuals, deafness is associated with an identity. In this approach, upper case, or capital, 'D' is used to denote membership of the social,
cultural, and linguistic minority group of Deaf people who use their own native Sign language. It also distinguishes Deaf people from other individuals who experience hearing loss, but do not use sign language. The use of audiological devices and speech training are considered by some to be threatening to the Deaf population (Anglin-Jaffe 2015). Consequently, there are continuous campaigns to recognise sign language as one of the key rights of deaf people including the rights of deaf children in school, as suggested in the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) recommendation that:

“Quality education in the national sign language(s) and the national written language(s) is one of [the] key factors for fulfilling the education and broader human rights of deaf children and adult deaf learners”. (World Federation of the Deaf, 2016, p. 3)

In asserting that quality education for deaf children should be limited to sign and written language, the Deaf scholars and the WFD did not take into account the fact that more than 90% of parents of deaf children are not deaf and have no sign language skills (Mitchell and Karchmer 2004). Increasingly, deaf children use spoken language to communicate (Archbold 2015a). The General Comment 4 on Article 24 (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016) asserts that an inclusive approach for deaf children must be provided with:

“[E]ducation delivered in the most appropriate languages and modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximize personal, academic and social development both within and outside formal school settings”. (para. 35, p. 10)

In this approach, being deaf is not restricted to having a sign or spoken language but rather suggests that the language needs of deaf children should be met on an individual basis. The General Comment also highlights the importance of being able to communicate in all aspects of life, not just in school.

Initiatives in researching and developing the prevention, identification and rehabilitation of a disability such as deafness are efforts to optimising individual’s daily functioning (World Health Organization 2017). Disability experts such as Corker and Shakespeare (2002) argued that interpreting these efforts as
oppression tends to undermine the complexity of individual experiences of a disability. They commented:

“Disability and impairment have been largely excluded from the mainstream postmodern analysis and this analysis has so far failed to impact significantly on how we perceive, think about and produce disability and impairment in the twenty-first century”. (p. 13)

Other factors such as level of impairment, home environment, family socio-economic background, early childhood educational experiences, school environment, and the child’s social environment have an influence on the development of a child (Antia 2015). Article 26 of UNCRPD calls on all States to:

“Take effective and appropriate measures…to enable persons with disabilities to attain and maintain maximum independence, full physical, mental, social and vocational ability, and full inclusion and participation in all aspects of life. To that end, States Parties shall organize, strengthen and extend comprehensive habilitation and rehabilitation services and programmes, particularly in the areas of health, employment, education and social services”. (United Nations 2006, p. 19)

For the majority of deaf children, access to hearing aids, cochlear implants and speech training is provided to enable development of spoken language and communicate with the majority of family and society (Archbold et al. 2008). High-quality early intervention services can change a child’s developmental trajectory and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities (Moeller et al. 2013).

2.4.2 Communication approach for deaf children

The recognition of sign language as a full form of language has changed attitudes to sign language and consequently, it has been recognised as an official language in the national policies of many countries (Reagan 2010). Sign language is prescribed as a medium communication for deaf individuals and in fact, required to be provided in schools as a right of deaf children (UNESCO 1994; United Nations 2006; World Federation of the Deaf 2016). Some educational programs even included sign language and spoken language curriculum to be taught simultaneously, known as ‘sign bilingual approach’ (Klerk et al. 2015; Callaway 1999) as well as allowing deaf children to be assessed using sign language instead of the traditional paper and pencil approach (Haug et al. 2016; Hlatywayo
et al. 2014). There are also improvements in research and practice of educational sign language interpreting and interpreters to be able to support deaf children in schools (Marschark et al. 2005; Witter-Meritew and Johnson 2004). Despite the international advancement in recognition, theories, research, policies and practices of sign language for deaf children, Connie Mayer and colleagues have written extensively about the limitations of sign language to support deaf children’s literacy skills and they argue that there is little evidence of success in deaf children’s academic performance and outcomes when sign language is prioritised over speech (Mayer and Trezek 2015; Mayer and Akamatsu 2003; Mayer 2007).

Johnston et al. 2002 have pointed out that opportunities for parents and other family members to learn sign language continue to be rarely available, even in highly resourced contexts, and this makes it difficult for children to have early access to a good language model, which is essential to ensure effective language learning. The low-prevalence of deafness also means that there are limited opportunities for deaf children to meet many deaf children, develop sign language skills and socialise. Support from qualified teachers of the deaf who are also competent users of sign language remains insufficient, especially in developing countries (Miles et al. 2011; Wapling 2016).

The last few decades have seen significant advancements in technology which provide opportunities for educational institutions to make use of its advantages. In countries of the North such as the United Kingdom, the existence of cochlear implants and advanced early intervention programmes increases deaf children’s access to acoustic information of spoken language, leading to higher rates of mainstream placement in schools and lower dependence on special education support services (De Raeve et al. 2012). Advancements in medical and health-related care are also being made available, and sometimes affordable, for deaf individuals in developing countries (McPherson and Brouillette 2008).

Access to the latest technology enables deaf children to be more effectively included in mainstream classrooms with their hearing peers, than previously reported (Antia 2015). This means that there is a shift in meeting the needs of deaf children as most specialised support may not necessarily be about getting support
for sign language interpreters but also about ensuring access to effective audiological management in order to have consistent participation in classroom activities (Archbold 2015a). However, teacher training programmes, even in developed countries such as the United States, were found to be not keeping pace with the change in deaf children’s communication needs (Lenihan 2010). Especially in developing countries where there are limited expertise to guide practice, teachers were found to have limited audiological training, and so children often do not gain the full benefit from this technology (Miles and McCracken 2009).

2.4.3 Some of the key debates in deaf education

Educational placement for deaf children is contested. Separate specialist provision is argued to enable specialist pedagogy such as instruction using sign language as advocated by the Salamanca Statement:

“Owing to the particular communication needs of deaf and deaf/blind persons, their education may be more suitably provided in special schools or special classes and units in mainstream schools”. (p.18)

Special schools for the deaf typically have full-time specialist support from trained teachers of the deaf with smaller classes and more appropriate support services (De Raeve et al. 2012). It is argued that these are spaces where Deaf culture can thrive (McIlroy and Storbeck 2011) and where a good quality acoustic learning environment is possible (Guardino and Antia 2012). However, due to factors such as geographical distance and availability of such specialist settings, it is not possible for all deaf children to attend this type of school, especially in countries with limited specialist resources and educational settings. Typically residential schools are located in urban areas which mean deaf children have to travel or live away from family, even at a young age. Even so, in a few studies of special schools in Uganda, Kristensen et al. (2006) found a lack of specialist knowledge and equipment such as qualified teachers of the deaf and hearing technologies, yet special schools tend to be regarded as centres of expertise to support inclusion.
Specifically for deaf children of hearing parents, the separation from family means that they might use a (sign) language that is different from their parents’, families’ and local communities’ language. Deaf parents of deaf children in a study in the USA were found to be more likely to want to send their child to special schools for the deaf so they can communicate using sign language with children of their age (Thumann-Prezioso 2005). However, the study also noted that the deaf parents of children with milder hearing loss, who have significant residual hearing and speech, faced a dilemma in deciding the educational settings of their child.

Improved access to audiological devices and speech training has enabled deaf children to develop an intelligible spoken language and therefore, increasingly to be taught in mainstream classrooms in developed and high-income countries such as the UK (Archbold and Mayer 2012). Deaf pupils who are individually placed in mainstream schools were supported by peripatetic (visiting) teachers of the deaf who were employed by the local education authorities (Powers 2001). More frequent interaction with hearing peers and teachers, provides deaf children with more opportunities to improve their spoken language, which is one of the best predictors of reading and writing skills development (Mayer 2007).

Where peripatetic teachers of the deaf are not available, support from specialist teachers who taught within the specialist unit such as in the USA is utilised to guide the inclusion of deaf children in mainstream classrooms (Foster et al. 2003). Specialist units or classes are considered able to create small special schools within mainstream schools. Iantaffi et al. (2003) reported that without access to specialist teachers, mainstream teachers tend to lack knowledge, skills and awareness of how to address the impact of deafness on children’s learning and participation. However, due to the low-incidence of deafness, it is also not economically viable in some country contexts to accommodate specialised provision for a minority of deaf children. Specialised programmes in Cyprus were reported to lack the necessary resources to provide more advanced courses to prepare children for postsecondary academia and success (Angelides and Aravi 2015). The deaf children in Angelides and Aravi (2015) also reported that they have less opportunity to socialise and build friendships with other peers since they were taught with a small number of peers.
The functions of special schools for the deaf in Belgium, for example, have expanded to include support for early intervention, day care centre, pre-, primary and vocational training school, support service for mainstream schools, audiological centre, and residential department (De Raeve et al. 2012). In England, the aim of resource-based provision is to be an integral part of a mainstream school, and is deliberately not separate from the rest of the school. These resource ‘bases’ aim to ensure that deaf children make good educational progress, close the attainment gap and ensure deaf children’s participation in the life of the school (Lynas 2002). Intensive language, literacy and communication teaching on a one-to-one basis, outside the mainstream class, have been acknowledged to be one of the best practices in supporting deaf children in mainstream schools (Powers 2001). The withdrawal is not merely seen as ‘exclusion’ but instead aims to monitor and improve inclusion. Pre and post-tutoring sessions are some of the accommodations necessary to address deaf children’s language delay (Lynas 2002), and this involves making difficult choices about which subjects can be missed in order that this tutoring takes place.

2.4.4 Sustaining technology for the inclusion of deaf children

The importance of assistive technology to inclusion is addressed by Articles 26 and 32 of the UNCRPD, and the General Comment acknowledges that the absence of assistive technologies represents a fundamental material barrier to inclusive education. In order to address the substantial gap between the need for and provision of assistive technology, the World Health Organisation established the Global Cooperation on Assistive Technology (GATE) initiative to realise the obligations of the UNCRPD (WHO 2018a). There is on-going research and development to improve new-technologies suitable for people with disabilities globally ranging from the creation of solar-powered hearing aids (Parving and Christensen 2004) to the advancement of e-health (Clark and Swanepoel 2014). Innovative technologies such as mobile app hearing screening enable assessment of deafness to be conducted using smart phones (Swanepoel et al. 2014). This means that with technology, access to hearing services is possible even in low resource settings. Yet, few countries have national assistive technology policies and programmes. Hearing aid production currently meets less than 10% of the
global need and in developing countries, less than 3% of people who need a hearing aid are thought to have one (WHO 2018a). Borg et al. (2011) found that research on access to assistive technology for people with disabilities in low-middle income countries is mainly dominated by product-oriented research for those with physical disabilities. There is a general lack of recent evidence of the experiences of deaf children especially in developing countries with regards to the usage of assistive technology.

Access to assistive technology such as hearing aids is of little help to deaf children if not maintained. Classrooms are busy places and maintaining an acoustically appropriate environment can be challenging (McCracken 2015). Although sound induction loop systems and radio FM have been used in high income countries for decades, it is only recently that they have been recommended to be included in the Priority Assistive Products List launched by the GATE initiative (WHO 2016). In moving towards inclusive and equitable education, the SDG4 aim to, “Build and upgrade education facilities that are child, disability and gender sensitive and provide safe, non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for all”. Facilities in schools for deaf children who wear hearing technologies include a sound induction loop and radio FM to ensure the deaf children’s continuous access to sound in classroom. Other factors that influence effective usage of hearing devices include the level of background noise, level of teacher’s voice and the distance between child and teachers (Crandell and Smaldino 2000). Archbold and O’Donoghue (2007) have warned the importance of long-term use the devices, and for teachers and parents to have the necessary expertise to check and maintain the hearing technologies so deaf children can benefit from wearing them. If appropriate support is not available to meet children’s needs, they may not able to use the technology or its usage is ineffective.

2.4.5 Teacher training and expectations

Teachers are, arguably, key to providing inclusive and equitable education. Researchers and scholars in developed (Black-Hawkins and Amrhein 2014; Kamenopoulou et al. 2016) and developing (Sharma et al. 2013; Kuroda et al. 2017) countries are engaged in meeting the challenges of preparing teachers for
inclusive education but teacher training programmes vary across countries. Initial teacher education (ITE) in England, for more than 20 years, does not have separate ITE for mainstream and special education teachers and therefore all trainees are expected to be prepared to teach pupils with disabilities and for teaching in inclusive settings (Lawson et al. 2013). Similarly, teacher education in Finland is not organised based on disability-oriented approach but provides teachers with a wide variety of knowledge and skills that they can apply in various educational settings and situations (Savolainen 2009).

With changes in children’s demographic characteristics and educational settings, reform in both mainstream and specialist teacher education is required especially because mainstream and special education systems in most countries are separated (Peters 2005). The separation of mainstream and specialist training limits who teachers think they can teach (Young 2008). Yet, there is broad agreement about the content of courses designed to prepare teachers for work in inclusive settings. Florian and colleagues emphasise that pre-service teachers are prepared to respond to learners’ diversity through what they call inclusive pedagogy (Black-Hawkins and Florian 2012; Florian 2008; Florian and Rouse 2009; Florian and Black-Hawkins 2011). Development of inclusive pedagogy focuses on teaching instructions that can include all children regardless of background and ability. Since there are increasing numbers of children with disabilities being educated in mainstream classrooms, training on children’s difficulties and disabilities need to be explicitly taught to give exposure and improve teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion of children with disabilities (Campbell and Gilmore 2003; Sharma et al. 2008). Even so, research in teacher professional learning studies highlight the contradictions of teacher training and change in practices (Opfer and Pedder 2011). The lack of quality training and on-site support were reported to be main factors for teachers in Cambodia to have negative attitude towards the development of inclusive education (Kuroda et al. 2017).

Specifically for teachers of deaf children, the four most important competencies ranked by teachers who taught deaf children include skills to adapt curriculum, understanding of deaf children’s communication skills, proficiencies to assess
children’s learning outcomes and competencies related to preparing a suitable
know how to design a learning environment that is safe, and enabling
opportunities for deaf children to build interaction with their peers, are key to
sustaining children’s full membership of their classes and school (Antia et al.
2002). In developed countries, besides training in sign language, it is particularly
important to prepare teachers with knowledge and skills related to the
management of audiological devices, as increasingly, deaf children are likely to be
fitted with hearing aids or cochlear implants and are speaking (Harrington and
Powers 2004).

Additionally, challenges in addressing deaf children’s needs increased especially
in countries with diverse languages and ethnicities (Rhoades et al. 2004). Given
the rapid changes in the population of deaf children in today’s society, training for
teachers is recommended to include virtual learning opportunities, hands-on field
experiences and course work in teacher preparation programs, and empirically
based research (Guardino 2015). The influence of recent mobile technology in the
training of teachers of deaf children has had a profound impact in supporting
teachers’ learning. For example, Chilton and McCracken (2017) used a remote
camera technology called ‘Swirl’ that was able to film a teachers’ lesson more
effectively. Such advancement facilitates practice-based learning and teachers
can be trained even in remote areas. Interestingly, although specialist teacher
training is arguably critical, Miles et al. (2018) presented example of cases in the
Tanzanian context where teachers’ practices were moving towards a more
inclusive approach despite limited access to specialist training.

2.5 The Deaf inclusion dilemma

Including deaf children in mainstream schools has been an extremely complex,
controversial and contentious issue across the globe. The differing definitions,
approaches, purposes and challenges are some of the issues that need to be
considered. Some deaf children especially in developing countries have little or no
language when they start primary school (Adoyo 2007). In trying to eliminate
exclusion and discrimination of deaf children through inclusion, there are also pragmatic concerns on the issue of language for deaf children.

The third short account illustrates the conflict that sometimes arises between the views of deaf people and those of the disability rights movement. This was highlighted at the United Kingdom Forum for International Education and Training (UKFIET) conference, Oxford, in 2017, where I attended a session on deaf children’s language and learning experiences in Kenya:

Deaf researcher(s): Kenyan deaf children are only learning to communicate with sign language for the first time when they attend school - teachers are not prepared to support children with very basic language and communication instruction.

Disability rights activist: Your recommendations risk segregating deaf children from their society and families. Segregation in education has excluded children with disabilities from the societies and should be opposed.

Deaf researcher: Sign language and separate classrooms are necessary for deaf children to become part of society – they are the most appropriate educational provision.

Deaf children in the study presented are only accessing language for the first time when they attend schools, and teachers were not prepared to support children with very basic language and communication instruction (Wapling et al. 2017). Wapling ended her presentation by saying that in the case of deaf children not having equal access to assistive technology, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, sign language and separate classrooms are, arguably, the most appropriate educational provisions. While disability activists campaign for children with disability to be educated with non-disabled (non-deaf pupils), scholars such as Snoddon and Underwood (2017) argue that empowering deaf children and their family to learn sign language in congregated spaces with other deaf pupils and teachers is considered the ‘grassroots initiatives for future Deaf community maintenance and flourishing’ (p.1413). Access to sign language is not merely seen as an educational tool but rather to recognise its linguistic status as the collective cultural rights of deaf communities. However, Murray et al. (2018) argues that the
success of this initiative depends on factors such as the teachers’ sign language competency level, availability of programmes for teaching sign language to parents and families of deaf children and provide an education on par with that of non-deaf learners.

2.6 School stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion

I have discussed in the previous sections that there are diverse views of inclusion, and scholars have opposing opinions about how best to educate deaf children and the deaf inclusion dilemma. This section attempts to point out a few reflections drawing on the available research from the existing literature. The focus of this review is to explore the experiences of educating deaf children pertaining to the notion of ‘inclusion’. More recently, there is a growing emphasis on engaging with the voices of those affected to contribute to the current social policy debates.

2.6.1 Parents’ experiences of deaf children

The presence of deafness in a family has the potential to affect all areas of family life. The majority of parents of deaf children have little or no experience of deafness. When they receive news about their child deafness, parents often have negative feelings and thoughts (Jackson and Turnbull 2004). Given the complexity of deafness, the often confusing process of identification and intervention for deaf children, especially when parents lack sufficient information and resources, they are left to make decisions about the intervention, communication and educational needs of their deaf child (Young et al. 2006). Parents tend also not to be prepared for the implications of their decisions. Following the identification of deafness, there are many decisions that parents have to take on behalf of their children that have long-lasting implications on the life of the children as well as their other family members. The perspective of families and children about their experiences of deaf children’s inclusion is poorly represented in the literature, especially in low and middle income countries.

Being included within the family is important for the socio-emotional development of deaf children, as well as for the other family members and society as a whole.
Best practices in a family-centred early intervention programme for deaf children suggest families to be connected to a comprehensive support system so they can benefit from the necessary knowledge and function effectively for their deaf child (Moeller et al. 2013). However, ensuring this connection is not straight-forward due to the complexity of deafness. For example, there are many issues that parents have to consider in deciding the communication of their deaf child. Some have argued that parents should be taught sign language as soon as the child is identified as being deaf but there are limited resources to train hearing parents with sign language even in highly resourced country such as Australia (Leigh et al. 2010). On the other hand, developing spoken language among deaf children requires long-term commitment from the parents. Access to hearing aids and cochlear implants followed by on-going efforts to ensure continuous usage, speech training and preparing an environment enabling deaf children to hear clearly. While the outcomes are generally valued by parents, they needed to be patient as progress took time, long-term management of equipment and an awareness that outcomes differ for every child (Archbold et al. 2008).

Parents’ involvement in their child’s education is generally accepted to be important but its effectiveness depends on: parental factors (parents’ belief, perceptions, income, gender); child factors (age, behavioural problems, additional disabilities); parent teacher factors (differing agenda, attitudes); and societal factors (historical, political, economic issues) (Hornby and Lafaele 2011). A meta-analysis of parental involvement in special education in USA reported that involvement was limited to development of Individualised Education Program meetings (Goldman and Burke 2017). Specialist services are mainly available in special schools for the deaf and therefore, getting ‘enough’ for deaf children is tricky given the low-incidence of deafness.

It is often the case that parents of children with disabilities in the USA need to provide a written statement of what is required so that the relevant authority can be requested to provide the support (Burke 2013). Parents reported their struggle to develop shared partnership with teachers when they have different understanding of the child’s need and a different agenda for the child. Parents of deaf children with additional disabilities faced bigger challenges but often received
less support (McCracken and Turner 2012). In the case where parents, family and local community refuse to accept their child’s deafness in Cameroon, Zimbabwe and India, deaf children had no mother tongue or sign language skills before they started school (Wilson et al. 2008). Economically poor families with a disabled member tend not to have enough time to build social networks and hence have fewer mechanisms of support and limited social capital (Singal 2008).

2.6.2 School leadership and successful inclusion programmes for deaf children

The increased expectations and pressures on schools to provide inclusive and equitable education have challenged the way school is organised internationally yet there is a lack of literature available on leadership and the development of successful inclusion programmes for deaf children.

School leaders are expected to shift their way of governing and managing human and material resources. Traditional approach to leadership took a top-down approach where school leaders are considered to play a key role in encouraging, implementing and sustaining changes in schools. Increasingly, this approach is found to be ineffective as teachers ended up feeling overwhelmed with the demands of practices and therefore became resistant to educational reform (Fullan 1994). Instead, in moving towards inclusive schools, Burstein et al. (2004) suggest that school leaders needs to develop a joint commitment by staff. As analysed by Kugelmass and Ainscow (2004), responsibility to sustain school improvements is lead and shared by all, not residing in any one individual. They noted that common features among leaders who were successful in fostering these inclusive cultures and practices include: 1) an uncompromising commitment to inclusive education; 2) clearly defined roles, responsibilities and boundaries; 3) collaborative interpersonal style; 4) problem-solving and conflict resolution skills; 5) understanding and appreciation of the expertise of others; 6) supportive relationships among staff. In a similar way, Burstein et al. (2004) suggest four important aspects to school transformation; building a commitment for change, planning for change, preparing personnel for change and providing supports that promote and maintain change. Ensuring that there is a clear overall vision, with an
emphasis on facilitating and fostering a problem-solving climate is important in building inclusive schools (Chapman et al. 2011).

The development of action plans in cooperation with Rwandan and Ethiopian ministries of education and disability-related NGO has been found to be effective for school stakeholders to own and understand the principle of inclusive education within a national system (Murenzi and Mebratu 2013). In building shared responsibilities, factors such as school leaders’ ability, confidence, expertise, experience, and the willingness of others to hold them accountable, influence its success. Head teachers who have training and experiences with children and people with disabilities were found to have more positive attitude to the inclusive approach (Praisner 2003). Not only head teachers, other school leaders such as special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCOs) in England who embrace a social justice discourse were found to be helpful in addressing the challenges in moving towards inclusive education (Liasidou and Svensson 2014).

Increasingly, decisions to include children with disabilities in schools have been influenced by parents who advocate for their child’s right to be included in local schools (Singal 2008). Singal (2008) highlighted that sometimes the head teacher’s decision contradicted the classroom teacher’s decision. Disagreement within an organisation is not uncommon but the situation will have damaging impacts on individuals and schools if not addressed adequately. Baker et al. (2018) have carefully portrayed the tensions and conflicts between school leaders in an increasingly diverse school. It is particularly challenging for school leaders with limited leadership experiences. Different leadership styles, inadequate communication, and distrust are some the main issues in building partnership. In the issue of inclusion and deafness, there are, arguably, more contentious issues and school leaders have to be prepared and skilful to balance the different opinions. Another issue is with the lack of concerted effort to monitor the development of inclusive approaches within school. School leaders are left to interpret its implementation with little or no resources support, in addition to having a high administrative workload which affects school leaders’ ability to work effectively (UNESCO 2017b).
2.6.3 Mainstream teachers’ role in inclusion

There are many approaches to deaf children’s inclusion. Some deaf children are attending local mainstream school with a specialist unit within the school or are at least receiving support from peripatetic teachers of the deaf such as in the UK. Therefore, mainstream teachers are regarded as the key persons for determining the quality of education in classrooms. With the long history of discrimination of people with disabilities in many societies, mainstream teachers might not be aware of, or even understand, the long struggle of the disability rights movement (Malinga and Gumbo 2016). The lack of ownership of the inclusion movement is one of the main reasons some mainstream teachers are resistant to including deaf children in mainstream classrooms despite trainings and provision of extra resources (Lee et al. 2014). Observing children’s improvement is a motivation for teachers to feel satisfied with their job (Westwood 2008). Especially in highly competitive education systems, mainstream teachers reported struggling to ensure achievement of all children in an examination-oriented and rigid curriculum education system (Yeo et al. 2016).

Enabling specialist support in mainstream classrooms for deaf children is valued by mainstream teachers, but they also reported difficulties arising from having to rely on specialist teachers. In the absence of support, mainstream teachers considered that they are incapable of teaching the children (Lissi et al. 2017). However, making time for collaboration with specialist teachers is challenging with limited time and a high workload. Determining the amount of support provided by specialist support is also reported to be tricky because mainstream teachers have to make sure that deaf children and the specialist teachers are treated as full members of the classroom and not merely as guests (Antia et al. 2002). With the increased number of deaf children using audiological devices, teachers reported not being prepared or trained adequately to support the needs of these children within mainstream classrooms (Mukari et al. 2007).

A lack of relevant information is reported to be the main issue faced by mainstream teachers in maintaining the inclusion of deaf children. Building close relationships with parents is also reported to be challenging with large class sizes.
In the case where there are no specialist personnel within the school, mainstream teachers complained that they are not involved in decision making, not trained to develop inclusive education and are not prepared to teach children with disabilities (Singal 2008). Another concern is that inadequate resources for teachers means that they have to prepare materials on their own and therefore have less time to improve teaching that could meet the needs of all children (Stubbs 2008).

2.6.4 Specialist teachers role in inclusion

Due to the advancement of specialist knowledge and expertise in relation to the needs of deaf children are mostly based in high-income countries, most literature about the experiences of specialist teachers are based in countries of the North. UNESCO (2015) reported that despite the increased number of children with disabilities in schools, there continues to be an inadequate number of specialist teachers globally. In the USA, specialist teachers were reported to have higher workload and lower job satisfaction than mainstream teachers (Stempien and Loeb 2002). Sign language interpreters are not usually available within school contexts. Teachers of the deaf have high workloads because they have to support deaf children within specialist provisions and at the same time provide support to the mainstream teachers and deaf children in the mainstream classrooms. However, Mpuang et al. (2015) explored teachers' language preferences when teaching deaf children in primary mainstream classrooms in Botswana and found that the many versions of sign language made teaching challenging.

Most deaf children have speech and language delays and therefore additional support is required to reduce the knowledge gap (Gregory 2005). Jarvis (2003a) argued that other than direct support to deaf children, the roles of teachers of the deaf also include raising awareness of deafness within the school, consulting and training other teachers and teaching assistants, undertaking deaf awareness sessions for hearing pupils, liaising with other professionals such as audiologists and with parents, checking and monitoring the use of specialist hearing equipment such as radio aids, planning with teachers and assistants and identifying appropriate strategies and resources in classroom. Some of the problems with collaboration with other professionals are difficulties in finding time for meetings,
different teaching style and a lack of instructional support, such as getting the curriculum materials from mainstream teachers ahead of the lesson (Leatherman 2009). Lynas (2002) explores specialist teachers’ experiences of supporting deaf children within specialist provision and reported one of the challenges is to find appropriate time to do the lesson and compensate for the lesson that the child is missing from the mainstream classroom. Withdrawing individuals or small groups of children for part of the lesson might have some implications on their membership in classroom. Therefore, Antia et al. (2002) argued that explicit discussions about the roles and responsibilities of mainstream and specialist teachers helps to avoid misunderstandings between teachers.

2.6.5 **Voices of deaf children and peers in mainstream settings**

Including children’s voices has increasingly been recognised as important in challenging assumptions about providing support to deaf children. Indeed, respect for children’s participation rights within education is fundamental to the realisation of the right to education as mentioned in Article 12 of the Convention on the rights of the child (United Nations 1989). Ainscow and Messiou (2017) have illustrated that although time-consuming, engaging with children’s views can pay off in terms of increasing the presence, participation and achievements of learners within a school. Despite the advantages, research on child disability are few, especially in low- and middle-income countries.

A number of studies have included deaf children’s opinions about their experiences, and there are mixed reactions by the deaf learners. A study by Wheeler et al. (2007) in the UK reported that deaf teenagers have positive attitudes towards their implants and acknowledge that it helps them to learn in school. However, they also noted that access to sound and speech is insufficient and additional support is needed to fill in the knowledge gap when children miss some necessary information in classrooms, especially when faced with the more challenging acoustics and language and curriculum. In particular, they highlighted that, teachers’ deaf awareness and acknowledgement of children’s individual needs are critical to making them feel supported in school. Regular and reliable maintenance of cochlear implants and hearing aids and school policies to reduce
background noise and promote lip reading and lip speaking as routine practices are essential if deaf children are to have equal opportunities to develop spoken and/or sign language (Archbold and O'Donoghue 2007). Although evidence has shown that frequent interactions with children of similar age are also necessary for language and communication skills development (Yoshinaga-Itano 2014), some deaf children complain that they struggle to interact with their peers in noisy mainstream classrooms (Iantaffi et al. 2003). Nunes et al. (2001) identified that their peers did not dislike the deaf children in the study but they were significantly more likely to be neglected by their peers and less likely to have a friend in the mainstream classrooms. Separate classrooms for deaf children, on the other hand, were reported to have limited opportunity for socialisation because of the small number of children in the class (Angelides and Aravi 2015).

Deaf children in England are four times more likely than other children to experience emotional health and wellbeing issues which often arise from communication difficulties within the family and with peers (Consortium for Research in Deaf Education (CRIDE) 2017). Engaging with the views of children can help facilitate the development of an inclusive approach to education, as recommended by Ainscow and Messiou (2017). Jarvis et al. (2002) report that deaf children were keen to have their voices heard and were disappointed if they were not included in research. In summary, the literature is sparse and this study contributes to this neglected area of research.

2.7 Summary and gaps in the literature

In this chapter I have mapped the developments and debates in the discourse of inclusion and deaf education. The chapter then outlined some of the school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion reported in previous studies. The different opinions about what mode of communication to use, where to educate a deaf child, and what are the best methods to use to teach deaf children have been ongoing sources of controversy and seem likely to continue to be debated.
Most literature is based in countries of the North. Middle-income countries are neglected and often grouped with low-income countries. Grech (2014) argues that, “Disability discourse including that on inclusive education continues to be fabricated in the global North and transferred to the global South, with little or no alertness to context or culture, or how this discourse is framed, applied (or otherwise) or even resisted in practice” (p.130). It was found that practices are not informed by research.

The available literature does not capture the children’s and parents’ voices and there is little literature on home and community experiences. Due to the complexity of inclusion and deaf education, there is no established research framework for studying deaf children’s inclusion. It is particularly difficult to articulate the definition of inclusive education and inclusion as their conceptualisation is contested. This review acknowledges that there are multi-layered dimensions in the research, policy and practice pertaining to the notion of inclusion. However, the models which frame the discussion of inclusion, disability and childhood are mostly constructed on the experience of those in countries of the North (Singal and Muthukrishna 2014). The lack of detailed discussion on the contextual circumstances ‘beyond the school gate’ that affects the learning and academic outcomes of deaf children means that there is little guidance to inform social and educational decision making for deaf children in low-middle income countries such as Malaysia.
Chapter 3  Research Methodology

Introduction

I have argued that the inclusion of deaf children in education has been understood through research and practice in high-income countries, and that there is a gap in research knowledge about how the school stakeholders in middle-income countries, such as Malaysia, experience deaf children’s inclusion in relation to the debates about inclusive education and deafness. In this chapter, I discuss the overall design of this study which aimed to understand education stakeholders’ experiences of the inclusion of deaf children in education. I also discuss the data generation procedures, participant recruitment, research instruments, ethical considerations and data analysis procedures. In summary, this chapter explains the rationale for a qualitative approach to data generation and analysis in relation to the research questions.

3.1 Development of the overarching research question

In this study I adopted a social constructivist stance, as I believe meanings in the world are varied and multiple and because our own experiences are shaped by historical social and cultural norms. Social constructivists understand that humans develop knowledge of the world through interactions with others (Creswell 2013a) and the approach enables my exploration of the ‘why and how of human interactions’ (Agee 2009, p.432).

I framed my investigation with the following broad research question: “What are school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion?” . This research question is deliberately broad in order to study the views and experiences of school leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, parents, deaf pupils and their peers, who are currently experiencing, implementing and supporting inclusion in education. Experiences were documented in three contrasting primary school settings in Selangor State, Malaysia.
3.2 Research design

Qualitative research design is best suited to address my research problem as it allows a deeper understanding of the social phenomena than would be obtained from quantitative data such as using a survey, where exploration is restricted (Maxwell 2008). This approach is also suitable because exploration of the issues focuses in a particular selected context. Social constructivists rely as much as possible on participants’ views in their own historical and cultural settings (Crotty 1998). This study aims to explore the social context of the school environment and how this impacts deaf pupils’ experiences. Social constructivism enables researchers to generate the pattern of meanings that participants make about their own experiences in their own particular context. According to Willig (2008), “Research from a social constructionist perspective is concerned with identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and to trace their implications for human experience and social practice” (p. 7). For some scholars, social constructivist researchers are also known as ‘interpretivists’, because researchers increase knowledge about the world through their own interpretation of how participants perceive and interact within a social context (Lincoln et al. 2011). I recognise that my own background shapes my interpretation. This means that the knowledge gained from this study is shared between participants and myself as the researcher. The multifaceted nature of knowledge construction is also appropriate for my evaluation because of the complex nature of inclusive education and deaf education.

In seeking what inclusion means for deaf children in Malaysia, a qualitative approach is best suited to address my research problem, as it allows a deeper understanding of the social phenomena than would be obtained from quantitative data such as using a survey, where exploration of educational experiences would be restricted (Maxwell 2008). Qualitative researchers believe that meaning is not simply discovered, but constructed by individuals who bring their own beliefs and experiences when they engage with a particular situation (Creswell 2013b). Thus, an open-ended data generation approach is more appropriate than a close-ended approach such as numeric-data, to study a phenomenon which is highly context-
based such as inclusion. According to Silverman (2011), a qualitative approach enables researchers to avoid ‘lopsided and limited data’ (p.43) as a result of making rigid correlations between variables. The nature of qualitative inquiry provides windows for researchers to conduct complex reasoning in understanding participants’ multiple subjective views (Creswell 2013).

In this study, in-depth exploration of central phenomena provides a more complete picture of complex situations to give deeper insights about the matters of concern. Obtaining sufficient information was important to explore the issues and challenges faced by respondents in order to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the situation. Also, qualitative design was chosen because there have been relatively few studies on deaf children’s inclusion that have used a qualitative design. Most of the published studies on deaf children’s inclusion relied on quantitative studies (for example Eriks-Brophy and Whittingham 2013; Hadjikakou et al. 2008; Richardson et al. 2010). Previous qualitative studies involved only small number of participants or did not involve views of other types of school stakeholders (teachers, pupils, parents) currently implementing, supporting and experiencing inclusive education (for example Doherty 2012; Iantaffi et al. 2003; Angelides and Aravi 2015). Therefore, the current study aimed to address this gap by using qualitative study with multiple sources of data collection to gain deeper insights about the central phenomenon. This was done so that sources of information would strengthen the reliability and validity of the study which increased confidence in the evidence (Flick 2014) and therefore reduced the chance of misinterpretation (Yin 2009).

However, every approach has its advantages and disadvantages (Silverman 2011). The problem of research using this approach is that it is done mainly with words, not with numbers, which usually have multiple meanings and are more abstract (Denzin and Lincoln 2008). Thick descriptions of a phenomenon and a holistic picture of the issue being studied can provide essential information for other researchers.
3.2.1 Understanding inclusive school environments: A Framework for studying deaf children's inclusion in Malaysia

In this study ‘The UK National Quality Standard Framework for Deaf Education’ (National Deaf Children’s Society and National Sensory Impairment Partnership 2011) was used as it proved difficult to find any other instrument available in the literature that could adequately answer questions about deaf children’s inclusion. The interviews conducted in this study were directly informed by the NATSIP framework.

The aim of the research was to explore how inclusion is experienced by school stakeholders in Malaysia by using the Quality Standards (QS) in Deaf Education recognised by the UK Department of Education entitled, “Resource provisions for deaf children and young people in mainstream schools” (NDCS and NatSIP 2011). They have been continuously developed and updated by NDCS and NatSIP in close collaboration with heads of services, heads of resource provisions, teachers of the deaf and other specialists in deaf education from across the UK.

There are a total of 17 quality standards organised into four categories (See Appendix A). I have purposively selected Quality Standard Number 3 (QS03: An inclusive school environment) (NDCS and NatSIP 2011, pg. 11) in the first category, “Securing inclusion and effective teaching and learning” as shown in Appendix A.

The focus of the Quality Standards document is directly relevant to my exploration of the experience of inclusion in the Malaysian context, despite the fact that material resources are much more limited than in the UK, and deaf education is at a much earlier stage of development.

QS03 focuses on the “Inclusive school environment” and provides a framework for the analysis of deaf children’s inclusion in Malaysia. It includes the culture and ethos of the school and how this promotes the inclusion and achievement of deaf children through school policies and plans. There are nine ‘requirements’ in QS03, which I used to explore deaf children’s learning and participation within the school.
environment from the perspectives of teachers, school leaders, parents and children themselves. The framework consists of nine requirements:

1) Positive attitudes to deaf children are encouraged
2) Reasonable adjustments are made
3) Deaf children feel valued and part of school community
4) True friendships for deaf children are established
5) Effective communication is ensured
6) Achievements are celebrated
7) Resources are embedded
8) Ongoing training is available to all staff and
9) Noise is managed and an optimal acoustic environment is ensured

This framework is my research tool, to guide decisions about what to ask, from whom, and in which settings. The range of responses and experiences provided by participants are the substance to better understand the meaning of inclusion in this study.

**Pilot study**

I conducted two pilot studies: the first exploratory pilot study aimed to practise my interview skills and the other to test the relevance of the interview schedule in the Malaysian context. This was conducted between January and April 2015 and involved individual interviews with seven trainee teachers about their one year training course at the University of Manchester to become teachers of the deaf and about their experience of the inclusion of deaf children in the school settings in which they were doing their teaching placements. This study had the dual purpose of enlightening me about the inclusion of deaf children in the UK context and trying out a photo elicitation approach (Miles et al. 2015). I decided not to use photo elicitation approach in my main study because it is time consuming and less useful to understand individual experiences in detail.

The interviews also helped me to learn how to pace the questions I asked, about using probes, and about the importance of listening during the interviewing process. Listening to the recordings of the interviews, reading and re-reading the
interview transcripts helped me in understanding the trainee teachers’ views on inclusion and simultaneously assisted me in understanding the field of ‘inclusive education’ in the UK and the conflicting arguments in the literature. In addition, I learnt to use thematic analysis as a method to analyse the data and understand the significance of my findings. Key findings were reported, including the various roles of teachers of the deaf, the diverse needs of deaf children, positive attitudes towards inclusion and the various definitions and understandings of the concept of ‘inclusion’.

In the second pilot study, I interviewed three Malaysian teachers of the deaf in October 2015. This study was particularly important because it helped me to design and subsequently improve and adapt the interview questions for the Malaysian context. This was a crucial stage because it allowed me to gather feedback, comments and advice about the importance of carefully wording the instructions and questions to avoid ambiguity and enhance clarity.

These pilot study experiences helped me to understand the complexities of inclusive education, deaf rights and the debates about the inclusion of deaf children in education in the UK, and this influenced the design of the main study and the interview schedules.

3.3 Methods for data generation

The main data generation method of this study is through individual face-to-face interviews (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). Interviews were selected over other forms of data collection in order to gather information about stakeholders’ experiences (Laforest 2009). Observation was considered not appropriate in this study due to time restrictions. The in-depth interviews were conducted from May to August 2016 (see Appendix B) where I spent about three weeks in each school.

Interviewing enabled me to establish rapport with the stakeholders, and it allowed flexibility to change the order of questioning according to the interview situation (Cohen et al. 2000). By using probes and prompts, I was able to encourage
participants to give full answers about their experiences as deaf individuals, or living with, working with or learning with deaf children (Creswell 2012).

3.3.1 Development of interview schedules

I developed interview schedules for different stakeholders – deaf adults, school leaders, mainstream teachers, specialist teachers, parents, deaf children and classmates, guided by the NDCS and NatSIP (2011) framework (see Appendix C). To increase the reliability of the study (Shenton 2004), the interview questions were developed in consultation with my supervisors who have had research and teaching experience in inclusive education and deaf education for at least 30 years. The interview schedule was then piloted with three teachers of the deaf in Malaysia in Malay prior to data gathering to identify whether the questions elicited sufficient responses and whether there were any potential problems with particular questions (van Teijlingen and Hundley 1998).

3.3.2 Research journal and fieldwork notes

My interest and positionality as a researcher to study the inclusion of deaf children in Malaysia requires me to be critical and reflective throughout my own research journey. I used my research journal to document and reflect upon my research experiences and evolving understanding of how inclusion is practised in Malaysian primary schools. The use of a research journal has helped to illuminate my research process (Borg 2001) and increase the accuracy of my data (Shenton 2004). The documentations of the research processes include reflection on the approach to, and experiences and problems during, fieldwork, as well as when analysing and interpreting the findings. I used my fieldwork notes to document my observations around the school, events seen and heard. I recorded my impressions, interpretations and personal reflections in a research journal while conducting the research.

The research journal and fieldwork notes have no pre-determined structure or format because it was an on-going process throughout my research. I should point out that I did not start writing my research journal with the intention of using it for
data. However, as the value of keeping the journal became evident, I did begin to realise, as Borg (2001) does, that it was in fact another source of data about my research.

3.3.3 Language and translation

This study was conducted in the Malay language, with the exception of the Indian Malaysian participant who used English. For deaf participants, interviews were in the spoken Malay language with the exception of a deaf child who only used sign language. All Participant Information Sheets were written in clear language and were easily accessible to participants in order to follow the University ethical practice, policy and guidance (Manchester Institute of Education 2014). Larkin et al. (2007) recommend the use of the interviewees’ preferred language as this potentially reduces the barriers for interviewees to express and illustrate their experiences. This means that both the PIS and the consent form were also translated into Malay (the national language of Malaysia). Approval from a native Malay speaker for all of the translations is presented in Appendix E. Note that all interview schedules, PIS and consent forms in the appendices of this thesis are in English for reference to non-Malay readers. Information about the research were verbally communicated to all the participants in their preferred language prior to the interviews. For the child participants, the PIS and consent form have been simplified, and they included pictures and symbols (see Appendix D). Interviews, transcription and analysis of the interviews were done in the language used by participants during the interview.

3.3.4 Recruitment of participants

I used a purposive and convenience sampling strategy (Creswell 2012) to select the three primary schools in this study. There was no available documentation to help me to identify suitable children. It took 6 months of research to identify the schools in which deaf children were being educated. The heavily bureaucratic system in Malaysia meant that I had to seek permission at various stages during the process.
In order to find out the percentage of deaf children in each type of educational setting of every state, I compared the number of deaf pupils in the statistics between settings and states in the Educational Data Sector (2014) report. In summary, approximately 40% of deaf children attend schools for the deaf, many of which are residential, and that almost 60% attend special ‘units’ attached to mainstream schools, which are referred to as the ‘Special Education Integration Program’ (SEIP). Only about 1% of deaf children attend classes in mainstream schools.

I had to undertake further detailed exploration of the two Ministry reports (Ministry of Education 2013b; Special Education Division 2013a). I found that Selangor state has the largest concentration of deaf children (15%) and a range of services for deaf children, including a cochlear implantation centre, as Selangor is one of the most developed states in Malaysia. The other 85% of deaf children are scattered across a wide geographical area in Malaysia’s 13 other states.

Only mainstream schools with deaf children were included in this study. Special schools for the deaf were not included because they are not considered part of inclusive education (Education Act 1996 1998). The number of deaf students in mainstream schools is very limited. As shown in Table 3.1, the schools where deaf children are educated were identified through two sources; the Department of Education of Selangor and the Institute of Ear, Hearing and Speech (Institute-HEARS) cochlear implant centre.

There are a total of 11 primary schools that offer SEIP to deaf pupils in Selangor state. The schools on the list were contacted to ask if their deaf pupils were included in the mainstream classroom for Inclusive Education Programme. Only two out of the 11 schools included deaf pupils in the mainstream classrooms identified as Aman School and Bijak School. Initially, there were a total of 19 schools in the list provided by the Institute-HEARS. However, further exploration identified that the schools in the list included schools in different states and private schools. The list was shortlisted to three schools. From the list, only one school had a deaf child - the deaf children had left the other two schools.
### Source of Information, Type of School, Number of Eligible Schools, and Number of Schools in This Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Information</th>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number of Eligible Schools</th>
<th>Number of Schools in This Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Department of Selangor</td>
<td>SEIP (deaf)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institute-Hears</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Total number of eligible schools, and schools included in the study.

I also included the views of two deaf adults. The purpose of interviewing deaf adults was to provide evidence from deaf adults’ perspective of their lived experiences. Their recruitment is considered as ‘opportunistic sampling’ as I took advantage of unforeseen opportunities when I met them during fieldwork (Ritchie and Lewis 2014). A total of 37 participants involved in this study. The number of these participants is shown in Table 3.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Setting</th>
<th>School Leaders</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Teaching Assistants</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstream teacher</td>
<td>SEIP teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td>Deaf Pupils</td>
<td>Classmates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aman</td>
<td>SEIP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstream classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bijak</td>
<td>SEIP</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstream classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherdk</td>
<td>Mainstream classroom</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Total number of participants

### 3.4 Gaining permission and access

#### 3.4.1 Ethical approval and permission

This study was conducted with approval from the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of Manchester (Ethics Approval No. PGR-9606356-RP). Permission to enter schools has been gained from the Malaysian government (see Appendix F) and Selangor state Department of Education (see Appendix G).
The main gatekeepers were the head teachers in the three schools. After obtaining permission from the Department of Education, I called the school to make an appointment with the school head teacher and provided information about myself and the Participant Information Sheets (PIS) (see Appendix D).

3.4.2 Access to schools and participants

I introduced myself to the school leaders in the three schools and explained the purpose of the study. Participants may feel insecure because my research is funded by the government and also because I study overseas and thus findings will be shared with non-Malaysians (i.e supervisors and examiners). I explained my position before starting the study, and in the PIS forms. Anonymity of response was assured and I explained that it would be unethical to check on their performance but rather try to explore the current education situation.

School leaders welcomed my presence and I was introduced to the teachers. The teachers were cooperative and helped me with the study. I requested the teachers to help me recruit the deaf pupils and their peers. Recruitment through the teachers’ recommendation strategy is considered the most suitable method to enable representative individuals to be included which also reflects the aim of the study (Arcury and Quandt 1999). The tricky part in recruiting the teachers is to find time to conduct the interview, but the majority of the teachers were willing to spend their break time or stay over after school to be interviewed.

The parents were contacted to be part of the study, and to give their informed consent for their child’s participation and children were asked to give their assent to participate. The parents in the study were willing to spend time during the weekend for the interview, which shows that they were glad to speak about their child. Average duration of interview with the parents was almost two hours. Two parents arranged to meet again to enable that all the questions were answered.

The mainstream children in the schools aged seven to fourteen. Pupils aged nine were preferred over younger pupils, since they had more experience and better language skills than younger children. This factor is particularly important for deaf
pupils because deafness can delay language development. I took particular account of the vulnerable person's communication needs and comfort at all times (ESOMAR World Research 1999). I ensured that all interviews with children took place during school time on school premises. The door and windows of the interview room were always open so that the children felt safe. Interviews were done without the presence of staff members in order to ensure that the children could speak/sign freely (Brady and Shaw 2012). After participants agreed to participate, interviews were arranged, based on the participants' preferences. Signed consent forms were obtained. This procedure was conducted for every interview. Recruitment of teachers, parents and children was repeated with a similar procedure.

Participation was entirely voluntary. All participants were made aware that the purpose of the study is to provide insights into their experience of the education of deaf pupils. Their experiences would be used to improve the quality of education received by deaf pupils in the future. Participants were reminded that they are free to withdraw from participating at any stage of the interview process. All participants were fully informed about the purpose, methodology and risk inherent in this study.

I sent the Participant Information Sheet and consent form to participants at least two weeks in advance of the interviews by hand. The potential adverse effects on participants were minimal. I paid particular attention to responses given during the interview. I listened carefully and responded appropriately, where necessary. If at any point I detected any distress or discomfort arising from the topic discussed, I tried to sensitively respond to such distress by ceasing the particular line of inquiry that seemed to be causing distress. I also reminded participants of their rights to withdraw or postpone the interview session if they wish. School staff participants were made aware that they can talk to the school counsellor if they wish and this was mentioned in the Participants Information Sheet.

None of the parents experienced distress when talking about the education of their children. I made it clear that they should contact a family member/close friend to provide support, if required. Parents were also informed that they could contact the Social Welfare Department to receive free counselling services by contacting their
offices in person or by telephone. I made them aware of these services in the Participant Information Sheet. This was the same for deaf adults.

Parents were asked to give their permission and their informed consent for their children to be interviewed, and assent was gained from the pupils. In the event that parents give consent but the child does not agree to participate, the child was not selected. The interview questions for children were simplified and shorter in length than the questions for the rest of the participants. Questions were repeated several times and long pauses allowed for the children to formulate their answers. Interviews with deaf children were conducted within the school environment and lasted a maximum of 30 minutes.

I made it clear that children could opt to withdraw or reschedule the interview at any time and if they experienced distress when talking about their experiences, they can contact the school counsellor. This information was mentioned in the Participant Information Sheet. I met the classmates during school time on school premises. Interviews were conducted in the counselling room during break time to avoid interruptions of their lesson time. At the beginning of the interview, they were assured that they can tell me anything they want and that I would not tell their teachers or their parents.

3.4.3 Data protection

Maintaining confidentiality is paramount in studies involving human participants. The participants received the Participant Information Sheet and consent form at least two weeks in advance of the interviews - this includes a request for permission to do audio/video recording. I assured participants that their responses will be kept confidential and that pseudonyms will be used in discussion with my supervisors and in the thesis.
3.5 Working with the data analysis

3.5.1 Managing the data

All interviews were uploaded, transcribed and analysed in Nvivo. Interviews were digitally transcribed even though it was a time consuming and stressful job. The reward of transcription is when I learnt about my interviewing style and was able to listen to my participants, which informed the early stages of analysis. By transcribing all interviews, I was able to structure the conversations with my participants and facilitate the initial analytic process (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). In Nvivo, audios were able to be played, paused, stopped, fast/slow and skip forward/backward of the audios (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). These functions were very useful to reduce the time taken in transcribing audios. The focus of the transcriptions was to report on the participants’ experiences rather than analysing participants’ use of language in the interview. I did not annotate any pause, “mmh” or frequent repetitions. The transcripts were checked for accuracy by listening back against the audio recording.

The processes were conducted originally based on type of participants. Firstly, the transcripts were read and re-read searching for meanings and possible patterns in the data. During this phase, I made notes and marked ideas within the data before initial codes were generated to get an overview of the data. In order to reduce the copious amounts of data collected into manageable and easily interpretable information, codes were generated from the data. With Nvivo, I assigned codes to words, phrases or paragraphs that were useful to construct meaning for later exploration of the statements. Known as “free nodes” in Nvivo 10, these codes are the building blocks of analysis for this study. During the initial analysis, if two or more codes have similar meaning, they were coded into a topic and got renamed. However, before the rearrangement, combination or elimination took place, codes were constantly referred to the actual data to avoid the loss of context. Within the free nodes, some codes were grouped into “tree nodes” where codes were organized as a catalogue in a hierarchical system. Example of the analysis is presented in the following section.
3.5.2 Themes development

Analysing qualitative data requires constant reflection from the researcher to make sense of the findings (Weston et al. 2001; Creswell 2012). The unit of analysis for this study is at individual and group level. I adopted and adapted Braun and Clarke's (2006) ‘phases of thematic analysis’ as guidance to do my analysis of the interview data. They suggest six phases: Familiarising myself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; writing the report. I analysed the data in Malay and then translated the findings into English selectively, as required, to remain as close as possible to the original words used by the participants (Larkin et al. 2007).

After reading the interview transcripts several times, I coded the data (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2011). Although coding is not the only way to analyse data and has many challenges (Holton 2010), the process of coding has been useful to look for meanings and patterns in data. There are various methods to code data as researchers are bounded to their research nature and goal (Saldaña 2016). In general, data can be coded deductively, inductively or with the combination of these two approaches where applicable. Among these three coding approaches, I used the combination approach. This is based on the viewpoint suggested by Corbin and Strauss (1998) that qualitative researchers are not free from their ‘theoretical sensitivity’ (p. 41); throughout the research activity (including during the process of coding), I brought my understanding of the literature, professional and personal experiences. In addition, as I interact with the data, I improve my understanding about the phenomenon of interest. Thus, a combination approach is the most suitable to meet the aim of my research.

During the coding phase, excerpts were selected for further analysis based on their relevance to the research question – regarding school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion. Steps were repeated with eliminations and combinations of the nodes developing what is known as ‘tree nodes’ (Gibbs 2005). Later, the individual data from seven different types of school stakeholders were triangulated in each setting. The cross case analysis made it possible to find common relationships and differences between different cases. Finally, a
comparative analysis was conducted across cases that allowed for the drawing out of broad themes under which the detailed discussions and analysis was made.

Using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) program such as Nvivo can take qualitative data analysis much further than is possible compared to conducting the analysis manually (Bazeley and Jackson 2013). For example, a passage can have simultaneous codes attached to it which then allow other analytical possibilities (Gibbs 2005). The opportunity to be more open about the interpretation of the interview transcripts enables the researcher to capture the complex phenomena in the data. An example of the process with data from school leaders is presented in the next section.

3.5.3 Example of the thematic analysis process with school leader participants

Responses from all school leader participants were read, reread and coded using Nvivo. Initially, across all school leader participants, 60 codes were recorded in the coding phase. The 60 codes were then read, analysed, renamed and reduced to 38 codes as some codes got rearranged, combined and/or eliminated. Known as “free nodes” in Nvivo 10, these codes are the building blocks of analysis for this study. During the initial analysis, if two or more codes have similar meaning, they were coded into a topic and got renamed. For example, I combined ‘limited funds’ with ‘limited teachers’ and renamed the new code as ‘resources’ – human and material. Some codes were merged and became one code. For example, ‘build friendship’ was merged with ‘social inclusion’ as a code. Some codes were eliminated because they were not the focus of the study.

Before the rearrangement, combination or elimination took place, codes were referred to the actual data to avoid the loss of context. With Nvivo 10, I was able to check how the extracted data was used across the actual data set. Within the free nodes, some codes were grouped into “tree nodes” where codes were organized as a catalogue in a hierarchical system. There are various functions in Nvivo that allow me to delete, merge, rename, rearrange and move the codes. Throughout the process of coding and re-coding, some codes were again rearranged and renamed. After reading the entire set of codes with reference to the extracted data,
the codes were scrutinized by noting interrelationships and connections between
codes. These tree nodes can be presented in graphical form. At this stage, codes
were again rearranged, refined, combined, added and/or eliminated to form
overarching themes. Some of the visual representation of the process using Nvivo
10 is presented in Appendix H. The process is repeated with data from other
participants.

3.5.4 Development of vignettes and pen portraits

The focus of this study is the experiences of deaf individuals. I developed
vignettes to introduce the deaf adults’ experience. This included data from the
interviews, with descriptions about their personal information, and particular
circumstances. The use of vignettes is a suitable method because it allows a
comparison to be made with the experiences of others (Ritchie and Lewis 2014).
In a similar way, I constructed pen portraits of the deaf children to highlight their
characteristics and demographic information prior to discussing their experiences.
The short descriptions about the children also helped to identify personal factors
that have influenced their individual experiences.

3.5.5 Trustworthiness

Confidence in the data generation can be obtained through multiple sources of
information (Flick 2009). Data from different types of school stakeholders were
triangulated in each setting, across the three settings, between the different types
of participants and across the different types of participants. This process is
messy, complex and time consuming (Leech and Onwuegbuzie 2007). Consultation
with two supervisors who have research experience in inclusive
education and deaf education for at least 30 years was an important step to
develop my understanding of the key issues and identify relevant information.

Accuracy and credibility of the findings were checked through ‘member-checking’
procedures (Creswell 2012). The interview transcripts were given to adult
participants in order to confirm that their views are represented truthfully (Kvale
and Brinkmann 2009). Generalization to other contexts than this study may not be

possible but if the findings emerging from this study have similarities with past studies, ‘transferability’ of knowledge may be possible (Flick 2009).

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the methodology aspect of the study to explore the experiences of deaf adults, staff members, parents and children. I argued that the use of the NatSIP framework was helpful to inform the design of this study especially in terms of the development of the interview schedules, due to the lack of suitable frameworks within the literature (NDCS and NatSIP 2011). Interviews were selected as the main data generation method, not only because they allow a deep exploration of the topic of interest, but they also enable opportunities to build rapport and gain trust from participants.

I have also addressed the ethical considerations and permission to conduct the study. It was difficult to identify schools with deaf children, so it was necessary to use purposive and convenience sampling to identify the key actors who could best help me to answer the research question about the experience of inclusive education for deaf children. I have also illustrated the process by which I engaged in analysing the data, using an example of the school leaders. The use of Nvivo throughout the study is indeed a valuable skill that has helped me to manage the copious amount of data. The following chapter presents the research context to set the background of the study.
Chapter 4 Research context

Introduction

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part introduces the Malaysian geographical and cultural context. Then, I discuss the policy and legislation related to the education of deaf children in Malaysia. The third part presents data and the status of special and inclusive education. Finally, I discuss the communication approach for deaf children and analyse the education of deaf children in Malaysia within the existing literature.

4.1 Diversity in Malaysian population and educational context

Malaysia is located in the south east of Asia region and has the third highest of GDP per capita after Singapore and Brunei among other members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (International Monetary Fund 2018). Malaysia is made up of two parts; Peninsular and East Malaysia. Figure 4.1 shows the 13 states and three federal territories known as Kuala Lumpur, Putrajaya and Labuan.

Figure 4.1 Map of Malaysia

Malaysia has a multicultural, multi-religion and multi-language population of 31 million, which includes Malay (55%), Chinese (24%), Bumiputera (12%), Indians (8%), with other minorities (1%) (Department of Statistics Malaysia 2017). There is a socioeconomic gap between the different ethnicities as a result of colonisation (United Nations Development Programme 2016). Despite the adoption of New
Economic Policy since 1970 to reduce the socioeconomic status gap, there is a trend towards rising income inequality, both overall and with inter-ethnic as well as urban-rural income disparities (Shari 2000).

High levels of investment have been sustained in education since independence in 1957, with “6.1% of GDP” being spent on education (United Nations Development Programme, 2016, p. 231). The primary school enrolment rate is 94%, and the primary school dropout rate has been reduced to just 0.2% (Ministry of Education 2014a).

Malaysian public schools are divided into ‘national schools’ (government-funded) and ‘vernacular schools’ (partially government-funded). Malay is the language of instruction in mainstream government-funded schools, which are attended by 77% of children, 20% of whom speak Malay as an additional language. English is taught as a compulsory subject. For Muslim children, they also have to learn Islamic studies which include studying Quran and prayers in Arabic language. Vernacular schools cater to 22% of the school age population where the medium of instruction is either Mandarin or Tamil in addition to Malay and English (Ministry of Education 2016), and the remainder of pupils are privately educated.

The standard primary age children in Malaysia is between 7 to 12 years old (MOE 2016). Children with disabilities including deaf children are allowed to attend primary schools until the maximum of 14 years old to prepare for the national examination in Year 6, known as Ujian Penilaian Tahap Rendah (UPSR) [Primary School Achievement Test]. Although the allowance enables deaf children to get more time, they are likely to be older than other hearing classmates. Taking this situation into account is important as a review of the literature reported that older children have greater fear of negative evaluation by hearing peers than younger children (Batten et al. 2014).

4.2 Government policy and legislation

Malaysian law has developed to improve the support received by pupils with disability. A major national review of policy and provision for pupils with disability
and their families has been taking place and is now gathering momentum. Some of the policies related to the education of Include Education Act 1996 (1998), Persons with Disabilities Act (2008) and Malaysian education blueprint 2013-2025. The last of these is particularly important, as it reflects a new determination on the part of the government as a whole to respond to the national education reform. However, there are several contradictions in the government policies in determining children’s educational provision. The Education Act 1996 (1998) mentioned that:

“... pupils with special needs who are educable are eligible to attend the special education programme except for the following pupils: (a) physically handicapped pupils with the mental ability to learn like normal pupils; and (b) pupils with multiple disabilities or with profound physical handicap or severe mental retardation”. (pg 342)

This statement discriminates against pupils with severe intellectual disabilities to be educated based on the ‘educability’ criterion, at the same time it states that children with physical disabilities do not qualify for any support in the mainstream. The focus on pupils’ ability to cope in mainstream classrooms assumes that there are pupils who are ineducable within the national educational programme. In 2008, the Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act (2008) states that, “[p]ersons with disabilities shall not be excluded from the general education system on the basis of disabilities” (Article 28, p. 24).

In 2010, the Government signed and ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) which specifies that children with disabilities have the right to access “inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live” (United Nations, 2006, Article 24). Inclusive education is defined in the national policy as the “concept of placing Special Educational Needs (SEN) children into mainstream classes to be educated alongside their peers, either with or without additional support and within the present school system” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 28, emphasis added). Interestingly, the Government recognises the limitations of its commitment by acknowledging that:
“This concept of inclusive education might not be in line with the ideal concept based on ‘acceptance, belonging and about providing school settings in which all disadvantaged children can be valued equally and be provided with equal educational opportunities’. (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 28-29)”

Those who have more than one impairment, such as deaf-blind and deaf children with an additional disability, are not eligible to be educated in the national school system, instead they are placed in Community Based Rehabilitation Centres which are the responsibility of the Department of Welfare (Yasin et al. 2012b). There is no information available in the public domain about the number of deaf children with additional disabilities who are cared for in these centres. The WHO Disability Report (2011) argued the importance of the education of all children with disabilities being the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to ensure access to education is provided.

Other provision for pupils with disabilities includes the development of Individual Education Plan (IEP). Although it is not made compulsory in the Malaysian education act such as in the USA, the Ministry of Education issued a policy to its implementation as part of the Malaysian Education Plan in 2010 (Bandu and Jelas 2012). The policy stated that, “in order to ensure the effectiveness of the national curriculum, Individual Education Programme for every student should be prepared” (Ministry of Education 2004a, p.1). Yet, its implementation is limited to children with learning disabilities and the focus is in relation to providing an alternative curriculum than the national curriculum (Mislan et al. 2009). However, teachers of deaf children perceived that Inclusive Education Programme is not for deaf children because they use the national curriculum (Khairuddin 2014).

4.3 Data on deaf learners in Malaysia

The identification of pupils with disabilities includes formal diagnosis by professional medical teams (Education Act 1996 1998). The Malaysian Ministry of Health (2014) has put forward definitions of the degree of hearing loss. The terms it uses have come into common usage in audiology to describe normal, mild, moderate, severe and profound hearing loss, intending the words to describe gradual change from one to the other. They are described as in Table 4.1.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of hearing loss</th>
<th>Hearing level in decibel (dB)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Normal</td>
<td>0 – 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild</td>
<td>21 – 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>46 – 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severe</td>
<td>71 – 90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profound</td>
<td>91 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Definitions of the degree of hearing loss by the Ministry of Health

Although the ministry of health recognises the different degrees of hearing loss, there is no differentiation made in the education provision. Children with all types of hearing loss from mild to profound, a hearing loss in one ear or a temporary hearing loss such as glue ear are regarded as being deaf in Malaysia (Bari and Yasin 2012).

Primary prevention of hearing loss through immunization, health education, and improved maternal and child health services have been the government priority. Early screening such as high-risk newborn and graduates of neonatal intensive care units are targeted for screening before or shortly after hospital discharge is available even before 2000s (Halim et al. 2017). Infants are recognised as being ‘at risk’ if there is a family history of permanent childhood hearing loss or due to health related-factors such as diseases. The new-born hearing screening in public healthcare system was introduced in 2001 but only widely implemented in 2009 which has reduced the age of confirmation of deafness to be by the age of one month (Ministry of Health 2015). Limited number of trained personnel in managing speech-language and hearing problems coupled with the lack of neonatal hearing screening programmes resulted in late detection of hearing loss in children (van Dort 2005). This provision was reported to be limited among the health-related professionals due to limited public awareness and attitudes towards routine and systematic hearing screening for children (Halim et al. 2017). Traditional approach to healing and superstitious beliefs and customs are also among the reasons for limited awareness about childhood disabilities (Toran et al. 2011; Sofia 2014). Deafness might be undetected until at later age when the language and communication skills gap with other children is more obvious. The children selected to be part of this study are among these children since they all born between 2003 and 2007.
The criteria for paediatric amplification in Malaysia are in accordance with WHO definition of disabling hearing impairment:

“Disabling hearing impairment in children under the age of 15 years should be defined as a permanent unaided hearing threshold level for the better ear of 31 dB or greater; for this purpose the “hearing threshold level” is to be taken as the better ear average hearing threshold level for the four frequencies 0.5, 1, 2 and 4 kHz”. (WHO, 2009)

Decisions about amplification are made according to the Ministry of Health (2012) guidelines, based on child’s audiological data, speech and language development, home and educational environment, family preference and existence of other medical condition or special needs. People with disabilities including deafness are encouraged to register with the Department of Welfare. The registration enables the person to receive government support such as a monthly allowance (Persons with Disabilities Act 2008).

There are approximately 3000 deaf learners in three officially recognised types of educational settings within the formal special education system in Malaysia (Special Education Division 2013a):

- Special schools (26 altogether) are mostly residential and attended by approximately 40% of deaf children. There are also twelve (12) privately owned special schools catering to 600 pupils with a range of disabilities (Ministry of Education 2016);
- The Special Education Integrated Programme (SEIP) (Program Pendidikan Khas Integrasi) was first introduced in 1963. It is now catering to approximately 60% of deaf children in ‘units’ attached to 23% of government-funded primary schools (N = 1345);
- The Inclusive Education Programme (Program Pendidikan Inklusif) officially registers children who are included in mainstream classrooms.

The Inclusive Education Programme was established following the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994), and through the Education Act 1996 (1998). It caters to 6% of learners with disabilities and approximately 1% of deaf children. Children are considered to be ‘fully inclusive’ if they attend a mainstream school full-time; and ‘partially inclusive’ if they spend some of their time in a mainstream classroom and the rest of the time in the SEIP (Special Education Division 2013b, p.4). Children with disabilities are required to pass school-based assessments before
they can be accepted into the Inclusive Education Programme (Special Education Division 2013b). The inclusion of children with disabilities in their local schools has been described as being “unconscious” in Malaysia (Lee & Low, 2013, p. 2) as they are not attached to either the SEIP or Inclusive Education Programme. The highly pressured and competitive examination-oriented mainstream education system is considered unsuitable for children regarded as having ‘low academic ability’ (Jelas and Ali 2012).

The Government has set the ambitious target of ensuring that 75% of children with disabilities, including deaf children, will be educated in mainstream classrooms by 2025 (Ministry of Education 2013a). This is part of a wider agenda to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities. Although this demonstrates the Government’s commitment to international rights-based educational agendas, it is an ambitious target in the case of deaf children given the need to attend to individual language learning needs, including sign language, in the context of considerable linguistic and cultural diversity. In contrast to these figures, the government is also committed to retaining special schools as part of a broad spectrum of provision and in order to enable parents to choose a special school placement for their child if that is their considered opinion.

Similar to other international reports that females with disabilities are at risk of being excluded from education (UNESCO 2002; 2010; 2017), it was also reported that there are less female deaf children than male deaf children enrolled in primary as well as secondary Malaysian schools (Special Education Division 2013a). It is important to note that, this statistic only includes those in special school and SEIP settings. Deaf children in mainstream schools are not formally registered so it is currently unknown if there are more or less unidentified female deaf children enrolled in schools. Reflecting from a study conducted on disabled women Malaysians’ experiences (Sofia 2014), there are beliefs carried over from traditional societies that are still strong about disability, women and shyness. It could be argued that female deaf children will continue to be at risk of not being identified – and therefore not receiving appropriate support, if the issue is not tackled.
4.4 Communication approach for deaf learners

The Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act promoted the rights of access for persons with disabilities to public facilities, housing, transport and employment including education. Article 28 (3c) stipulated:

“to ensure that the education for people and especially children who are blind, deaf or deaf-blind is provided in the language, method and manner that is most suitable for each individual, and in environments that maximise their academic and social development”. (Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development 2008, pg 25)

Malaysian Sign Language (MSL) is recognised by the Government as the official language of Deaf people in the Malaysian Persons with Disabilities Act (2008). The language of instruction for deaf children is referred to as Total Communication, which is a combination of communication strategies, including the Hand Code of Malay, speech, finger spelling, writing and lip reading (Tee 1990). Teachers of the deaf are trained to teach using ‘Hand Code of Malay’ (Bahasa Melayu Kod Tangan) alongside speech. This is an approach designed to support spoken Malay, and is not a language in its own right. MSL is not taught in schools in Malaysia (Yasin et al. 2017), neither is Sign Bilingualism used.

Support for learning MSL is only provided by non-governmental organizations, such as the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf, and training for interpreters is also limited (Omar 2009). Different NGO’s for Deaf communities in different states have different versions of sign language including Penang Sign Language and Selangor Sign Language (Yusoff 2014a). Interestingly, available resources for learning sign language within the Malaysian market as reported by Ow et al. (2007) also include other sign language such as American Sign Language and British Sign Language. These sign language dictionaries assume that sign language learning is restricted to memorisation of words in sign language and therefore overlook the complex structure of the sign language (Yusoff 2014a).

Teaching instruction using other modes of communication, such as cued speech, is only provided in a private school administered by the National Deaf Association of Malaysia with little evidence of success (Yasin et al. 2013). The communication
practices in Malaysian schools are therefore not in line with the WFD recommendation that:

"Quality education in the national sign language(s) and the national written language(s) is one of [the] key factors for fulfilling the education and broader human rights of deaf children and adult deaf learners (World Federation of the Deaf, 2016, p. 3)".

Due to advances in the use of audiological technology in Malaysia, parents are more likely to have contact with medical professionals than with educationalists before their children start school (UNICEF Malaysia 2014). Therefore, doctors and audiologists have the most direct influence on deaf children’s mode of communication as they are involved in the initial diagnosis and the fitting of hearing aids. Cochlear implants have been provided to more than 600 severely and profoundly deaf children by the Ministry of Health since hospitals began offering this service in 1995 (Goh, Fadzilah, Abdullah, Othman, & Umat, 2017; Yusoff, Umat, & Mukari, 2017). To date, this service has been made available in six zones; North, Central, South, East including Sabah and Sarawak zone (Ministry of Health 2017). The introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening in 2001 has further strengthened this service (Ministry of Health 2015).

Although subsidies are available from the Government, approval of these subsidies can take up to two years and so parents often have to cover the cost of the technology and its maintenance. Findings from Goh et al. (2018) reported that more than half of the recipients of cochlear implant are Chinese. The audiological support services such as speech therapy are also mainly available in urban areas (Ministry of Health 2012). This division between different ethnicities and areas reflect the complexity of providing support that is inclusive and equitable.

Since the introduction of audiological support in the 1960s in Malaysia, services to support children’s audiological and speech needs have improved greatly (van Dort 2005). With these advances, an increasing number of deaf pupils have started to develop spoken language, rather than only communicating using sign language. As a result, some deaf pupils were reported to be educated in regular school with their hearing peers (Mukari et al. 2007). The shift to educating deaf pupils within their community rather than in residential schools is also in line with the
government campaign to move towards an inclusive education system (Ministry of Education 2013a). Being a signatory to the Salamanca Statement, Malaysia has committed itself to the development of an inclusive education system but continues to be defined narrowly in the policy, which has affected its implementation.

Currently there are no specialist teachers available to support deaf children outside of the established special education services. Since there is no sign language support provided in mainstream schools, being able to speak is an essential prerequisite for being able to participate on an equal basis in the examination-oriented mainstream schools of Malaysia. At the same time, the high cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants limits the number of children who can benefit from this technology since not all parents can afford this. Equally important to consider is the tropical climate of Malaysia as it relates to the management of hearing technologies and background noise. The average temperature of Selangor is 32°C (between 27°C to 37°C). Normally, it is warmer from 11.00 am to 5.30 pm. The use of fans and air-conditioners are common in Malaysia, and these create additional background noise in classrooms. The humidity level is high around 70% throughout the year which mean that hearing aids/tubing need regular cleaning and drying. Daily maintenance of the hearing technologies is required if it is to be used reliably and appropriately.

Little research has been carried out to investigate the current status of the education of deaf pupils in Malaysia. Educating deaf pupils in separated settings has been a tradition, to enable communication through sign language (Yusoff 2014a). Due to the low incidence of deafness, there are a limited number of mainstream schools that can offer SEIP places to deaf children – the majority are reserved for children with learning difficulties. Previous research (Mukari et al. 2007; Yasin et al. 2012a) reported that deaf children have low academic attainment not only because they were not as competent as their peers in terms of language and communication development when they started school, but also because the designated curriculum, teaching approach and assessment were not modified appropriately to assist deaf pupils to develop their full potential.
Summary

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of the Malaysian context which has a diverse population and a multilingual society. It also has a long history of colonisation which has created a disparity of wealth between races. Despite this, the government is committed to improving the education of all children including children with disabilities. I have argued that the Malaysian educational policy has narrowed the implementation of its inclusive education policy to only include children who are considered educable, while others are only partially included. This is due to a limited understanding of the complexity of inclusive education and how to support deaf children. Although support for deaf children to develop spoken language has increased, this is only available to deaf children in urban areas and those who can afford hearing devices. At the same time, there are contradictory approaches to sign language learning in school and the rights of deaf individuals within the existing policy. The fact that there is a lack of research on the practice of inclusion highlights the importance of this study. The following four chapters discuss the experiences of two deaf adults and school stakeholders against this background of the context.
Chapter 5  Perspectives of ‘successful’ deaf/Deaf adults

Introduction

In this chapter, I present the experiences of two ‘successful’ deaf adults. The aim is to explore their educational experiences, from primary school through to university in order to illuminate some of the complexities of inclusion, and the different possible trajectories of deaf learners in Malaysia.

In reality, deaf children of today are the citizens of tomorrow with all the rights and responsibilities to contribute to the ‘people and planet’ (UNESCO 2016a). As promoted by the SDG4, education includes holistic and life-long learning. The deaf adults’ lived experiences highlight the factors that help them to perceive a ‘successful’ adult life.

In the first part of this chapter I present short vignettes of their educational experience which include information about their background and some of their perceptions about these experiences. The chapter is divided into three stages of life; identification and intervention experiences, primary and secondary school experiences and post-school experiences. The second part of the chapter discusses Yuyu’s and Zack’s educational and career trajectories and these are then related to current policy debates about the education of deaf children in Malaysia and internationally.

Yuyu is in her early-30s. I first met her in 2008 when she was a Masters student in the same university where I was doing my teacher training. This enabled me to invite her to participate in this study. I met Zack fortuitously at an equestrian centre in Selangor where he works. Zack is in his early 20s and he wears hearing aids. It became clear at that time for me to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities (Ritchie and Lewis 2014) so I invited him to participate in this study and he agreed.

Yuyu and Zack are profoundly deaf but use different communication modes. Yuyu communicates primarily using MSL, so I used a mixture of signed and written
Malay and spoken English with Yuyu. Zack is ‘oral’ – and communicates entirely in spoken Malay language, so the interview took place in Malay.

5.1 Identification, education and adult life

In this first section, I reflect on the deaf adults’ identification and intervention experiences, primary and secondary school experiences and post-school experiences. Understanding their early childhood experiences sheds light on the influence of children’s early language and communication environment to the individual’s inclusion. Analysis of their school and post-school experiences represent some of the complexities of what it means for deaf individuals to be included, and this will be further explored in the second part of this chapter. As discussed in Chapter 3, I present the data from deaf adults in the form of vignettes to allow comparison to be made with the experiences of others (Ritchie and Lewis 2014).

5.1.1 Identification and intervention experiences

Yuyu was born in 1986 and Zack in 1993 – before the establishment of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Cochlear Implant centre in 1995 and long before the introduction of the New-Born Hearing Screening program in 2001. They both have hearing parents who have limited knowledge and experience of deafness but were able to afford speech therapy and early amplification.

When Yuyu was born, she was suspected deaf because her brother, who is three years old at that time, had just been identified as being deaf due to his lack of response to sound. Yuyu said she was fitted with hearing aids when she was about three. Yuyu’s parents speak Mandarin, Malay and English. She had speech therapy but stopped wearing the hearing aids when she was ten because she “didn’t find them helpful”. Yuyu considers her first language is Malay, as she uses written Malay to communicate with those who don’t know MSL. She communicates in MSL with Deaf people, although she uses some speech when
communicating with her mother who has learnt to use Hand Code of Malay and her father uses home signs for individual words such as “bath, study, sleep, and eat”.

Although Yuyu was suspected of being deaf when she was born, her deafness was probably identified at a later age due to the lack of newborn hearing screening program. The fact that Yuyu was only fitted with hearing aids at the age of three demonstrates the fact that intervention for deaf children is delayed due to late identification. Although this was 30 years ago, some children are still identified late. It is also unknown if she had regular speech training sufficient to help her spoken language development, since there were only a handful of speech therapists in Malaysia before the year of 2000 (van Dort 2005). It appears that having supportive parents and a deaf older brother who attended SEIP have helped Yuyu to have early exposure to Hand Code of Malay and later to Malaysian Sign Language.

Zack’s identification was prompted by his mother’s attentiveness to his delayed speech development when he was four. His deafness was confirmed at a private paediatric clinic. Following the identification, he was fitted with hearing aids that were paid for by his parents and attended speech therapy sessions in the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Hospital speech department:

At the beginning, Zack didn’t like to wear his hearing aids but his parents bought him a present when he wore the hearing aids so he used to wear them consistently. Zack’s mother helped him to learn to speak Malay. He says, “I learned new words and practiced to say the words every night with my mother”. His family also spoke slowly and clearly as advised by his speech therapist. When he started speaking, he was teased by his older siblings for his unclear speech so he spent most of his time in his room where he learned to love reading books with his mother. Regular maintenance of his hearing aids also helped to ensure that they work all the time.
His parents’ relative wealth and their dedicated support helped Zack to make good use of and maintain his hearing aids, and to learn to speak. As the only deaf child in the family, Zack realised he was different from other siblings and therefore felt he was left-out. The fact that he spent more time reading with his mother who could also provide a range of spoken language models, provided opportunities for Zack to focus on improving his literacy skills.

Since Yuyu’s parents have two deaf children, they have developed awareness of the importance of providing visual cues when communicating, such as using home signs so Yuyu can develop sign language. Similarly, amplification and speech therapy have helped Zack to acquire spoken language.

5.1.2 Primary and secondary school experiences

Yuyu and Zack were both educated in government-funded schools in Selangor State, but have had different experiences of the education system, largely due to the modes of communication used in the schools they attended. Note that although the national policy on inclusive education is introduced in 1996, both adults are educated mainly prior to the recent wide implementation of national policy on inclusive education.

Similar to her deaf brother, Yuyu was educated almost entirely within the separate educational setting of the SEIP at primary and secondary level from 1991 onwards:

*The teachers use Hand Code of Malay and her peers are mainly deaf children. She practices her Hand Code of Malay with her family at home. They also helped her with her homework and said that her mother always ensures the teachers use the national curriculum with her. When she was in upper form of secondary school in 2000, she was included in the mainstream classroom to prepare for the Malaysian Certificate of Education. She had to move to a mainstream school without SEIP in 2001 because the*
Having supportive parents, a deaf older brother and being able to complete the majority of her education with other deaf children, have helped Yuyu to become an accomplished user of Hand Code of Malay, and prepared her with literacy skills. Being able to hear spoken language at an early age probably helped her to establish proficient sign language skills and fully participate in the education system (Leigh and Johnston 2004). Although Yuyu was not educated in a special school, the SEIP programme has effectively created small special schools within mainstream schools, where deaf children have full-time specialists support. These are spaces where Deaf culture can thrive. However, the organisation of deaf children into small special ‘units’ means that schools are rarely able to provide a wide range of subjects.

Zack attended the local schools with his siblings following a speech therapist’s recommendation.

Zack says that it was difficult to make friends, and, “School was challenging”. He went to four different primary schools because he was teased by his classmates. The teachers spoke too quickly which made it difficult for him to hear, and so he learned to focus on the teachers’ lips. His parents went over his schoolwork with him in the evenings, and his secondary school teachers gave him extra tuition on a voluntary basis in break times. He passed the Malaysian Certificate of Education which enabled him to continue to do a diploma and then a bachelor degree.

Despite not having support from teachers who specialised in deafness, the dedicated support of Zack’s parents and his teachers’ extra tuition helped Zack to maintain his hearing aids, learn to speak, and achieve academically in the exam-focused education system. Being able to fully develop his spoken language has enabled him to communicate with teachers and other children and therefore be more independent at later age.
The educational possibilities available to Yuyu’s and Zack’s parents are largely an accident of geography. Matters beyond the school gates such as the availability of a school bus and public transportation are important issues that influence parents’ decisions. In urban and highly populated areas, there are also more options for parents to decide. Yuyu’s parents had a choice to enrol her in specialist setting because the SEIP happened to be near their home. Zack’s parents were able to enrol him in several different schools to help Zack become familiar with a place where he is happy and confident. Attending a school that is appropriate to their needs have helped both individuals to develop their language and communication skills. Yuyu communicating with sign and written language and Zack speaking fluently have helped them to continue to tertiary education.

5.1.3 Post-school and adult life

Decisions made in Yuyu’s and Zack’s early years and school experiences were largely dependent on their parents’ understanding of inclusion. I reflect on Yuyu’s and Zack’s adult life experiences in order to understand their own perception of inclusion beyond educational placement. Both of them achieved high academic performance upon completing secondary school, which enabled them to continue to tertiary education and enter working life where they socialise with a wider range of society.

Yuyu wanted to become a teacher so she did her undergraduate degree in Special Education. During the four-year undergraduate course, she only had occasional support from a sign language interpreter due to the university’s budget restrictions and the interpreter’s limited knowledge of her subjects. Since she specialised in deafness, she had course mates and lecturers who know Hand Code of Malay. She relies on written communication with people who do not know sign language. After graduating, Yuyu became a volunteer at a Deaf Association centre in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, where she socialises with other Deaf people. She has been teaching deaf children in an SEIP for about 8 years.
Yuyu’s deafness is a central part of her identity, and she considers herself to be a member of a linguistic minority which has its own culture and mode of communication (McIlroy and Storbeck 2011). Being able to volunteer at the Deaf Association centre and teach deaf children in the SEIP allow her to continue to be within the Deaf community. Her experience also highlights the importance of gaining literacy skills as they have profound and lasting repercussions for the lives of deaf individuals (Mayer and Akamatsu 2003). She is able to communicate with a wider range of people who do not know sign language, through writing.

For Zack, he considers his adult life is similar to other people. After school, he completed a diploma and is currently an undergraduate student of Animal Science at a prestigious university in Malaysia.

Attending university is the first time Zack lived away from his family so he learned to be independent. He has supportive course mates who do not see his deafness as a weakness. “Now”, he says, “I have made a lot of friends”. At the university, he met people from all sorts of backgrounds and social status. They studied together and taught him to be independent. From the experiences, Zack has gained confidence that he was able to tell people to speak slowly and take turns in a group discussion when he cannot hear well. He wanted to form an advocacy group to educate people about what it’s like to be deaf and wear hearing aids.

5.2 Dimensions of inclusion and exclusion

The contrasting experiences of these ‘successful’ deaf adults highlight some of the disputes and contradictions in the practice, policy and discourse of inclusion. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) of the findings yielded themes which can be understood from the perspective of ‘dimensions of inclusion’ including location, curriculum, language and communication, acoustics, amplification, friendship and socialisation which are all inter-related. I argue here that an
experience of one dimension of inclusion cannot be understood in isolation from the others.

In terms of inclusion within the family dimension, Yuyu’s parents were willing to learn Hand Code of Malay which helped Yuyu to be included within the family and maintain the child-parent and siblings relationships, although this does not include extended family members. Late identification contributes to Zack’s initial exclusion from his family due to the lack of awareness of his deafness. Being able to speak has enabled him to communicate with a wider range of society. Having other hearing siblings was recognised to be helpful for deaf children to learn to speak but having a deaf sibling was regarded to be important for the child’s self-esteem (Woolfe and Smith 2001).

Although audiological devices enable deaf individuals to have access to sound and speech, factors such as the efficiency of the device and its audiological management influence the actual access to sound. It is equally important to manage the listening environment. In a noisy situation, Zack will struggle to hear clearly.

Regular exposure to an accessible language, and meaningful interactions with others who are capable users of Hand Code of Malay in SEIP helped Yuyu to be able to communicate and participate in the lessons. Indeed, Article 21 of the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO 1994) recognises that the particular communication needs of deaf learners can sometimes justify separate educational provision. In a similar way, being included in mainstream classrooms with hearing children helps Zack to learn and practice speaking. He has lots of good language models which have helped him to improve his language competency, although this did not include having any deaf peers.

The teaching of full curriculum has prepared Yuyu and Zack with secondary and tertiary educational success. It is unlikely that both individuals would have been able to study at university if they had only been exposed to the restricted curriculum. The opportunity to interact with people from diverse backgrounds has developed their confidence.
Summary

This chapter has presented two deaf adults’ childhood experiences, school experiences and adult life experiences. I have also reflected on the complexity of inclusion in the second part of the chapter. Although the deaf adults are being educated prior to the wide emphasis on the implementation of the national policy on inclusive education, they experienced different level of family, language, acoustic, curricular and social inclusion. Indeed, both of them have different background, profile and circumstances yet their inclusion is multi-layered and inter-related. Factors such as advanced audiological technology, policy changes and parents’ advocacy have an influence on how school stakeholders in recent Malaysian educational setting experience the inclusion of deaf children. The following three chapters move one to discuss the children’s, teachers’ and parents' experiences against this complex nature of inclusion and deafness.
Chapter 6 Perspectives and experiences of deaf children and their classmates

Introduction

This chapter explores the children’s experiences of their education, which is indeed the focal point of this research. I begin by presenting the approximate location of the school from the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, where the institute-HEARS cochlear implant centre is located. Then, I describe the context of the three schools that the children attended known as Aman, Bijak and Cherdik School. Information about the schools was drawn from interviews with the school staff members, my observations, my impressions, interpretations and personal reflections in a research journal while conducting the research.

In the second part of the chapter, I move on to introduce the deaf children and their classmates in the form of pen portraits. The children were considered by teachers that could help me to understand the children's experiences in school even though it proved to be much more difficult to gain rich data from them. I interviewed the children using both speech and sign, entirely in Malay with the exception of Indian children who also used English. Then, I discuss the findings that emerged from the children’s data under these three subheadings; children’s communication in school, friendship between the children and learning environment in the classroom.

6.1 School contexts

The schools are located in Selangor state – the most developed state in Malaysia in which the capital city is located (See Figure 6.1). Selangor occupies some 125,000 sq.km and has 12 districts, each run by its respective councils. The population of the state is 6.39 million, more than 20% of the total Malaysian population, and is one of the most densely populated states.

All of the participants in the three primary schools were diverse in terms of their socio-economic composition. The purpose of this section is to reflect upon the
contextual details such as class size, school structure, temperature and light of the classrooms in the school as part of the analysis of the research site. Since there were about 1600-2500 children and 80-100 teachers in the three schools, half of them attend morning sessions from 7.30 am to 1 pm, and the other half attend the afternoon/evening sessions which begin at 1 pm and finish at 6.30 pm.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 6.1 Approximate location of the schools from Kuala Lumpur

6.1.1 Aman School

School Aman is about 40 kilometres (25 miles) to the north of Kuala Lumpur. The school can be reached by a major motorway in 40 minutes. During peak hours it can take up to two hours.

A colourful open space on the ground floor of the front block was used for the school assembly. The walls and brick pillars were painted with decorations, times tables and moral values with explanations. A stage, some ceiling fans and a PA system were installed in this area.

This school has 1836 children and 80 teachers who work split shifts. The school headmaster has four deputies who hold posts related to academic, student affairs
and co-curriculum¹ responsibilities including the SEIP coordinator. Figure 6.2 below illustrates the hierarchy of the school administration team. Within this organisation, any school decisions are made at the school level, but SEIP Coordinator governs most decisions in the SEIP unit. In addition to the academic curriculum, the school also delivers after-school sports and clubs activities which take place on Wednesday evenings for two hours. Sports include cricket, netball and football and the clubs include Scouts, Girl Guides and Red Crescent. Children in the SEIP were grouped together and usually, the SEIP teachers decide the activities. There is no playground in this school. Children play around the canteen and other open spaces.

![Organogram of Aman School Leaders](image)

Figure 6.2 Organogram of Aman School Leaders

At the entrance to the SEIP unit was a mural as shown in Image 6.1. There are three logos used in the mural. At the top is the school logo. The logos on the left and right indicate that the school caters for children with disability and hearing impairment.

![Image 6.1 Mural on the wall of SEIP classrooms in Aman School, saying “Special Education Integration Program, Learning Disability, Hearing Impairment”](image)

¹ Co-curriculum/co-curricular is the term used for activities in addition to the academic curriculum.
Interestingly, the use of the logo differs from its use in foreign country such the UK, for example the logo on the right is used to represent an induction loop system. However, there is no induction loop system installed in any of the classrooms in the school. In this sense, the meaning of the logo has its own particular meaning in the school system; the ear represents deaf children are educated in this school.

There were about 80 children in the SEIP, but only 7 of them were deaf children. All SEIP children attended the morning session. There were three staff members’ rooms in the school; one big room located near the school administration office was for all the mainstream teachers; one room was for SEIP teachers of children with learning disabilities located on the ground floor near the classrooms; and SEIP teachers who teach deaf children had their own staff room. The separation of the teachers means that there are no informal opportunities for teachers to collaborate, get to know each other, discuss the children, socialise, learn from each other and share information.

A new block of building was situated behind the school canteen, at ground level to cater for the increasing number of children in the SEIP unit. The text in front of this block says “Hearing impairment”. This means that the deaf children are physically separated from the majority of the children with learning disabilities, except for five Year 6 children as their class is located within this new block. The block was divided into four classrooms but the room dividers were not soundproofed. It is possible to hear children and teachers speaking clearly in the classrooms next door. The SEIP classrooms were air-conditioned, and all children take off their shoes to enter the class. The image of the block is presented in Image 6.2 and Table 6.1 below.
Children in the SEIP started their break 30 minutes earlier than the mainstream children to make it possible for everyone to eat their snacks in the canteen. Lesson break was indicated by an electric bell but there was no accommodation made for the deaf children to know if the bell is ringing. All SEIP children sat together and received free packed-breakfast during the break as part of the services provided by the school and included in the school budget. The free packed-breakfasts were also provided to mainstream pupils who were in the ‘low family income’ register. The canteen was busy and noisy when the SEIP children rushed to get a seat so some deaf children eat near the SEIP-deaf unit veranda.

Every Monday, the school had a formal assembly from 7.15 am to 7.55 am when all 900 morning session’s children sat on the ground, including the deaf children and those with learning disabilities. Three songs were sung at the opening of the assembly; the national and state anthems and a school song – accompanied by recorded music played through the PA system. There was no loop amplifier system that links the sound to the deaf children’s hearing aids so one of SEIP
Teachers stood next to the deaf children to hint that music had started. She led the signing of the songs’ lyric followed by the deaf children. Other pupils and teachers stood still to show respect to the songs they sang. The SEIP teacher also interpreted the speeches into sign language during the assembly.

6.1.2 Bijak School

School Bijak was located in outskirts of a town. The area was highly populated with most people living in blocks of flats as in Image 6.3 below.

Image 6.3 Blocks of flats in Bijak School area

School Bijak was built in 2002 by the government and became fully operational in 2003 to support the large number of children at that time. The school building had a modern design as shown in Image 6.4, and consisted of 36 classrooms and other facilities such as toilets, library, computer room, and science laboratories. The assembly was held in the middle of the school where there was a stage, and all children sat on the ground. There was also no induction loop system in this school to help deaf children with hearing aids to hear more clearly from the PA system so a teacher of the deaf helped to communicate the speeches to the deaf children.
Almost 1600 children attended School Bijak with 80 teachers. About a thousand children and 50 teachers attend the morning session. A total of 75 children were in the SEIP, but only eight of them were deaf children as the rest were categorised as having learning disabilities, including Down syndrome and autism. The school had a similar governance structure as School Aman where the head teacher had four school deputies.

There were some sign language murals along the stairs down to the underground level where the SEIP unit was located. The sign pictures included alphabets, numbers and greetings such as ‘hello’ and ‘how are you’ in Malay. The whole area had rubber flooring, and everyone was required to take off their shoes before entering the unit. The area was beautifully decorated with paper flowers and information. Half-window curtains were fitted in the classroom so there was good ventilation, and white fluorescent lights lit up the unit. There was a mini library consisting of shelves of books and children’s tables and chairs. There were several copies of sign language books including Malaysian Sign Language, American Sign Language and Sign Supported English books.
6.1.3 Cherdik School

School Cherdik is located 19 km (12 miles) to the south of Kuala Lumpur and it only takes 20 minutes to reach the city via motorways. With the high density of residents in the area, the school had around 2500 children and 97 teachers. It was governed by the head teacher and three head teacher deputies (academic, co-curriculum and student affairs deputy). This school also has a morning and an afternoon session. More than a thousand children in Year 1, 2 and 4 attended the afternoon session including a deaf child called Caliph, who was a participant in this study. The session started at 1.10 pm and finished at 6.30 pm with a 20-minute break at 3.00 pm or 3.30 pm. School Cherdik has 4 blocks of three-storey buildings. The front block of the school is shown in Image 6.5 below.
The school had a weekly formal assembly in an open space situated in the middle of the school. The classrooms have two doors, a whiteboard, ceiling fans and several panels of soft board and glass windows such as in Image 6.6 below.

![Image 6.6 Example of a classroom in Cherdik School](image)

### 6.2 Deaf children and their classmates in this study

Now I will introduce the children in this study. The children have been given pseudonyms which match the first letter of their school pseudonyms: Aman, Bijak and Cherdik. Four children in Aman and Bijak School and two children in Cherdik School participated in this study. Information about the deaf children’s educational setting and their classmates is presented in Table 6.3 below.
Table 6.3 The deaf children participants and their classmates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Educational setting</th>
<th>Deaf children</th>
<th>Classmate in mainstream classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aman School</td>
<td>SEIP (deaf)</td>
<td>Aisyah</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEIP (LD) and mainstream</td>
<td>Akwan</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEIP (LD) and mainstream</td>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Anita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bijak School</td>
<td>SEIP and mainstream</td>
<td>Badrul</td>
<td>Budin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SEIP</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherdik School</td>
<td>Mainstream</td>
<td>Caliph</td>
<td>Chad</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deaf children have not been interviewed in research projects in Malaysia before and this is the first time it is conducted. Although I participated in school activities for two to three weeks to build rapport prior to conducting the interviews, the children were sometimes shy, and only spoke (or signed) in very short phrases during the interviews. Questions were repeated several times and long pauses allowed for the children to formulate their answers.

I used data from the children, their teachers and the deaf children’s parents and fieldwork notes to develop pen portraits to introduce the child participants. The pen portraits illustrate the children’s personal information such as their age, gender and family background. The age of the children ranges from 9-13 years old. Six participants were boys, and four were girls. Eight children participants were Malay and two were Indians. I have also included some information about the children’s deafness, such as the age of identification and experiences with hearing aids. Following the pen portraits, I present the emerging themes across the children’s data.

Six of the seven deaf children were registered in the Special Education Integration Programme in Aman and Bijak School. Each SEIP caters to approximately 60 to
80 pupils with learning disabilities, with just seven deaf children in Aman, and eight deaf children in Bijak. Since the deaf children are educated in a separate classroom within the SEIP, which has its own administrative structures, separate from the mainstream school, they spend most of their time in this ‘gated community’ with their teachers. They occasionally participated in the weekly formal school assembly and other activities in the main school, but the SEIP also organised its own separate activities, such as Sports Day. It is common in Malaysia for deaf children to be placed in an SEIP without a trained teacher of the deaf, and this was the case in Aman. Although the teachers in Aman have had no formal training on how to teach deaf children, they have had more than ten years’ experience of teaching deaf pupils, have learned to sign ‘on the job’, and have studied sign vocabulary from books in their own time.

In the next section, I present the pen portraits of Aisyah, Akwan and Ben who are educated full-time in the SEIP unit. Their pen portraits also describe their experience at home.

**Aisyah**

Aisyah is a 13-year-old Malay girl. She has five siblings – four brothers and one sister, she is the youngest. Two of her brothers and her sister were studying at local university, and they lived away from home. Her father was rarely at home because of work. She was shy when meeting new people, but she was friendly with the people she knows. Every evening, she liked to play with the computer because she had no friends to play with.

**Akwan**

Akwan is a nine-year-old Malay boy, and he is the only deaf child in this research who has a deaf sibling. Akwan also signs with his deaf brother when he comes home from his boarding school for holidays, but speaks with his other family members. When Akwan was born, he passed the routine hearing assessment for children on the at risk register. He was identified as deaf at the age of three and a half after his parents realised that he could only say a few words. He was fitted with hearing aids when he was about four years old. Akwan then attended speech
therapy in a private hospital in Kuala Lumpur once a week. He still attends the sessions which are now at least once a month.

**Ben**

Ben is a Malay boy aged 12. Ben and his twin brother were born at 28 weeks of pregnancy, and he only weighed 1.3 kg (2.86 lbs). He had severe jaundice soon after he was born and only returned home after 2.5 months old. At the age of 2, he was identified to have a severe and profoundly hearing loss in each ear. He is also considered small compared to his peers. Ben speaks with his family even though his speech is not very clear. At 4 years old, his parents bought high quality hearing aids and soon after that Ben started to speak. Ben also attended speech therapy sessions three times per week. His parents are well-educated and can afford to pay for the high quality hearing aids themselves. When the hearing aids need to be serviced, Ben is keen to get them back as soon as possible.

Three deaf children also attended mainstream classroom through the Inclusive Education Programme. They are known as Anjali, Bella and Badrul. These children spend most of their time in the SEIP but attend the mainstream classroom for core subjects such as Malay, English and Science – approximately one to two hours per day.

**Anjali**

Anjali is a thirteen-year-old Indian-Malaysian girl learning in a Year 6 class. When Anjali was born, she was ill and stayed at the hospital until she was almost two months old. At the age of four, the parents got her a check-up because she was not behaving normally like her sister and other cousins. She was diagnosed as having hyperactivity disorder and attended occupational therapies. Her deafness was identified at the age of five after she complained to her parents that she could not hear when using the telephone. She was fitted with hearing aids at the age of 6. She loves the hearing aids because they help her to hear and she feels lonely without them. She changes the batteries herself when they run out. She wears the hearing aids most of the time, but in situations that are too noisy in class, she takes her hearing aids out, only replacing them when she sees the children have become quiet.
Badrul
Badrul is a Malay boy aged 12. He has a mild conductive hearing loss due to the fact that his right ear is not fully formed. He only received his first hearing aid from the Department of Welfare at the age of seven. The aid stopped working when he was 10 years old, and since no maintenance service was provided, he did not receive a replacement until few a months before my fieldwork in the school started. Even though the hearing aid helps him to hear, he does not like wearing it. It was uncomfortable, and the SEIP unit was noisy.

Bella
Bella is an 11-year-old Malay girl who studied with Badrul. Bella had a heart problem when she was born so she was in and out of the hospital until she was almost 2 years old. When she was five, she complained to her mother that she could not hear with her left ear. Her mother took her to a hearing assessment and she was identified as having mild to moderate hearing loss. Bella received a hearing aid when she attended school at the age of seven. She said that she loves going to school because she can meet her friends. She wears a headscarf2 outside the home, at school and when she goes out with her family so she is not worried that people would stare at her hearing aids.

One of the deaf children in this study is educated in a mainstream school without the support of any specialist teachers, and without an SEIP. This child was identified through the institute-HEARS cochlear implant centre.

Caliph
Caliph is a 10 year old Malay boy, and he attends the same school as his elder brother. He was identified to have severe to profound bilateral hearing loss at 1.5 years old after his mother realised that he was not responding to loud noise, such as thunder. Caliph had a cochlear implantation at 2 years old in the right ear, wore a hearing aid in the left ear and attended speech therapy intensively. He still attends the sessions at least once a month. At home, Caliph also practises speech

2 Headscarves are worn by Muslim women to cover the person’s hair, head, neck and chest.
with his mother. Caliph was shy when meeting new people, but he liked helping others.

I also interviewed three children in the mainstream classrooms, known as Anita, Budin and Chad. Below are the pen portraits of these classmates.

**Anita**
Anita is Anjali’s classmate. She is a 12-year-old Indian-Malaysian girl in Year 6. She speaks Malay and English in addition to her home language, Tamil. Anita has been in this school since Year 1 and is in the lower ability class with the other 25-30 pupils (of the whole year group of 150) whose marks were lower than average across all the subjects.

**Budin**
Budin is a Malay boy aged 11 years old, studying in Year 5, with the other 40 children in his age. He is a bit shorter than the average boys in his class and usually sits in the front with Bella and Badrul in the Science laboratory. Budin is a quiet person and usually only speaks when spoken to. He knows very few English words, which he learned in the English class.

**Chad**
Chad is a 10-year-old Malay boy. Chad has low academic attainments and is studying with other 25 children in a Year 4 class. He struggled with English and Mathematics but is good at sports. Chad is a friendly boy, and has been sitting beside Caliph for the past four years. He has a great deal of knowledge about Caliph. He knows that he wears hearing aids in order to be able to hear, and that they need batteries, and that, without them, Caliph cannot hear.

### 6.3 Children’s experiences of inclusion:

The data presented below illustrates how the deaf children and their classmates experienced school in general. In order to present the data within a workable structure, these experiences were coded and grouped into subthemes.
The boys tend to talk about the sports they enjoy in school. For example Badrul, Budin, Chad and Caliph mentioned that they like sports such as high jump and football, whereas the girls only mentioned chatting with their friends during break time.

6.3.1 Children’s communication in school

Information about the age of identification of deafness, amplification and intervention are some of the factors associated with the development of deaf children’s language and communication skills. Appendix I shows the summary of this information to guide the discussion of the children’s communication in school.

Aisyah is the only deaf child who uses signed and written language, not speech, to communicate. There was very little information about Aisyah’s deafness because her mother does not believe that she is deaf and believes that her difficulty in speaking is the result of a supernatural force. Her teachers suggested that Aisyah had bilateral severe to profound hearing loss as she did not respond to loud sound and she does not speak. At school, Aisyah signs with the teachers and other deaf children in the SEIP unit. She had limited interaction with other people in the school because she depends on her teacher to communicate with others.

Anjali, Bella and Badrul had mild to moderate deafness so they have residual hearing to enable them to speak while Akwan, Ben and Caliph had hearing aids fitted and attended speech therapy so they also speak. They all said that they also look at the person’s lips to help them understand their speech.

All deaf children who were educated in the SEIP learned sign language in school, with the exception of Anjali. Since Anjali was taught in a classroom with children identified as having learning disabilities, she did not learn any sign language. Learning sign language gave the children access to communication with the other deaf children who use sign language. Akwan and Ben said that they speak and sign with other deaf children in the SEIP. Badrul, on the other hand, commented, “I mainly speak. I only know a few sign language words. I learned since I first came here in Year 1”. Even though Badrul had been taught in the SEIP for five years, he
had not developed sufficient competency to communicate with sign language. This is probably because he was only taught with Bella who also has mild to moderate deafness and speaks. The following quote from Bella shows her experience of using sign language with Badrul:

“There was a time, Badrul and I were in the mainstream class, I signed to him but he ignored me. He said he was embarrassed to [use] sign language”. (Bella)

Bella and Badrul have only been taught in the mainstream classroom for less than six months so they were not familiar with the pupils in the classroom. It appears that Badrul does not want to be seen to be different from other pupils who do not use sign language in the class. It is possible that Badrul is choosing not to sign because he doesn’t want to draw attention to himself.

The teaching of sign language is not exclusive to the deaf children in Aman and Bijak School. During school weekly assembly, all pupils and teachers were taught some basic sign language by the SEIP teachers, such as basic greetings. However, this was not always effective, as the following quote illustrates:

“The teachers taught us [signs] but I don’t remember them”. (Budin)

In the Science lesson, Budin was grouped with Bella and Badrul, but had limited interaction with them because they were mainly supported by their teacher of the deaf, Badariah.

There was no additional teacher to support Anjali in the mainstream classroom. In the Malay lesson, Anita sat beside Anjali, and they helped each other. She has learned that Anjali’s speech sometimes is not very accurate, but that doesn’t bother her because she can still understand Anjali. She also learned that Anjali’s hearing aids help her to hear and she knows that when the batteries need replacing, they make a beeping sound. When this happens, and Anjali has no new batteries, Anita helps her by explaining the content of the lessons to her after the lessons. She said, “When Anjali cannot hear, I speak closely to her and she looks
at my lips”. Being taught together has enabled Anita to learn to communicate with Anjali.

Chad had been sitting next to Caliph since Year 1. He knows that he has to tap on Caliph’s shoulder and wait for him to turn to face him, before they can talk. He considered Caliph’s speech to be a bit distorted but he can still understand him. Chad has learned to find ways to make sure Caliph can hear and understand him. He was also patient when communicating with Caliph when his hearing aids did not work or when they ran out of batteries:

“Caliph reads what I write [on a piece of paper], replies [with speech], and I write again when I want to speak more”. (Chad)

Although the Bijak School makes an effort to create sign language murals and teach sign language at the school assembly, this does not seem to help the rest of the school to use sign language. One profoundly deaf child uses sign language to communicate while six of the seven deaf children speak with the help of hearing technologies. Due to the small number of deaf children, Aisyah has limited opportunity to learn sign language. Two of the three classmates have learned to communicate with their deaf classmate even when the hearing devices did not work.

6.3.2 Friendship between the children

Aisyah had one good friend but he has now moved to secondary school so she has been left without a friend. Aisyah was mainly alone in the class as other deaf children in the school were a lot younger than her. She considered Aman school is “boring and difficult”. During extra-curricular activities every Wednesday, she attended the school’s Scouts club activities with other children identified with learning disability, but she did not like it because she had no one to sign to. The separation of the mainstream and SEIP activities such as different break times and Sports Days limit the informal opportunity for Aisyah to meet the mainstream pupils. In addition, the fact that Aisyah travelled by car to and from school also meant that Aisyah had little or no contact with the mainstream pupils in school,
and since lessons in the SEIP finished 30 minutes earlier than the mainstream classes.

Akwan and Ben said they liked to go to school because they can learn and play with their peers although this only includes deaf children. Akwan’s mother acknowledged that since Akwan has attended the SEIP, he wears his hearing aids consistently because his peers wear them too. The SEIP for deaf children in Aman School is located further away from the SEIP classrooms for children identified with learning disabilities, so Akwan seldom played with them even during break time. Ben likes the fact that he was able to learn sign language and communicate with children who only sign but he also considered himself to be much older than the other children in the SEIP unit, so he spent time with Badrul during lesson break.

The placement of deaf children in mainstream classrooms for one to two hours lesson seems to be the main opportunity for the deaf children and the mainstream children to become friends. Bella shared her experience:

“In the PPKI [SEIP], I only have Badrul but there are more classmates in the mainstream classroom. Sometimes I met them before the assembly to ask what they bring for the Science experiment”.

Attending the mainstream classroom has enabled Bella to make more friends as evident above. Yet, due to limited interaction in and outside the mainstream classroom, Badrul had a different view. He said, “I prefer the PPKI [SEIP] class. I don’t have any friends in the inclusive class. I don’t really speak to them”. Badrul did not like the mainstream classroom because he did not feel he made any friends with the pupils. He considered his friends were in the SEIP instead.

Anita said that Anjali was one of her best friends, having known her since they were in Year 4 when Anjali was full-time in the mainstream classroom. Every day, she travels to school with Anjali on the school bus. Although in Year 6 (when I did my fieldwork), Anjali only attended the mainstream classroom for Malay and Mathematics lesson – approximately one to two hours a day, they still spent time together before the assembly and during the lesson break. At weekends, she
sometimes goes to Anjali’s house to do homework, chat, listen to music and play with Anjali’s puppies. They also attended some tuition classes after school together two days a week for Science and Mathematics. When Anjali is absent, Anita reminds the teachers to keep copies of the worksheets for her.

Similarly, Chad seems to have built a friendship with Caliph since they spent a lot of time together in the school. Chad regards Caliph as a bright person. In the classroom, they help each other during the lessons. When playing ball games, Chad is careful not to hit Caliph’s head to avoid damaging his hearing aids. He knows that the hearing aids are very important to Caliph as he never saw Caliph take them off, even when some children teased Caliph about his hearing aids. In the mainstream school without a specialist setting, Caliph did not have any deaf peers. However, his mother was active in a non-government organisation for parents of deaf children with cochlear implants and hearing aids so he made some friends at the NGO event such as during Eid celebration and workshops. The teachers had not played a role in teaching Chad about Caliph’s ‘needs’. Chad learnt it by himself – naturally – simply through interaction, becoming accustomed to what it means to be deaf.

All six deaf children who speak have regular interactions and time with ‘mainstream’ friends. According to their mothers, Anjali and Bella learned to speak from playing with their siblings and cousins at home. Badrul said that he had friends near his house where he played football every evening since he was little. Akwan and Ben also attended mainstream school like Caliph before they moved to the SEIP. The opportunities to communicate, interact, play and make friends with children who speak seem to have improved the deaf children’s spoken language and communication skills.

### 6.3.3 Learning environment in the classroom

The following themes emerged during the analysis known as classroom arrangements, curriculum, teaching practices, acoustic environment, management of hearing aids and language skills all of which are inter-related.
Facilities such as tables, chairs, lights and fans were made available in all of the children’s classrooms. There were a maximum of three deaf children at any one time in the SEIP classrooms so Aisyah, Akwan and Ben tended to have individual lessons with their teachers. Aisyah’s teachers recognised that individual teaching makes it possible to pause the lesson so that the child can understand what is being taught. Ben was considered by his teachers in the SEIP to have improved his hand-writing since he attended the school.

There were about 40 pupils in the mainstream classroom so being able to sit at the front was critical for the deaf children who attended the class. When these conditions were not met, deaf children expressed frustration:

“In the English lesson, we sat at the back of the class. I cannot hear anything she said. I cannot see the teacher’s mouth and I cannot see the board either. I don’t like it there”. (Bella)

Although generally Bella said she likes attending the mainstream classroom because she has made some friends, during the English lesson, she struggled to hear or see what the teacher is teaching. Her placement in the classroom was merely a token presence. By comparison, her experience in the Science lesson was much more positive regarding lipreading access:

“When the teacher demonstrates the experiment, I first look at the teacher’s mouth. She repeats the steps several times to make sure we can understand what she taught”. (Bella)

Bella needs to read the teacher’s lips to understand what she said. Repetition of the lesson was helpful because she could then watch the steps to conduct the experiment. The Science teacher, Bisma, was recognised as an expert teacher by the Ministry of Education. She had more than twenty years of teaching experience.

There were only about 25 children in the bottom set whose academic attainment was considered to be 'low', and where the curriculum had been simplified. Anjali and Caliph were included in this type of class. Although Anjali was learning Malay as her second language, she said she liked her Year 6 Malay teacher, Amal, because she helped her to understand the lesson. She reflected,
“The teacher wrote on board but she said we all cannot copy first. We all have to focus, hear her explanation then only we can write”. (Anjali)

The teacher’s approach to focus on listening was helpful so Anjali could keep up with the teacher’s speech and the pace of the lesson.

When children could not keep up with the teaching and learning pace in the mainstream classroom setting, they were advised to move to a specialist setting, as had already happened to Ben. Ben had attended a mainstream school for four years, but was then advised by the mainstream teachers to move to the SEIP classroom at Bijak School because he could not keep up with the rigid and advanced curriculum. Ben seems happy with the pace of learning in the SEIP, although the curriculum is much narrower.

Aisyah on the other hand has difficulty understanding lessons because of her limited language skills and that her teachers are not trained to teach deaf children. Aisyah’s teacher, SEIP Teacher Adriana, learned sign language from books and she finds it difficult to teach abstract concepts so Aisyah struggles to understand her explanation. As the curriculum becomes more demanding, Aisyah is falling behind.

It was not only the deaf children who struggled with the lessons in the mainstream classrooms. The mainstream pupils were also struggling to cope. Anita and Chad reported that there was a lot to study and the examination questions were difficult. Chad said, “I failed my English. I don’t understand the questions and there was a lot to remember”. Chad considered that being able to memorise the lessons was important to be able to answer the examination questions. Caliph also commented: “The teachers teach, but sometimes I don’t understand the lesson”. His difficulty in understanding may have been because his cochlear implant had not been working reliably for eight months and he was managing with one hearing aid.

Although the SEIP is a specialist facility designed to accommodate deaf children, the walls between the classrooms are not soundproofed, and Akwan finds the background noise distracting. A similar comment was given by deaf children in the
SEIP of Bijak School. Bella said she stopped wearing her hearing aids because she got headache with the loud noise made by some of the children identified with learning disability in the SEIP unit.

6.4 Reflecting on the experiences of the deaf children and adults

In this section, I reflect upon the deaf children’s experiences in the light of the dimensions of inclusion that was introduced in the deaf adults’ chapter (see Section 5.2). In scrutinising the experiences of both the children and the adults, I identify ways in which barriers to participation of deaf children in mainstream settings can be overcome.

Ensuring identification and intervention take place as early as possible is key for the development of language acquisition. Children who have been identified and begun intervention by 6 months of age will have significantly better language development than their later-identified peers (Yoshinaga-Itano 2003). The standard of the deaf children’s spoken language competence was quite weak which makes it hard for them to participate fully and pass exams. However, being included in mainstream classrooms with hearing children helps the deaf children to learn and continue to practise speaking. Caliph has plenty of good language models in his class who have helped him to improve his language competency, although this did not include any deaf peers. This reflects the experiences of the deaf adult, Zack.

Three of the deaf children in this study were attending the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) full time, three were attending the SEIP and were only taught in mainstream classrooms for core subjects such as Malay, English and Science, and one deaf child was attending mainstream classroom full-time. Since the curriculum in the mainstream classrooms is ‘advanced’, it is not only the deaf children that are experiencing difficulty in school with the exams and the rigidity of the curriculum. For example, two of the classmates commented on failing in English because they were unable to understand English and grasp the complexity of the grammar. In sharp contrast, the narrow, limited curriculum taught
in the SEIP means that deaf children are unlikely to gain access to those lessons required for educational success at secondary and tertiary levels.

In the SEIP, the deaf children had limited opportunities to build friendship with hearing children (and vice-versa) due to the separate, segregated setting. One child, Aisyah, was particularly isolated due to the fact that she only knew how to sign, and has not developed a basic foundation and competence in any language. It is not surprising that she found school ‘boring and difficult’. At the same time, she is also socially isolated at home, as her family members do not know how to sign, unlike Yuyu’s family.

Although the teachers in the SEIP enable Aisyah to have access to signed communication, the very small number of deaf children in the SEIP means that she has limited opportunity for language development and social skills learning. In this sense, this particular form of inclusion is not working for Aisyah, and it is likely that she would have been better ‘included’ in a special school alongside other deaf children. Yuyu recognised that being able to socialise with other Deaf individuals helped her to develop her Deaf identity and enabled her to contribute to the Deaf community (Pregel and Kamenopolou 2018).

Although the children were sometimes shy, and only spoke (or signed) in very short phrases, they raised the issue that none of the teachers mentioned; i.e. noisy background, social isolation. Although the SEIP is a specialist facility designed to accommodate deaf children, the walls between the classrooms are not soundproofed. As a result, deaf children who have hearing aids, refused to wear them consistently because of loud background noise. It is argued that when deaf children and families are actively involved in deciding the interventions and usage of assistive technologies, rehabilitation can mitigate impairment (Shakespeare et al. 2018). The lack of maintenance means that the children are not gaining the full benefit from the technology.

Educating deaf children in separate settings, either in residential schools for the deaf or SEIP, to enable communication through sign language, has been a tradition in Malaysian context (Yusoff 2014b). Findings from this study indicate that
usage of hearing technologies has seized deaf children’s opportunity to communicate with family who are mostly hearing people and do not have sign language skills (Mitchell and Karchmer 2004). Deaf children are attending local schools without having to travel away from family. Bat-Chava et al. (2014) proposed that improvements in speech can lead to increased exposure to spoken conversations, which in turn can help children develop a better understanding of others, thereby fostering the development of social skills and relationships. Through being included with hearing children, six of the seven deaf children in this study are developing spoken language and participated in a wide range of society.

Summary

This chapter presented the context of Aman, Bijak and Cherdik schools. Through the children’s experiences, I explored the organisational and curricular limitations of the SEIP, the social isolation of the mainstream for some children, and the differences between the two types of educational setting. I have also presented the children’s experiences of the learning environment in their classrooms. I argue that the children’s personal characteristics in relation to their deafness as well as the barriers within the school that add to the complexity in developing inclusive education for deaf individuals. The following chapter will explore the perspectives of the school staff members.
Chapter 7 Understanding, deciding and experiencing the inclusion of deaf children: the view of school staff members

Introduction

In this chapter I present the analysis of the responses from 18 out of the 37 participants comprise of the school staff; the head teachers, SEIP coordinators, mainstream teachers, SEIP teachers, teachers of the deaf and the teaching assistants. Reflecting on the school staff members’ experiences is important to understand the perspectives of those who are directly involved in the development of deaf children’s inclusion.

I begin this chapter with presenting an overview of the staff members in each school. In order to present the data in a workable structure, I group the emerging themes from the staff data into three overarching themes which I called understanding, deciding and experiencing the inclusion of deaf children. I discuss the staff members’ understanding and decision making as the direct result of deaf children being ‘in’ the school. Subsequently, I focus on the staff experiences which was organised according to the types of their role.

A distinction has to be made about the school setting and the staff members’ role. Aman and Bijak School have the Special Education Integration Programme (SEIP) unit, but in Cherdik School there was no specialist teacher or teaching assistant. Analysing the staff members’ data was a challenging process because of the amount of data from the different sources. Their perspectives and experiences vary and I had to consider their roles, school context and the characteristics of the deaf children and families that they support. Although the recursive process of the analysis was time consuming, they allowed me to move from simple coding and description developing new ideas and ways of organising the data.
7.1 Overview of the staff members in each school

All staff members have been given pseudonyms which match the first letter of their school pseudonyms. The initial title represents their role in the school. Staff members interviewed in each school is presented in Table 7.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Aman School</th>
<th>Bijak School</th>
<th>Cherdik School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Head teachers</td>
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<td>Leader Aini</td>
<td>Leader Bakri</td>
<td>Leader Citra</td>
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<td>SEIP Coordinator Bariah</td>
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<td>Teachers</td>
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<td>Mainstream teachers</td>
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<td>Teacher Bisma</td>
<td>Teacher Chinta Teacher Chantek</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEIP teachers</td>
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<td>Assistant Bedah</td>
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<td>Number of participants (N=18)</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1 School staff participants in each school

More staff members volunteer to participate from Aman School than the other two schools. Leader Aini has the longest teaching experiences of 26 years compared to other staff members in the study. Before she came to Aman School in 2010, she was a deputy head teacher in a school that also had an SEIP unit for deaf children in 2001. SEIP Coordinator Ahmad is the SEIP Coordinator, who moved to Aman School in 2008 when his son was identified to have learning disability. Both of the leaders are trained as mainstream teachers and attended a three-days training in special education. Teacher Aminah and Teacher Amal teach Malay subject in the mainstream classrooms. There is no trained teacher of the deaf in Aman School. The three teachers in the SEIP unit had school-based generic special education training. SEIP Teacher Adila does not use sign language and has been teaching children with learning disabilities in Aman school for six years. Although not trained as a teacher of the deaf, SEIP Teacher Ada has 17 years of teaching deaf children experience. She is the only teacher that is competent in sign language because she taught in the special school of the deaf for six years prior to teaching in Aman School. She has been in the school for 11 years. SEIP Teacher Adriana learned to
sign from SEIP Teacher Ada and books for the past two years because there were not enough teachers for the deaf children in the SEIP. Two teaching assistants volunteered in the study. Assistant Ain assisted the administration and management work while Assistant Alyn supported teachers and deaf children in the SEIP unit. They both have been in the school for seven years.

There are six members of staff from Bijak School in this study. Leader Bakri was trained as a mainstream teacher and after teaching for 12 years, he worked in the District Education Office for 10 years and was appointed as the head teacher of Bijak School two years ago. He does not have any special education training but has a brother with Down syndrome. The SEIP Coordinator Bariah has generic special education trainings and has been managing special education for the past 25 years. SEIP Coordinator Bariah moved to Bijak School in 2004 to set up the SEIP unit for children with learning disabilities. SEIP classrooms for deaf children in Bijak School were only set up in 2010 initiated by TOD Badariah who moved to the School in 2009. Previously she taught in special school for the deaf for 15 years. In 2014, TOD Baiduri transferred to Bijak School after a year in a special school for the deaf and five years in the SEIP of another school. One mainstream teacher was interviewed who an expert Science teacher recognised by the Ministry of education. One teaching assistant was also interviewed from Bijak School.

Three staff members agreed to be interviewed in Cherdik School. The head teacher had just been appointed in early 2015 after 18 years of teaching. Teacher Chinta is the only Indian staff member in this study and has 6 years of teaching English experiences. Teacher Chantek has 11-year-experience of teaching Malay in the school.

7.2 Understanding what it means to be ‘in’

The staff can be grouped into two main categories – those who had some form of formal training on Special Education and those who never had any training about educating children with disabilities. Their understanding of inclusion can be grouped into three themes as discussed below.
7.2.1 Inclusive Education Programme

Those who had special education training who perceived that deaf children are only in ‘inclusive education’ if they are in the Inclusive Education Programme – therefore Caliph is not officially included. Among these staff were the SEIP Coordinators, SEIP Teachers, teachers of the deaf and teaching assistants. These ten staff based in the SEIP unit and had some children who were included in the mainstream classroom for some of their academic lessons. For example, this SEIP Coordinator had a diploma in Special Education and had served in the SEIP unit for more than 8 years explained about the programme:

“Inclusive education means the ‘special children’ are placed with the mainstream children and taught by the mainstream teachers”. (SEIP Coordinator Mr Ahmad)

Almost all the staff used the term ‘special children’ interchangeably to refer to deaf children and children with learning disability which implies that deaf children’s particular needs are not recognised. The deaf child being ‘in’ the mainstream classroom is perceived as part of the continuum of services available for children with disabilities to prepare them for the national examination. Mr Ahmad thought that educating children with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms enables interactions between the children. Based on his experiences, Mr Ahmad had high expectations of pupils with disabilities who learn from the mainstream teachers and other mainstream pupils.

7.2.2 Inclusive society

A small number of staff (four out of eighteen staff members) perceived that the deaf children being ‘in’ the school was part of the initiatives to expose the children with the mainstream children and vice versa. These staff members had some personal experiences with children/people with disabilities. They have positive attitudes towards mixing the children together. They did not, however, differentiate between the settings where the pupils are placed as they interchangeably used ‘in school’ and ‘in classroom’ to refer to the deaf children being ‘in’ the school.
“To me inclusive education means they [children with disabilities] can mix with mainstream children. They are part of the society too”. (Leader Bakri)

This quote shows that Leader Bakri had an open attitude that inclusion means something bigger than school. He perceived inclusive education from a social inclusionist perspective. He valued the benefit to children with disabilities of socialising in mainstream classrooms. This could be because his brother has Down syndrome. Despite his progressive views, the physical layout of the gated community means this is difficult.

7.2.3 Satisfying parents’ wishes

Four staff members mentioned that they were unfamiliar with the term ‘inclusive education’ but referred to parental pressure for the placement of deaf children in the school. It seems that doctor’s recommendation has enabled the placement of the deaf child in the school. Caliph had a cochlear implant at the age of 3 and learned to speak. The parents chose elective surgery for their son and decided to put him in the school with his other siblings. The head teacher commented:

“I have received a lot of complaints from the teachers. I think Caliph should go to special education class but the parents refused, and they got a referral letter from the doctor. So, we go on [letting the child stay in the school]”. (Leader Citra)

Caliph’s cochlear implant had been malfunctioning for the past eight months at the time of the interview. Thus Caliph has limited access to sound through his hearing aid, worn in the other ear. Note that the mother was trying to solve the problem.

Teacher Aminah taught Malay to a Year 4 class that included Anjali whose family speaks English, Malay and Tamil. She described the placement of Anjali in the mainstream classroom and the SEIP:

“Anjali hardly understands what I ask her to do. I spoke to the head teacher to move the child to SEIP classroom, but he said the parents refused. So she stayed [in the mainstream classroom]. But later she was moved after the head teacher persuaded the parents”. (Teacher Aminah)
The teacher highlighted the tensions between parents’ preferences and the mainstream teacher’s practical concerns. In Year 4, the lessons are more challenging. The teacher finds it hard to teach Anjali who is also struggling to learn Malay Language subject in her second language.

Inclusion is not used as a term as the inclusion of deaf children was understood from three standpoints; 1) placement in mainstream classrooms under the *Inclusive Education Programme*, 2) a process of developing an inclusive society and 3) to satisfy parents’ wishes. Given the different understanding of what it means for deaf children to be ‘in’ among the staff participants, the following section analyses the decisions and experiences elicited from the participants’ responses in relation to the deaf children being ‘in’ their respective school.

### 7.3 Deciding which deaf children are ‘in’

Given the different context of the school, I organised the staff members’ experiences into three situations; overall school context, mainstream classrooms and SEIP unit.

#### 7.3.1 Including deaf children in Aman School

The most experienced SEIP teacher who taught deaf children in the school was SEIP Teacher Ada, who is also the most experienced sign language user in the school. All deaf children were included in the school activities such as assembly, talk, and celebrations:

> “Sometimes we join activities with the mainstream children. For example, last week we attended the launching of Ramadhan\(^3\) week. There was a lecture by an Islamic Education teacher. I want to interpret [the speech to sign language], but there were a lot of Arabic terms that I don’t really know how to translate. To be honest, I don’t like deaf children to go to any of the assembly or joint activities. I am not sure if these Year 1, 2 and 3 [children] can understand all the abstract concepts like fasting,

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\(^3\) Ramadhan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, and is observed by Muslims as a month of fasting
good or bad deeds. I will tell them again in the SEIP classroom”. (SEIP Teacher Ada)

SEIP Teacher Ada recognised the limited sign language vocabularies to translate speech during the school activities. She also doubted that the deaf children could understand the meaning of the signs of the abstract concepts she used. Since none of the deaf children used sign language at home, she repeats relevant information from the school assembly in the SEIP classrooms to make sure the deaf pupils understand them.

There were only about 25 children in the bottom set whose academic attainment was considered to be ‘low’, and where the curriculum had been simplified. Anjali and another two children identified with learning disabilities from the SEIP unit were also included in this class. The decision to include the child is reflected by this teacher:

“When we send them [children with disabilities] for inclusive education, we don’t send the severe [disabilities] children. We send those who have potential to take the [national] examination. We only send for few subjects like Malay and Science”. (SEIP Teacher Adila)

This quote highlights the predominant view that inclusive education is defined as a ‘place’ where children are sent to. It also shows that the level of disability is a critical decision to be included in the Inclusive Education Programme. The staff interchangeably used the word ‘severe children’ and described severity in terms of ‘behavioural problem’, ‘compliance’, ‘residual hearing’, ‘speech ability’ and ‘academic performance’. Children who did not pass the school exams were not considered to be placed in mainstream classrooms. Assistant Ain raised her concern about those who are included in the mainstream classroom:

“I think inclusive education is just to give exposure to the children. The curriculum is tougher [than in SEIP], almost 40 children in the class and they [children with disabilities] have a lot to catch up. To me, if they want to understand the lesson, it is better for them to be in SEIP”. (Assistant Ain)

The teaching assistant questioned the possibility of children with disabilities to understand the lesson in the mainstream classrooms. There was an expectation
that the curriculum was less challenging in the SEIP. She considered SEIP classrooms were better because they were small in size so teachers can provide individual attention.

The rest of deaf children in Aman School were taught in the SEIP unit. One of the teachers, SEIP Teacher Adriana, had 10-years of teaching mainstream children and 10-years of teaching children with learning disabilities experiences. She had been asked to teach deaf children in the SEIP unit for the past two years because the school had insufficient teachers to teach deaf children. She learnt sign language from SEIP Teacher Ada and referred to sign language vocabulary books. The deaf child she taught, Aisyah, did not wear hearing aids and used sign language to communicate with the teachers. At home, her family spoke to her and did not use any sign language, as they had no knowledge of it.

“I won’t suggest Aisyah to go to the mainstream classroom. Who will sign for her? She will be shy too because she doesn't speak. I don't think it will work for her to be in the mainstream classroom”. (SEIP Teacher Adriana)

Teacher Adriana thought that deaf children who use sign language like Aisyah should not be included in the mainstream classroom and should be taught in a separate classroom in the SEIP unit. The reason for the separation was because there was no communication support available for her in the mainstream and the teacher was also concerned about the deaf pupil’s self-esteem.

7.3.2 Including deaf children in Bijak School

Bijak School caters to approximately 60 children identified to have learning disability and eight deaf children in the SEIP unit. Although they all were included in the school activities such as assembly, talk, and celebrations with other mainstream pupils, they had a separate Sports Day. The head teacher who thought that mixing the children together is important so that they can learn to accept each other commented:

“During extra-curricular activities, they were separated. They have their own Sports Day. I have asked the SEIP Coordinator to combine the
Sports Day [with mainstream children], but she refused. She is in charge of the SEIP unit”. (Leader Bakri)

From the comment above, it can be inferred that although Mr Bakri is the head teacher, SEIP Coordinator Bariah had a greater autonomy over the SEIP unit. This illustrates an example of a contradictory decision between staff members even though they are meant to work as a team. Even though the deaf children are included within the school, they are separated from the rest of the school during some activities such as above.

Two of the eight deaf children in Bijak School were included in the Inclusive Education Programme in the Year 5 for Science and English lessons. The Science teacher was an expert teacher recognised by the Ministry of Education. A trained teacher of the deaf attended the lesson with the deaf children in the mainstream classroom:

“Bella and Badrul were included [in the mainstream classroom] because they still have some hearing. They are not totally deaf. We have to see if the mainstream teacher is someone who we can work with too. Last year, the teacher did not accept inclusive education. She felt like she is being observed while she is teaching, and I am in the class with her. But this year, these Science and English teachers are okay with it”. (TOD Baiduri)

The teacher categorised that those with mild hearing loss are ‘able’ to be taught in mainstream classrooms. Bella and Badrul are not severely deaf and speak so they were considered in the Inclusive Education Programme. However, the teacher also explained that the placement of deaf children in the mainstream classroom also depends on the willingness of the mainstream teachers. Some mainstream teachers do not necessarily agree to have another teacher in the classroom during the lesson.

Another six deaf children besides Bella and Badrul were full-time in the SEIP unit and this included Ben, who wears hearing aids since he was two years old. His mother wanted him to speak, so previously he was educated in a mainstream school until he was in Year 4. Ben moved to the SEIP classroom at Bijak School
about two years ago. TOD Badariah described her disagreement of including deaf children like Ben, in mainstream classrooms:

“When Ben first arrived, he knows nothing. His handwriting was terrible. I thought what a waste of time to be in the mainstream classroom. Imagine being taught by mainstream teachers who know nothing about the needs of deaf children”. (TOD Badariah)

The teacher thought that Ben should not be included in the mainstream classroom because the mainstream teachers do not have the skills to teach deaf children. The SEIP classroom is considered to be appropriate for Ben where more individual attention can be provided. TOD Badariah considered handwriting as an indicator of the child’s ability but his ability to speak was not recognised. This assumption neglected the fact that deaf children are diverse in ability and development.

7.3.3 Including deaf pupil in Cherdik School

There were three staff members interviewed in Cherdik School and they were Leader Citra, Teacher Chantek and Teacher Chinta. There was no SEIP unit and only one deaf child, Caliph, was included in the class with other children for the whole school period. He was the only known deaf pupil in the school. Caliph was taught in the bottom set whose academic attainment was considered to be ‘low’, and where the curriculum had been simplified. The classroom he attended had 25 children:

“Caliph and his classmates have weak academic performance. We simplified their curriculum, and we organised a lot of activities. Sometimes they do it in pairs or groups. We used pictures, and we asked them to tell stories. They are normally shy to speak. We encouraged them to stand up and speak up”. (Teacher Chantek)

Despite not having any specialist training, Teacher Chantek adapted the lesson to enable all of the children to access the curriculum. She considered that lessons were not limited to academic skills but social skills too. Building children’ confidence was deemed to be necessary for all children not only the deaf pupil. In
this case, the deaf pupil had the same expectation like his other peers even though he has profound hearing loss.

The inclusion of deaf children in Aman, Bijak and Cherdik School were based on multi-factorial reasons including the characteristics of the children, schools’ organisation, resources and circumstances. The following section analyses the experiences of the school staff with regards to the inclusion of deaf children within the school.

7.4 Experiencing the inclusion of deaf children

I organised this section according to the type of participants to highlight the staff members’ roles in developing inclusive education for deaf children in school.

7.4.1 Head teachers

All three schools had more than 1500 children and 70-90 teachers. Typically the administrative office is in a different building, away from the classrooms. All three head teachers did not teach any of the deaf children but met them during school activities such as assembly. The head teacher of Aman School had 18 years of governing school experiences and head teachers of Bijak and Cherdik School had less than two years of headteacher experiences. One of the roles of head teachers is to manage the training of the staff in the school:

“We should be trained on how to help and manage these types of children. We want to help, but we don’t know how. Teachers should be exposed to strategies to interact with these children, how to teach them”. (Leader Citra)

Leader Citra considered children such as Caliph as different from the mainstream children. This was similar to the other two head teachers with regards to their experiences in managing the inclusion of deaf children in the school. Training for staff to work with deaf children was not available, and there was also no training with regards to inclusive education. School staff had to learn to manage and support the deaf children independently. As a consequence, staff members tend to
have negative attitude towards including deaf children in the mainstream classrooms.

In Aman and Bijak School, one of the roles of the head teachers is to establish shared understandings and goals to ensure deaf children are supported in school. However, meeting a common ground among the staff was not straightforward:

“Some mainstream teachers do not want to teach children [with disabilities] in the mainstream classrooms. They questioned, “If the children were taught by us, what SEIP teachers are going to do?” So, I have to explain that both mainstream teachers and SEIP teachers need to work together”. (Leader Aini)

Leader Aini acknowledged that clearing up misunderstandings between the staff was part of her roles in school. She considered that reassuring mainstream teachers to accept children with disabilities in the mainstream classrooms is crucial, and that everyone is responsible, it does not reside in any one individual.

7.4.2 SEIP Coordinators

The SEIP in both schools catered for deaf children as well as children with learning disabilities. Therefore, the SEIP coordinators had to balance the allocation of teachers between the classrooms in the unit. For children with learning disabilities, the classrooms for children with learning disabilities were divided based on the severity of their behaviour. Meanwhile, the classrooms for deaf children were organised based on the age of the children because they had to follow the national curriculum. When the number of deaf children increased, more teachers were needed to teach in deaf children classrooms.

“There’s no trained teacher of the deaf, so we have to ask LD-teachers to teach and learn sign language.”. (SEIP Coordinator Ahmad)

SEIP Coordinator Ahmad had to find a solution to solve the issue of insufficient teachers within the SEIP unit. Knowing sign language was considered an important skill in teaching deaf children. The SEIP teachers received help from more experienced colleagues and learned from books.
Another role of the SEIP coordinator is to find sponsors to support the needs of children in the SEIP unit. In Bijak School, a wealthy person sponsored seven hearing aids to the deaf children in the SEIP unit. The sponsorship also included regular visits from the hearing aids provider’s audiologists to check on the condition of the hearing aids.

“Parents here mostly have low income. We cannot assume all parents can afford to provide hearing aids. We try to help them to find sponsors. We want them to develop speech, so we help the parents”. (SEIP Coordinator Bariah)

SEIP Coordinator Bariah used her network to find sponsors to get the hearing aids for the deaf children. There was a positive attitude towards deaf children within the school community and society with regards to wearing hearing aids. The effort received support from the government and had mass media coverage and she was proud of the recognition.

7.4.3 Mainstream teachers

All five mainstream teachers in this study taught the deaf children with this group of mainstream children. Information about the list of the mainstream teachers and the deaf children they taught is in Table 7.2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream teachers</th>
<th>Deaf children</th>
<th>Subject</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Aminah</td>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Taught Malay in Year 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Amal</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taught Malay in Year 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Bisma</td>
<td>Bella and Badrul</td>
<td>Taught Science in Year 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Chinta</td>
<td>Caliph</td>
<td>Taught English in Year 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Chantek</td>
<td></td>
<td>Taught Malay in Year 3 and Year 4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.2 Mainstream teachers and their deaf children

In order to understand the experiences of the mainstream teacher, I present some background about the roles of mainstream teachers in school in the following paragraph.
Mainstream teachers typically have an average of 25 lesson periods per week which means on average they teach about 5 out of 11 lesson periods per day. They teach one of the core subjects (Malay, English, Math, Science, Islamic studies/Morale Education, History) and some elective subjects (i.e Physical Education, Arts, Music, Technology etc.). In addition, every teacher also hold at least one administrative role within the school such as Extra-curricular teacher, Parent-Teacher Association committee, Library teacher, Computer Lab teacher, Subject-related committee and many others. A mainstream classroom usually had about 40 children and there was a requirement for the teachers to teach the national curriculum. Every 6 months, subject-teacher committees prepared examination questions to assess children’ overall achievement in all of the subjects they have learned. At the end of the year, teachers used the final exam’s result and assigned children according to their overall achievement for the next year’s classroom. This means that the classrooms had a ranking of being 1st, 2nd, 3rd and so on. Children with the lowest exam grades were grouped in the bottom set. Usually this class has no more than 25 children so that teachers can provide more attentions to the children.

When Anjali was in Year 1, she enrolled in the SEIP classroom but in Year 4, her mother requested a move from the SEIP classroom because she wanted her to learn with other mainstream children. Anjali was taught in a mainstream classroom with other children in the bottom set. Teacher Aminah taught her Malay Language in Year 4. She had never taught any deaf pupil before:

“I used to teach children with high academic abilities. That year I was asked to teach this [bottom set] class. I don’t know how to teach Anjali some difficult concepts. She hardly understood. Sometimes I just asked her to copy from the book because she didn’t know how to do it”. (Teacher Aminah)

Anjali speaks English and Malay with her parents and some Tamil with her grandmother. She speaks Malay at school because the majority of her classmates and teachers in school are Malays. Anjali is learning Malay as her second language. Teacher Aminah was not aware of how to adapt her teaching to meet Anjali’s language needs which has influenced her attitude and expectations of Anjali’s ability. She thought that copying from books is a solution for children like Anjali. She also said:
“Sometimes I don’t have enough time. For those who can’t keep up the pace, they were left unattended. There is nothing much I can do. I admit that Anjali was not receiving enough support. There was a lot to teach”.
(Teacher Aminah)

Teacher Aminah felt that she was caught between teaching the whole curriculum and ensuring all children understand the lesson. Anjali had to catch up with the pace, and was left to swim or sink. The teacher seems to use a teacher-centred approach where the process of learning and teaching focusses on the teacher rather than the children.

In Teacher Amal’s Malay lesson, she conducted activities where children had to read a passage out loud. She described her experience with Anjali as below:

“When she reads, her friends laughed at her. Teachers have to take action to advise other children not to laugh. Even though she sounds unusual, we can still hear the words. I told them that nobody should laugh. I scolded them if they laugh”. (Teacher Amal)

Teacher Amal was sensitive about the deaf pupil’s self-esteem. She did not allow other children to laugh and reminded them to respect the deaf pupil. Her positive attitude towards the inclusion of deaf pupil in her class was also reflected as she wanted all children regardless of background to be successful. She has high expectations of those who are in the mainstream classrooms.

Teacher Aminah’s and Teacher Amal’s interaction with Anjali’s parents was little or almost none. Even though they taught Anjali in the mainstream classroom, they considered her to belong to the SEIP unit so the SEIP teachers dealt with any concern raised by Anjali’s parents. An example of the comment:

“SEIP Teacher Adila usually deals with Anjali’s parents. I don’t really know the parents. I will tell Teacher Adila to tell the mother about the homework etc. I have never met her”. (Teacher Aminah)

The example above shows that there is a strong sense of separate roles and responsibility between the mainstream teachers and the SEIP teachers. Lack of shared responsibility made Teacher Aminah considered that interaction with the deaf pupil’s parents is the SEIP teachers’ job. This situation might create
mainstream teachers being ignorant about the needs of deaf children in classroom.
Teacher Bisma taught Science to Bella and Badrul in Year 5. TOD Baiduri was attending her lesson together with the deaf children. While Teacher Bisma is teaching, TOD Baiduri sat in between the two deaf children, to assist them throughout the lesson. She said,

“It’s nice because I have a teacher of the deaf in my class. I don’t know sign language, so I teach as usual and she helps Badrul and Bella in my class”. (Teacher Bisma)

Teacher Bisma felt supported by having a teacher of the deaf in her class. However, she had assumed that all deaf children communicate with sign language. Having an additional teacher in the class had made her undermine the needs to adapt her lesson to ensure curricular access for the deaf children. Teacher Bisma did not develop a sense of ownership to the deaf children because she presumed TOD Baiduri was available to help.

One of the reasons given by Teacher Chantek in Cherdik School who was opposed to having Caliph in the school, is due to the unavailability of specialist support to assist the teachers and Caliph, especially when the cochlear implant did not function.

“When the battery runs out, he can’t hear, and I don’t know how to help. The mother should teach us about the device. When he [Caliph] can’t hear, I just pointed and gestured to him. He copied from the book”. (Teacher Chantek)

Teacher Chantek was unable to communicate with Caliph in this case. She raised the importance of parent’s involvement to guide the teachers to deal with the troubleshooting of the cochlear implant. Teacher Chantek was left to decide on what to do and how to help Caliph when this happened.

Caliph sat in the front row of the class where he can see the teachers, and he had classmates to assist him in the class. Since the class is for those with low
academic performance, the lessons were simplified, and children had simpler
tasks than children with higher academic performances.

“When I first saw him, I think he was okay. Compared to his other classmates, Caliph is a hard-working boy. I don’t see that he is ‘special’. He mixed with his other friends like usual. If he does not understand, he asks his friends or me. If the [hearing aids] battery died, he could lip-read. I will talk to him several times, point to him, he will be okay. If the battery died, he could still hear because I increased my voice”. (Teacher Chinta)

Teacher Chinta perceived that good behaviours such as being ‘responsive’, ‘obedient’, and ‘finish his/her work quickly’ were important in class. She treated Caliph just like his other classmates. She thought that gestures, repetitions and lip-readings could compensate for the faulty cochlear implant. However, Teacher Chinta was not aware that shouting does not help Caliph to hear.

Teacher Chantek also highlighted her experience communicating with Caliph during a spelling activity in her class where she said the word out loud and the pupils had to write them in their exercise book. She said,

“When I said the word, Caliph looked at my mouth. He asked me to repeat. For example the word ‘payung’ [umbrella], he said ‘bayung’. I corrected him and said the syllable several times ‘pa-pa-pa’, then, he was like ‘oh… payung’. He got confused by words with similar sounds. But sometimes I had to move on because other children are waiting for the next word”. (Teacher Chantek)

Teacher Chantek was concerned that Caliph cannot hear well so she made efforts to repeat what she had said clearly and emphasised consonants that have similar mouth shape. She took the risk of spending more time for the deaf child but realised that she had to consider the needs of other children too.

7.4.4 Specialist teachers

All three SEIP teachers in Aman School that participated in this study had generic special education training. None of them had formal sign language training. SEIP
Teacher Adriana reflected on the difficulty of teaching language to a profoundly deaf child:

“Teaching language subject such as Malay is difficult. We have things like figurative language where the meaning is different from the literal interpretation. I’m struggling to teach these to deaf children. No matter how good you are with sign language, it will not be assessed in the examination. They have to be able to write. Aisyah cannot write an essay. She hardly writes five sentences. She needs pictures to assist her. If there’s no picture, she cannot understand the question”. (SEIP Teacher Adriana)

SEIP Teacher Adriana only learned the signs from her colleagues and books. Teaching abstract concepts was difficult because she had limited sign language to explain the concept. Even if she spends her own time studying the vocabulary from the book, it was difficult to teach abstract concepts because Aisyah only learns and uses sign language at school not at home.

SEIP Teacher Adila experienced a negative attitude from some of the mainstream teachers. She expressed her view about providing a specialist teacher to support Anjali in the mainstream classroom.

“Ideally, we should have a specialist teacher to be with them [deaf children] in the mainstream classroom but this is impossible as we have class to teach in the SEIP unit. Some mainstream teachers don’t like to have another [SEIP] teacher in the class too. We only meet them [mainstream teachers] informally outside classroom”. (SEIP Teacher Adila)

Teacher Adila recognised that there were some mainstream teachers who are willing to teach deaf pupil but reluctant to have an additional teacher in the class. As a consequence, there was a lack of opportunity to form professional relationships between the teachers.

7.4.5 Teaching assistants

Teaching assistants had a three-day Special Education training provided by the state department of education before they work in the school. They support
teachers and children with disabilities in the SEIP unit but there was no specific role. One of them commented on the consequence of this uncertainty:

“From early morning, we meet them at the gate until they finish school. We also managed them in the classroom. Some parents did not want to hear what we say about their children. They looked down at us. We are just like a ‘helper’. They only talk to the teachers. In fact, we spent more time with the children than the teachers”. (Assistant Bedah)

Assistant Bedah perceived that she was seen as less important persons in the classroom which meant the parents tended to disrespect them. There was a general assumption that deaf children need less support than children with learning disabilities and this is evidenced from the teaching assistants’ experiences. The lack of clarity in their roles in school often meant that teaching assistants supported children with more obvious needs such as managing behavioural problems. Consequently, the needs of children with the more hidden disability such as deafness were sometimes ignored or side-lined.

7.5 Reflecting on the staff member’s experiences

There is a general assumption that knowing sign language is the dominant requirement in supporting deaf children so school staff who do not know how to sign often feel incapable of including deaf children in school. The small number of trained teachers of the deaf, and their absence altogether in some cases, meant that they were unable to support school staff to become more confident when including deaf children.

School leaders on the whole had a positive attitude towards the Government’s inclusive education policy but they identified the very limited number of trained teachers of the deaf as a barrier to progress. Mainstream teachers were not trained to teach deaf children and the fact that the deaf children are failing their subjects reinforced their low expectations of the children. Two mainstream teachers believed that the placement of deaf children in their classroom is important to help them pass exams and improve social skills. The fact that no one in school is skilled in maintaining a good acoustic environment and the consistent use of hearing devices is another barrier faced by mainstream teachers.
The fact that the specialist teachers spent the time to learn sign language at their own time and costs showed the commitment to support deaf children’s inclusion. However, the limited on-going training on supporting deaf children means that their knowledge is not up-to-date with deaf children’s needs. As a result, they were neither able to support the deaf children adequately nor capable of guiding other stakeholders to fully include the deaf children in schools.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented an analysis of the school staff members’ views and experiences in relation to the inclusion of deaf children. I started by presenting the diverse range of school staff that participated in this study. Then, I present the diverse views of inclusion among the staff members. I have argued that due to the different conceptualisation of inclusion, staff members have different approaches in including the deaf children in the three schools. An important lesson from the findings is that some teachers are already supporting children and parents inclusively without using the term ‘inclusive’ or ‘inclusion’ in describing their approach. Subsequently, I focussed on the staff experiences according to their roles in the school. This has helped me to identify the barriers to the children participating in education faced by the staff members. In the final section, I reflect upon the some of the main findings to highlight the complexity of developing education that is inclusive and equitable for deaf children. The following chapter will explore the perspectives of the parents about their deaf child’s inclusion.
Chapter 8  Parents’ experiences of their deaf child’s inclusion

Introduction

This chapter discusses the parents’ experiences of their deaf child’s inclusion. I begin the chapter with an overview of the parents who participated in the study. Then, I describe the parents’ initial experiences with deafness as the background of the parents’ experiences. After that, I present three overarching themes that emerged from the parents’ data. Finally, I reflect upon the parents’ experiences in relation to the deaf inclusion debate. Both mothers and fathers were invited to participate in the study but it was only mothers who were willing to be interviewed. Even so, four mothers also used ‘we’ indicating the experiences of both parents. On average, the length of an interview with parents was 2 hours indicating they were glad to talk about their deaf child.

All except one are the parents of deaf children who also participated in this study. Ms Badilah’ child was not interviewed because he did not speak and had only been learning sign language for a few months at the time of my fieldwork. Badruls’ parents were not included because they chose not to participate. The demographic information about the parents is shown in Table 8.1 below. The wide range of background of the seven parents and seven deaf children reflect the diversity in deaf children population and their families which will be explored in the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Mrs Alia</th>
<th>Mrs Ati</th>
<th>Mrs Ash</th>
<th>Mrs Basha</th>
<th>Mrs Bienda</th>
<th>Ms Badilah</th>
<th>Mrs Chaz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf child’s name</td>
<td>Akwan</td>
<td>Aisyah</td>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Caliph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>44</td>
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<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Level of education</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Degree</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Secondary school</td>
<td>Degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Carer</td>
<td>Retail assistant</td>
<td>Housewife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other deaf child</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.1 Demographic information of the parents

8.1 Overview of the parents

This section presents an overview of the parents’ demographic information. None of the parents are deaf, and their ages ranged from 31 to 49 years old. The oldest is Mrs Bienda who has seven children and works as a child-minder. The youngest of the parents is Ms Badilah. She had a divorce after her fourth child was born in 2013. She now lives with her parents and all her children. To support the family, she works in one of the largest convenience stores in Malaysia as the assistant store manager. Mrs Ati is in her mid-40s and is a full-time housewife with six children.

All parents are Malay except for Mrs Ash, who is a Malaysian Indian. At home, Mrs Ash speaks English, Malay and some Tamil with Anjali and Anjali’s sister – who is one year younger. Mrs Ash works in a private company. Mrs Alia and Mrs Basha have five and three children respectively. They are both primary school teachers, but not in the schools of this study. Mrs Basha has just received her doctoral degree. The only parent who has a child in Cherdik School is Mrs Chaz. She is not working but volunteered as a secretary of a non-government organisation (NGO) for parents of deaf children with cochlear implants/hearing aids.

Some parents referred to the severity of their child’s deafness using descriptions such as ‘cannot hear that well’, ‘severe deafness’ or ‘very deaf’ – they tended not to use the Ministry of Health definitions of the degree of hearing loss. The definition of deafness here includes children with all types of hearing loss from mild to profound, a hearing loss in one ear or a temporary hearing loss (Ministry of Health 2014).
On the whole, those who had a higher level of education were more aware of the audiological descriptions of their child’s deafness, able to afford hearing aids and were willing to spend a considerable amount of money on the more advanced audiological technologies. Mrs Bienda, Ms Badilah and Mrs Ati gave conflicting descriptions about their child’s deafness. The following section discusses the parents’ experiences with the children’s differing degrees of deafness.

8.2 The starting point

The purpose for discussing the parents’ early experiences of their child’s deafness is to shed light on the complexity of deafness and supports for the children and their family. I argue that understanding the early childhood experiences is critical as the precursor of deaf children’s inclusion.

The parents’ deaf children were born in 2003 to 2007. This means that after the establishment of the Institute-HEARS cochlear implant centre in 1995 and the introduction of the High Risk New-Born Hearing Screening (HRNHS) program in 2001 but before the actual implementation of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) in public hospitals in 2009.

In the absence of newborn hearing screening and the fact that deafness could occur postnatally as late-onset, progressive or acquired, I discuss how the children’s deafness were identified and who initiated the process. This process is also known as the ‘discovery mechanism’ (Young and Tattersall 2007, pg 210). I divided the experiences into three stages suspicion, assessment and intervention as illustrated in Figure 8.1. Parents’ initial experience is considered to begin during the suspicion stage. There are several mechanisms that triggered the suspicion of deafness including being placed on the Ministry of Health’s at-risk register, parents’ observation, children’s complaint and teachers’ observation. Following the suspicion, parents’ experienced the process of assessment where the deafness is identified. Once the degree of deafness was identified, parents experienced the process of supporting their child through intervention program. In what follows, I analyse the parents’ initial experiences.
Figure 8.1 Parents' initial experience with deafness

I will begin with the case of Mrs Alia because she has two deaf children who were born in 1997 and 2007 respectively. Her first child was diagnosed with severe and profound deafness only when he was four because of his lack of speech following her own observation. When her second deaf child, Akwan, was born, she was already included in the ‘at risk group’ register. The initial hearing assessment for this child was initiated and driven by the medical team. At that time, Akwan passed the assessment, and the health workers convinced her that he was too young to be identified, so Mrs Alia thought he was not deaf. When Akwan turned three, Mrs Alia realised that he had difficulty in speaking too and took him to be diagnosed. It is interesting to note that the starting point for Mrs Alia to attend to her children’s deafness was informed by both her personal observation and the hospital’s initiative. Mrs Alia was first introduced to cochlear implant procedure for her first son, but she decided not to proceed because it was such a new initiative and there was limited evidence of the success of cochlear implantation in Malaysia, so Akwan’s brother was fitted with hearing aids instead. When Akwan was identified as being deaf six years after the first child was identified, Mrs Alia was knowledgeable about hearing aids and so took Akwan to be fitted and ensured that he attended speech therapy as soon as possible.

Mrs Basha gave birth to Ben and his twin brother in the 28th week of pregnancy. They were both just about 1300g (2.2lbs). Ben had severe jaundice at birth so he was included in the hospital’s at risk group register for deafness. The initial hearing assessment for Mrs Basha’s deaf child was initiated by the paediatric team several months after Ben’s treatment for jaundice. Following the identification, she hired a
personal speech therapist for Ben who also informed Mrs Basha’s initial audiological management and intervention experiences.

The rest of the parents were not on the ‘at-risk group’ register. Mrs Chaz is the only parent who realised that her son was not responding to loud noises and when he was six months old he had not babbled, so she insisted on having her child’s hearing status assessed. Her first experience with a hearing technology was with hearing aids provided by the hospital, and she learned to make sure Caliph wears them consistently. Mrs Chaz was introduced to cochlear implant when Caliph was referred to the cochlear implant centre as a suitable candidate. The speech therapy sessions provided by the centre also helped her to teach Caliph at home.

Parents’ awareness about deafness was found to be slow or non-existent for children with mild, unilateral or fluctuating hearing loss. In the case of Mrs Ash and Mrs Bienda, the suspicion was neither initiated by the hospital nor their own observation. It was their child who told them that they could not hear well when they both were about five years old. Mrs Ash had Anjali fitted with hearing aids and attended speech therapy as soon as she was diagnosed. Whereas, Mrs Bienda’s first experience with Bella’s hearing aids began when Bella attended school at the age of seven. She did not send Bella to any speech therapy session because she thought support from the teachers of the deaf in Bijak School was sufficient.

The teachers were the first to suspect that Ms Badil’s and Mrs Ati’s child is deaf. Ms Badilah did not know why Badil was not speaking, so she sent him to a community-based rehabilitation centre for disabled children instead of registering him for school. Badil was referred to the doctor only after Teacher Badariah came to visit the centre in early 2015 when Badil was eight years old. He was then registered in Bijak School. On the other hand, Mrs Ati refuses to believe that Aisyah is deaf, and is convinced that her difficulty in speaking is the result of a supernatural force, and that one day she will be able to speak normally. She thought her child could hear and speak, so Mrs Ati did not see the relevance of wearing hearing aids or attending speech therapy.
In this section, I have presented the parents’ initial experience with deafness to set the background of the parents’ experiences. Hearing assessment that was initiated by the medical team as a result of family history and illness has enabled the child to be assessed as soon as possible. In the lack of Universal Newborn Hearing Screening procedure implementation, parents’ observation plays a significant role to initiate the diagnosis. Unilateral and mild bilateral hearing loss might be undetected until at the later stage when the language and communication gap is obvious compared to other children. The lack of parental knowledge and awareness of a child’s language development milestone and superstitions further complicate the process of early identification. Table 8.2 below presents a summary of the information about the parents’ initial experiences and the child’s deafness description to facilitate the discussion of the parents’ experiences in the next section.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Deaf children</th>
<th>Initial discovery mechanism</th>
<th>Description of children's deafness</th>
<th>Attended speech therapy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Alia</td>
<td>Akwan’s older brother</td>
<td>Parental observation</td>
<td>Identified at 4 years old Severe to profound deafness Hearing aids at 5 years old</td>
<td>Yes at 7 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Akwan</td>
<td>HRNHS and parental observation</td>
<td>Identified at 3 years old Moderate to severe deafness Hearing aids at 3 years old</td>
<td>Yes at 4 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Ash</td>
<td>Anjali</td>
<td>Child-led</td>
<td>Identified at 5 years old Mild to moderate deafness Hearing aids at 5 years old</td>
<td>Yes at 5 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Ati</td>
<td>Aisyah</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Identified at 7 years old Bilateral profound deafness No hearing aids</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Basha</td>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>High-risk Newborn Hearing Screening</td>
<td>Identified at 2 years old Bilateral severe deafness Hearing aids at 2.5 years old</td>
<td>Yes at 3 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Bienda</td>
<td>Bella</td>
<td>Child-led</td>
<td>Identified at 5 years old Unilateral moderate deafness Hearing aids at 7 years old</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Badilah</td>
<td>Badil</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>Identified at 8 years old Bilateral profound deafness No hearing aids</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mrs Chaz</td>
<td>Caliph</td>
<td>Parental observation</td>
<td>Identified at 1.5 years old Bilateral profound deafness Hearing aids at 2.5 years old and a cochlear implant at 3 years old</td>
<td>Yes at 2.5 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8.2 Parents’ initial identification of deafness and children's deafness description
8.3 Losing time during the long and winding road

‘Losing time’ emerged as one of the themes identified from the analysis of parents’ experiences of their child’s deafness. Substantial delays occurred between the identification, confirmation and intervention for all the parents. The lost time is a common parental experience due to various reasons that will be explored in this section. I divide this section into three main parts focusing on the diagnostic process, hearing aids fitting and the outcomes of the intervention. These complex processes reflect some of the deaf children’s experiences discussed in Chapter 6.

8.3.1 Audiological identification and assessment

Identification of deafness is critical to deaf children’s inclusion because it reflects the beginning of support for deaf children’s language, communication and education development. The majority of parents have no experiences to draw upon, no expectations to refer to, and often no close family or personal friend to consult. Decisions are usually made by parents and often fraught with uncertainty which have major repercussions for adult life. Information about communication modes and educational settings was not always available to parents and this was reflected from the parents’ data.

Despite the fact that Akwan and Ben were suspected to be deaf, there was still a delay in the identification of their deafness. The fact that Akwan passed the Newborn Hearing Screening illustrates the complexity of deafness and its diagnosis. Although he was tested as soon as he was born, the equipment and technique used at that time might not be as effective, given the fact that Universal Newborn Hearing Screening procedure was not yet prioritised. There was also a lack of awareness about the importance of Newborn Hearing Screening and follow-up recommendations on the part of the healthcare workers and the parents. It seems that Akwan had acquired hearing loss or late-onset deafness. The many different reasons for Akwan’s late identification indicate that there are multi-faceted issues in supporting deaf children’s inclusion.
Newborn screening tests do not require active cooperation from the child but require the child to be still. Ben did not like the probes placed in his ears and refused to sleep even after sedated. The diagnostic process was not only challenging for very young children. In order to assess older children such as Anjali, pure tone audiometry requires her to respond through actions that indicate she can hear the sound. Mrs Ash reflected on the difficulty in getting the test done:

“During the [hearing] test, Anjali had to play with some toys. She didn’t cooperate. She didn’t know how to play. We had to do a different test where she doesn’t need to play with toys, but that was after several follow-ups”. (Mrs Ash)

It might be that the paediatric audiological techniques were not well developed at that time to get the test done. As a result, the parent had to reschedule for a different kind of test and caused them to lose time.

Mrs Chaz’s request for the hearing assessment was initiated by her suspicion than approached by the medical team, so she had to convince the health workers to do the test. When she asked the nurse to check,

“The nurse just clapped her hands, and at that time Caliph turned to her. I was not satisfied. We went to a private paediatric clinic, the doctor checked Caliph’s ear and said he is not deaf, but I refused to accept that because he didn’t do a proper test”.

Time was lost in the process of waiting for a referral letter from the primary care physicians. When she got a referral:

“The doctor sent a referral letter to a speech department. We had to wait for few months for the appointment and were told that we have to meet an audiologist first. So we had to wait again because there was a long queue”. (Mrs Chaz)

The less efficient of paediatric services and the limited awareness about the importance of the Newborn Hearing Screening programme among the hospital workers caused Caliph’s deafness to have late identification. Health workers who downplayed parental concern and suggested that the babies were too young to be tested or gave false assurance of normal hearing had delayed the identification
process. Identification of deafness was also delayed when an inaccurate recommendation was provided and caused the parents to have to reschedule to meet the right specialists.

In these four examples, I have indicated that the confirmation of deafness requires some time and children can be very difficult to test accurately where clinicians have not received adequate training. Several attempts and a combination of tests were required to provide sufficient information to identify the children’s deafness. As a consequence, support to develop the deaf children’s language and communication was also delayed which inevitably impact on the deaf children’s education.

Despite the delays, parents’ efforts to identify their child’s deafness have enabled the provision of support being made and therefore a crucial step for the deaf children’s inclusion in education.

8.3.2 Reaction following confirmation of deafness

Parents expressed mixed reactions to the confirmation of their child’s deafness regardless of who initiated the identification. Some of the comments:

“I was shocked even though I already suspected it. The doctor told us about the next step. After a week, I got up and I said to myself that I need to help my son. So, I told my family and we looked for information of what to do next”. (Mrs Chaz)

“When Akwan was identified to be deaf too, I was a little surprised and wondered why he was not identified before but that’s it. We proceed with the hearing aids fitting and attend speech therapy session”. (Mrs Alia)

The examples illustrate that some parents need some time and some parents might be able to quickly accept the news. This was the first experience for Mrs Chaz with deafness so she needed some time to understand the situation before she was able to decide about the next step. Mrs Alia was surprised too but she had experience with her first child so she was knowledgeable about what to do next.
In order to recover from the shock of the confirmation of deafness, some parents expressed gratitude and contentment. Two of the parents said,

“God has given me everything except for just one small little thing which is my child’s hearing. It is not very bad. Some deaf children cannot speak. I am very lucky that even though she can’t hear well, she can speak. I consider it as a blessing already”. (Mrs Ash)

“God is testing me to take care of a child like Bella. I believe we are the chosen one. He knows best”. (Mrs Bienda)

The parents noted that being grateful for other good things and accepting God’s plan has helped the parents to cope and be ready for the follow-up processes and intervention requirement. Being able to quickly recover from the news is also an important element that indirectly affecting deaf children’s inclusion because it relates back to the issue of early and timely support for deaf children.

8.3.3 Amplification and speech therapy

Early identification is of little importance if it is not combined with quality services that can benefit the children and families. Getting the deaf children identified as early as possible was compromised for many of the parents, and some parents need time to recover from the news, so support to develop the deaf children’s language and communication skills was also delayed.

Currently there is no support from specialist teachers for deaf children and their family before they attend school. So parents depend on the doctors, audiologist and speech therapist to advise about the needs of their deaf child. None of the parents talked about learning sign language. One parent mentioned about learning cued speech but because the centre is far from where they live, it was not considered possible.

The main support available to parents following the identification of deafness was to fit hearing aids to their child so that support can be provided to facilitate optimal speech and language programmes (Abdullah et al. 2006). Parents were referred to a cochlear implant team for further assessment if the child was a suitable
candidate for cochlear implantation (Goh et al. 2018). Since the age of the children's identification ranges between 1.5 years old to 8 years old (see Table 8.2), the issues of the process of amplification experienced by the parents vary.

Funds for the hearing technologies were available, but parents had to apply to the fund. Mrs Bienda had to wait for almost two years to get Bella’s hearing aids. The lack of urgency was probably because Bella’s unilateral deafness was not a priority. For bilateral profound deafness, approval for cochlear implantation procedure fund was quicker:

“The cost of the operation was MYR77,000 (£14,400). We applied for the hospital fund, waited for its approval for a few months and they gave us MYR70,000 (£13,000). We need another MYR7000 (£1,400). It was a lot for us. Until the date of the operation, we still didn’t have enough amount, so we had to postpone the operation for a few more months”. (Mrs Chaz)

Although Mrs Chaz received more than 90% of the total cost of the cochlear implantation, she lost time while waiting for the application to the hospital’s welfare department to be approved as well as getting enough funds for the surgery.

After amplification was fitted, parents had to ensure that their child wears the hearing aids consistently but not all parents succeeded:

“Bella doesn’t like her hearing aids until now. She said everything was too noisy. When she doesn’t wear it, she feels calm and peaceful”. (Mrs Bienda)

“Both Akwan and his brother do not wear the hearing aids all the time. I have to force them to wear it. They wear the hearing aids when they go to the speech therapy. When we are out and about, they don’t want to wear it. I think they feel shy about it”. (Mrs Alia)

Mrs Bienda and Mrs Alia have spent time on identification processes and getting the hearing aids but the children refused to wear them. Keeping hearing aids on children is not an easy task. There are many reasons for a child to reject the hearing aids including feeling uncomfortable or shy that people will stare. It also depends on whether children were fitted appropriately. Without effective hearing aid, the deaf children’s inclusion is compromised.
The availability of technology alone is not sufficient. Daily maintenance is required if it is to be used reliably and appropriately. Since hearing aids were provided by businesses external to the hospital, parents had to manage its maintenance when the hearing aid is in need of repair:

“I had to send the hearing aids for service. The company was in Singapore. It was expensive and took some time to get them back”. (Mrs Basha)

The parent loses time in waiting for the hearing aids to be fixed especially when the hearing aid dealers are based overseas. In this case, the logistic of the hearing aids maintenance is inefficient. When alternative is provided, parents expressed satisfaction:

“While waiting for Caliph’s processor in service, they gave him a spare processor. So that was good. He was able to continue to hear while waiting”. (Mrs Chaz)

Ensuring the process of amplification and the management of the hearing technologies are efficient is essential to ensure that speech is audible and comfortable for the children. Yet again parents lose time due to the lack of funding and availability of technology within the area to ensure optimal usage of the hearing technologies. The following section discusses the parents’ experiences as a result of receiving support for the amplification and speech development processes.

8.3.4 Outcomes of amplification and speech therapy

The parents’ experiences of the fitting a hearing aid and its management is a complex and gradual process. In this section, I reflect upon the parents’ experience of their deaf child’s amplification and speech therapy. As mentioned previously, five of the seven parents have their deaf child fitted with hearing technologies. Among these five, four of the parents sent their deaf children to attend speech therapy.
Equally important to understand is the duration of the parents’ experiences with their child’s hearing technologies. At the time of interview in 2016, parents’ experiences range from four to fourteen years depending on the age of the child and when they were fitted as indicated in Table 8.2. Mrs Alia had the longest experiences because her older deaf son was fitted in 2002 while Mrs Bienda has the least experience with her child’s hearing technologies when Bella was fitted in 2012. The year when the child was fitted is also important to understand the availability of technology at that time in order to understand the complexity of the outcomes of the intervention.

All four parents who sent their children to speech therapy acknowledged the improvement that the hearing technology has made to their speech – especially the more expensive hearing aids:

“At first I bought the cheap hearing aids, about MYR3500 (£650). The hearing aids provider did warn me that the filters were not very efficient. Ben wasn’t making much progress. When he turned four (2008), we decided to change his hearing aids that costed MYR9000 (£1700). He made exponential progress with the new hearing aids. It was clear to us that the quality of hearing aids made so much difference to his speech outcomes”. (Mrs Basha)

This parent reflected on the importance of children wearing quality devices. She was convinced that a better quality of hearing aids has enabled Ben to hear more clearly and therefore able to develop speech. Note that Ben was first fitted with hearing aids when he was two years old. Only after two years later, Mrs Basha was able to decide that the hearing aids that Ben was wearing were inappropriate. The process of reviewing the outcomes takes time and parents had to wait but at the same time be an active evaluator of the process to be able to decide.

Not only that the amplification and speech therapy improved the children’s speech, the parents also reported other areas of development including literacy skills.

“At the beginning, Akwan had to point to the object that the therapist said. He learned to differentiate sounds. At later stage, he was asked to select from written words. He learned to read from attending the speech therapy session. He was able to read before he attended school”. (Mrs Alia)
Being able to hear has helped Akwan to make sense of the different objects and written words spoken by the therapist. Individual approach during speech therapy has also helped Akwan to listen attentively and be able to make sense of the different sounds he was hearing. Indeed, this process takes time and parents have to continue exposing their children with such training to help them learn to listen with their hearing aids.

While the majority of parents depend on the speech therapist to practise with their deaf child, one parent described her experience learning how to support her child’s speech:

“One of us, either the mother or father, had to attend the session with the child. The therapist taught us about things like signal sound and told us to introduce the sound slowly. We started with two sounds first then gradually increased the number of sounds we introduced to our child. We conducted session and they watched us do it with our child”. (Mrs Chaz)

In this example, Mrs Chaz mentioned that different therapists have different approaches in conducting the speech therapy session. Parents were included and expected to take a leading role in the session. Developing skills among the parents takes time before they can confidently conduct the speech training in order to provide continuous support to their deaf children. As presented in Chapter 6, Caliph has unclear speech and this on-going support from his parents is a crucial step in improving his participation in school.

Parents of children who have longer experiences with the hearing aids are more likely to have high expectations of their child. In addition, parents who take a role in their children’s progress expressed higher expectations of their child’s ability to speak. Early identification empowers parents to make timely choices that will allow their deaf children to be given a good start in life, and participate in family and the wider community activity and interaction. Delayed identification and intervention means that there are significant and irreversible difficulties in the child’s speech and in linguistic, cognitive, and educational development.
8.4 Limited information to support deaf children

Another theme which emerged from the parents’ experiences is the limited information within their environment about how to support their deaf child. The considerable amount of efforts made by the parents to help their child to develop speech had strong influences on children’s experience of inclusion in school.

8.4.1 Child development stages

There was a common assumption among five of the parents during their deaf child’s early years that children do not speak until they turned four or more. The trend is more apparent for those with the first child and the youngest child in the family. First-time parents have limited experience to compare the language development of their first child so often missed the development milestone until the language gap with other children is more obvious at later age. In the case where the deaf child is the youngest in the family, the child is often overprotected so their lack of speech is assumed to be as a result of being ‘spoiled’. Examples of the comment given to the parents when they talked about their child’s lack of speech or hearing to other extended family members or friends include:

“He is still too young. He will grow out of it”. (Mrs Alia)

“She was just being a bit silly [for not responding]”. (Mrs Ash)

“She was just spoiled because she was the youngest. She will learn to speak when she has friends”. (Mrs Bienda)

When parents have limited understanding about child development stages, these comments can influence how the parents’ reacted. Family members or friends who downplayed the parents’ concern and suggested that the children were too young to speak delayed the identification of deafness.

There is also a lack of understanding about the connection between hearing and speech. Ms Badilah did not know why Badil cannot speak. She said:
“Badil’s throat [voice] is fine. He can cry and scream loudly. He just cannot speak”.

Hearing loss is a hidden impairment and this parent had limited understanding about its implication to the child’s speech development. Badil can produce sounds such as crying and screaming but his deafness hindered his speech and language development.

A parent refused to believe that her child is deaf. Instead, she viewed her child’s lack of speech from a different perspective than the child developmental stages:

“I know Aisyah can speak. You know that ‘thing’ didn’t allow her to speak. People like Aisyah, who can see these unseen creatures will keep quiet because the ‘thing’ doesn’t want anyone to know about them”. (Mrs Ati)

Mrs Ati believes that Aisyah can hear but was not allowed to speak. Her superstitious belief contradicts the child development stages so support such as providing amplification was not provided. Instead, she claims that Aisyah communicates with her through what she called ‘telepathy’:

“I speak like usual with her but she won’t speak. She knows what I want to tell her and I can understand her, you know, like telepathy”.

The extent to which other family members communicate with the child at home is uncertain. As mentioned previously, Aisyah was identified by the teachers and she learned sign language when she attended school. The teacher said Aisyah’s older sister is beginning to learn sign language too.

8.4.2 Knowledge about the audiological management

The issue of limited information to support deaf children is also apparent throughout the process of intervention. At the time families were still battling to come to terms with the diagnosis, the shock and the grief, they were expected to understand the management of hearing technology. However, parents are not necessarily able to keep up with the advancement of hearing technology and its
benefit to children. Mrs Alia was offered cochlear implantation for her first deaf child in 2001. She said:

“The cost of cochlear implantation at that time was MYR80,000 (£15,000). Although my husband’s company can pay this, we thought about the long-term cost of this procedure. We took quite some time to decide as there was not much information available. There were not many children being implanted in Malaysia so we didn’t get to see the outcomes. We looked at some cases in the United States online. In the end, we decided to use hearing aids instead”.

Note that this was about five years after the establishment of the cochlear implant program in the Institute-HEARS in 1995. Funding was not an issue but the lack of information and limited understanding of the outcomes of cochlear implantation for deaf children in Malaysia restricted the parents’ ability to make an informed choice.

Although audiologists provide recommendation about the fitting of hearing technologies, it is up to the parents to decide its brand and model. As mentioned in previous section, Mrs Basha was left to decide which model to buy and she started with a less advanced model because it was much cheaper. She did not realise the significant difference the different levels of technology makes until after two years. Another parent also described her experience in selecting the hearing aid:

“The therapist suggested me to take Oticon brand. I was also asked to consider Siemens but I don’t like the design. I want it to be as hidden as possible. We proceeded with Oticon until now”.

Since hearing aid dealers are often external to the government hospital, parents are free to decide the brand and model. In this case, due to the lack of information about the different types of hearing aid, the parents’ decision was based on its appearance. While the clinician may understand the needs of hearing aid and the benefits that it will bring, the parents may not like it because it is the first visible proof that their child has a disability or is different from other children.

The logistics of the hearing aid maintenance and service also became an issue when the dealers moved:

“As she grows, the ear mould doesn’t fit her ear anymore. To change it I have to go to the shop [hearing aid provider] in Kuala Lumpur. There was
There was a lack of communication between the hearing aid dealer and Mrs Bienda that she had missed the information about them moving somewhere else. When parents have limited understanding about the benefits of hearing aid, ensuring the continuity of its usage is undermined. Mrs Bienda did not have the knowledge and urgency to find the dealer or change the hearing aid provider.

The parents’ of this study faced challenges due to limited information to support their deaf child. The parents’ effort to seek for information in order to support their children is part of the process to develop their child’s inclusion. Without parents’ attention to these complex processes, deaf children’s participation in education tends to being more challenging.

**8.4.3 Deciding the school**

Parents were informed about the amplification and support for speech development of their child, but there was limited information about how to choose the educational setting for their child. Since there are no specialist teachers available to support deaf children outside of the established special education services, parents had limited information about deciding the school. Ms Badilah sent her child to a community based centre because she did not know about school for children who do not speak like Badil.

Parents who are actively involved in deciding the usage of assistive technologies and initial support, helped other parents to decide on their child’s education. For two of the parents who identified their child’s deafness before the child turned two, they had worked on improving the child’s speech for at least four years by the time the child was ready to attend school. Since their deaf child can speak, they thought attending mainstream school was appropriate:

“I wanted Caliph to speak so why should I send him to special school for deaf children? They [the teachers] will use sign language and Caliph will stop speaking if he goes there [special school]”. (Mrs Chaz)
“I have hired a personal speech therapist that came to our house since he was 2.5 years old and I also bought the more advanced hearing aids for Ben. He was already speaking so I don’t want him to stop speaking if he attends special school for deaf children”. (Mrs Basha)

The parents have an expectation that school for deaf children only use sign language and deaf children who learn to sign will not learn to speak. Parents’ limited knowledge about the complexity of this connection caused them to think that mainstream school is the only option for deaf children.

Identification and intervention is only ever as good as its management. Without support from professionals who have specialist knowledge or understanding of deafness, then management of amplification, speech training practices and monitoring child’s development have to be the parents’ responsibility. As this section has illustrated, within the limited knowledge and awareness, parents took a pragmatic approach. What is apparent among the majority of the parents is that the professionals’ guidance is welcomed. The guidance can work to take away anxiety that they, as parents, might not be doing the right thing.

8.5 Assumption that special education is the only option

To enrol a child in school in Year 1, parents had to fill in the registration form and the state education department decided the school for the child based on their address and availability in the area. A couple of parents were advised by the district education officer of the procedure for children with disabilities including deaf children:

“I went to the district education office to ask about where should I enrol Bella and the officer told me that first I have to register with the welfare office to get the OKU[^1] card. I had to send a copy of the medical report and OKU with my school application”. (Mrs Bienda)

Children who were identified as having a disability including deafness, are expected to register with the welfare department. The registration enables the children to be identified, and a monthly allowance can be allocated. Since there

[^1]: OKU is the abbreviation for Orang Kurang Upaya which means people with disability
are separate system of mainstream and special education, parents have the expectation that their child will be placed in a school with SEIP.

The combination of delayed identification and intervention and parents limited access to information resulted in these children falling behind their normal hearing peers in language, cognition, social and emotional development. Five of the parents thought 'special education' is most appropriate because of their children's language delay. Mrs Alia had her older deaf child attends a special secondary school for the deaf and Akwan attends the SEIP unit. As a primary school teacher, she regarded special education as necessary for her deaf children:

“I want Akwan to be in the SEIP. The [special education] teachers can focus on him. It is not possible in the mainstream classroom as there are about 40 children in a typical class. In the SEIP, when he saw his friends wear the hearing aids, he wears them”.

Mrs Alia highlighted the importance of attending the SEIP unit to enable Akwan to receive individual support in a smaller classroom than the mainstream classroom. She also acknowledged that having deaf peers can increase Akwan’s confidence about wearing hearing aids.

Two parents experienced refusal from the mainstream teachers when they decided to include their children in the mainstream classroom:

“The speech therapist told me to send my child to mainstream school so I did. But at school, the teacher said that she doesn’t know how to communicate with deaf children and asked me to send him to a special school for the deaf instead”. (Mrs Chaz)

This shows the mismatch of guidance given by professionals during the early intervention program, and the communication approach used in school. Although Caliph speaks, the teachers had assumed that all deaf children should be educated in a 'special education' setting instead.

8.6 Reflecting on the parents’ experiences of inclusion

The parents in this study come from a wide range of backgrounds. Some were able to afford hearing aids and were willing to spend a considerable amount of
money on the more advanced audiological technologies, while others believed that their deaf child’s difficulty in speaking is the result of a supernatural force, and that one day they would be able to speak. The mothers’ level of education ranges from high school certificate to a doctoral degree.

The parents in this study all had contact with medical professionals and hearing aid providers long before their children started school. Those children who receive cochlear implants and digital hearing aids are likely to be advised by doctors and audiologists since they are involved in the initial diagnosis and the fitting of hearing aids. While advanced medical services are available, guidance for parents on how to make decisions about educational provision for their deaf children is not provided. The child or family have to fit an existing service delivery model, rather than being offered an individualised plan that meets the specific developmental, communicative, educational, and social needs of the child and the family. There is a contradictory approach between the intervention by medical professionals with deaf children, and the mode of communication promoted by teachers of the deaf in schools. The general assumption that all deaf children communicate using sign language conflicts with and undermines the parents’ aspirations for their children to continue learning to speak, as encouraged by the speech therapists.

Some parents regard the teachers as the experts in their children’s education. Four of the seven parents think that there is only one way of educating deaf children – and that is in a specialist facility. These parents want their child to receive individual support so the organisation of deaf children into small special ‘units’ is considered to be appropriate, but three parents think otherwise. Those parents with a higher level of education played a stronger advocacy role in their deaf children’s inclusion in education. These parents sought information on the internet, can afford the cost of private resources and intervention for their deaf child. One parent participated in the organisation of parents of deaf children. They perceive the placement of deaf children in mainstream classrooms as important in helping the development of spoken language and social skills. However, due to the fact that mainstream teachers are not trained to teach deaf children and are reluctant to include them in mainstream classrooms, these parents had to advocate for the arrangement to be made. Although school leaders agreed with
the parents’ demand, parents reported that they are not liked by the teachers for going against the teachers' preferences.

The limited availability of government funding for audiological support is an additional barrier facing parents. They have to pay for the maintenance of the hearing technologies. There are limited speech training sessions and parents pay for private sessions instead. Although subsidies are available from the Government, approval of these subsidies can take up to two years and so parents often have to cover the cost of the technology and its maintenance.

There is also a lack of comprehensive information and practical support to reinforce parents’ confidence and ability to cope with the stress of parenting their children. Typically, parents received support from informal sources such as family, friends and other parents, similar to parents of children with other disabilities as reported by Toran et al. (2013). Internet and social media sites are noted as another source of information but the dearth of local publications in the Malaysian context mean that parents are at risk of receiving inaccurate data, being advised by non-trained individuals or implying ideas from another context, which are mostly based in western countries (Porter and Edirippulige 2007). There is no one-size-fits-all approach that can be applied to all children, as their needs are necessarily to be tailored at individual levels, but parents are not fully informed of this complexity in making decisions for their children (Young et al. 2006)

**Summary**

In this chapter I have presented the experiences of the parents of deaf children in relation to the deaf child’s inclusion. Findings from the parents reflected the complexity of deafness and its implication to the inclusion debate. I have argued that the starting point of the parents varies, and this has an influence on the identification, amplification and intervention process. The parents lost time and had limited information in supporting their deaf child. Parents who are more aware, knowledgeable and willing to provide optimal support for their children will be in a better position to formulate their child’s needs and ensure these are met. I argue that in order for deaf children to be included, being identified and early intervention
is important to develop a child’s language. Without effective language and good communication skills, children cannot be expected to fully participate in school. The fact that ‘special education’ is the dominant approach to educate deaf children represents a considerable barrier to the children participating in education. The following chapter discuss findings from the deaf adults’, children’s, staff members’ and parents to address the complexity of deaf inclusion.
Chapter 9  Addressing the deaf inclusion dilemma

This chapter is organised into four sections to answer the over-arching research question that informed this thesis: What are the school stakeholders’ experiences of deaf children’s inclusion? The school stakeholders’ experiences indicate that deaf children’s inclusion can be understood from the perspective of ‘dimensions of inclusion’ including location, curriculum, language and communication, acoustics, amplification, friendship and socialisation which are all inter-related. I argue here that experience of one dimension of inclusion cannot be understood in isolation from the others.

9.1  Specialist and whole-school approaches to inclusion

In this study, I have argued that there is great value in listening to school stakeholders’ experiences, in understanding the meaning of inclusion and to use these experiences to address the deaf inclusion dilemma in the Malaysian education system. While the term ‘inclusive education’ used in the SDG4 recognises the renewed focus on inclusion to be seen more broadly, targeting all children including those who are under-served, vulnerable and disadvantaged (UNESCO 2016b), ‘inclusive education’ in Malaysia is currently understood, in policy terms, as merely the location in which children with disabilities, including deaf children, are educated. Official placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms is seen as ‘inclusive’ and is provided through the ‘Inclusive Education Programme’ – with limited understanding of the complexity of including deaf children in noisy, high stakes classrooms. There was also a lack of a mechanism to interpret the Government’s purpose for adopting the inclusive education approach and teachers had different understandings of the inclusion of deaf children (Section 7.2). The increased diversity in classrooms, was not followed by transformation in the way schools and classrooms are organised (Loreman 2017), so the physical inclusion of a deaf child in a mainstream classroom without sufficient support also promotes the child’s exclusion from the lesson (Jarvis 2007).
The findings confirm that increased political will, as a result of international policies such as the Salamanca statement and UNCRPD, as well as advances in audiological technology and related specialist knowledge, has enabled deaf children to develop greater spoken language abilities and to attend mainstream classroom (Section 6.3). The availability of the hearing devices has had an impact on the choices available to deaf children and their parents. However, teachers in Malaysia have limited audiological training, and so children do not gain the full benefit from this technology. Specialist knowledge for educating deaf children was restricted to the use of sign language (Section 7.3) and was insufficient to reach out to the deaf learners’ full potential (Lynas 2002). The aim of providing specialist support, from trained teachers of the deaf for example, should be expanded to be an integral part of a mainstream school in order to provide the right conditions for children’s learning as recommended by the UN General Comment on inclusive education (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2016).

The separate thinking about the education of children with disabilities and the mainstream education (Miles and Singal 2010) within the Malaysian education system means that teachers tend to regard meeting the needs of deaf children as a low priority, and so they are less likely to make the children’s learning environment more inclusive (Ainscow 2007). Whilst the existence of SEIP has enabled access to specialist support individually, or in a small group, the deaf children are accessing a narrow curriculum and are subject to limited opportunities for the advanced courses which prepare children for post-secondary academic success (Angelides and Aravi 2015). The unequal access to the curriculum may lead to reinforce and exacerbate the inequality inherent within the school community and society (Miles 1997; Cole 2006). At the same time, parents were not informed about the strengths and limitations of this kind of educational provision, so they are not prepared for the consequences of their decisions (Young et al. 2006).

Sometimes in the context of few material resources, options are limited or not available, and deaf children attend their local schools without specialist support. The fact that Caliph’s and Zack’s teachers and parents took a lead role in supporting their educational needs demonstrates their concerted effort to
encourage the acceptance of children with diverse needs. Parents of deaf children who acted as advocates for their children to receive an education that demonstrates opportunities to improve speech, have challenged the assumption about deaf children’s education in Malaysia (Chapter 8). This study has illustrated that both the characteristics of individual children and their families, as well as the realisation of the barriers within the school system are the ‘levers for change’ (Ainscow 2005) to encourage the development of education that is inclusive and equitable. An appreciation of the importance of developing a broad range of flexible support structures in accommodating individual differences between deaf children would also be helpful in developing equal education practices (Archbold 2015a).

Radical application of inclusion policy without considering the local culture and circumstances has resulted in resistance to making changes in practice (Rose 2017). Despite the good intentions to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities, some school stakeholders in this study were found to resist the inclusion policy such as presented by staff members and parents in Chapter 7 and 8 respectively. This resistance not only stemmed from the rigid education system, but also from societal expectations of deaf children (Simonsen et al. 2009). A National ‘standard’ agenda is useful to set ‘high-quality education’ but a narrow view of ‘education’ limited to ‘scores’ is unhelpful and risks children’s overall development (Ainscow et al. 2006; Norwich 2013) and the study supports this as there were little spaces to ‘catch-up’ with the lessons (Section 7.4).

An explicit and holistic reform within the society is needed to improve awareness about the complexity of meeting the educational needs of deaf children and their families and the purpose of developing inclusive education. Staff members had limited training about the implementation of the inclusion policy and yet are expected to spread the idea to other school stakeholders. It is therefore not surprising that when faced with challenges, staff members had little motivation for its application. Interestingly, children who spent most of their time with deaf children in school were found to develop some understanding about their deaf peers’ needs such as reported in Section 6.3, despite not being taught by any specialist teacher. The development of friendship and the sense of belonging
between the children has become an internal motivation for the children to negotiate their differences (Antia et al. 2002).

School reform is necessary but has been insufficient for the deaf children’s education. I have illustrated that early and timely support provided, following the identification of a child’s deafness, is also important and has significant impacts on the child language, communication and educational experiences. The fact that most deaf children in this study have delayed identification and amplification represent considerable barriers to the children participating in education. Teachers and parents need to be aware of this limitation in the health-related provision, so that children’s needs especially related to their language and communication skills can be appropriately supported (Fadzilah et al. 2016). At the same time, parents’ involvement is crucial, to determine the purpose of education that benefits the children’s language, cognition, social and emotional development (Hornby and Lafaele 2011). Networking can help parents to build confidence and social capital in order to better support their child (Singal 2008; Miles et al. 2012).

While there is an argument within the literature that identification of disability entails the danger of stigmatisation (Wedell 2008), findings from this study illustrate that; identification of deafness enabling support to be effectively provided to meet children’s educational needs, especially when parents are in denial of their child’s deafness. Usage of audiological devices means that there are yet more variables in deaf children’s education, including the age of hearing aid fitting and cochlear implantation, type and quality of devices, and management of the intervention system (Archbold and Mayer 2012). Diversity within the discourse of disability is often overgeneralised to all children with disabilities, which risks the specific needs of deaf children. Since the majority of children in both SEIP in Aman and Bijak School were children with learning disabilities, the needs of deaf children were grouped with the majority.

9.2 Communication tensions and challenges

The mechanism in which deafness was identified among the children in this study varies (Section 8.2) but the common trend was that they all had delayed
identification and support to develop their language and communication skills before they turned three; when the ability to learn a language becomes more difficult (Moeller et al. 2013). There was a very limited opportunity to learn sign language during the deaf children’s early years because specialist teachers are only available in the established special education services. Training for Malaysian Sign Language is only provided by NGOs such as the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf and training for interpreters is also limited (Yusoff, 2014). Since there are limited resources and expertise for sign bilingualism in Malaysian schools, it is unlikely that this approach can be implemented effectively in the immediate future, and Leigh and Johnston (2004) have argued that there is a lack of evidence to support the effectiveness of this approach. The study also illustrates the varied communication practices taking place in schools, and the dominance of Hand Code of Malay as part of a total communication approach, rather than the structured use of Malaysian Sign Language. Even so, specialist teachers reflected on the difficulty of teaching abstract concepts to deaf children due to the limited sign language competency of the teachers and the children (Section 7.4). The fact that none of the children’s parents uses sign language at home represents considerable barriers to sign language learning among the deaf children.

Two parents had difficulties in accepting their children’s deafness which resulted in children having no mother tongue or sign language skills before they started school, especially for children with greater degrees of deafness (Section 8.4). Parents who were frustrated ended up neglecting the child or were unable to stay committed. This had a direct impact on children’s wellbeing, as is the case in other developing countries such as Cameroon and Zimbabwe (Wilson et al. 2008). The Government’s initiatives on inclusion are in line with the agenda to increase the profile of those with disabilities so that the societies are more aware of their needs rather than denying their existence. Parents who are able and willing to spend time and money on supporting the deaf children’s language and communication skills following their identification, were more likely to be committed to taking ownership of the decision they made for their child’s communication and education.
Being able to speak was the dominant approach following identification, as doctors and audiologists were involved in the initial diagnosis and the fitting of hearing aids. There was a lack of information for parents to make decisions following identification which led to parents making decisions based on professionals’ (audiologists and teachers) advice. As a result, parents have to bear the consequences with limited support (Moeller et al. 2013; Young et al. 2006) which highlights the importance of parents’ full awareness about the long-term management and outcomes of hearing technologies, if hearing technologies are to be sustained (Archbold and O’Donoghue 2007). There was also limited access to amplification and frequent speech therapy services due to financial issues and long queues. Without effective language and good communication skills, children cannot be expected to learn in school. Without effective schooling throughout childhood, limited personal, social and employment opportunities are available in the whole of life. It is important to note that the introduction of the Newborn Hearing Screening in 2001 has changed the mechanism by which deaf children are identified and initiated by health professionals, which means the age of identification can now be within the post-natal period (Ministry of Health 2015). As previously argued, without institutionalised mechanisms to screen hearing, children’s identification of deafness can remain undetected leading to intervention being delayed.

Adequate auditory stimulation in early childhood is the foundation for optimal speech and language development as well as the acquisition of literacy skills (Archbold and Mayer 2012; Mayer and Trezek 2015). Zack (23 years old) was identified at four, fitted with hearing aids and attended speech therapy at around four years old. This was about 20 years ago, yet Akwan was also identified at the age of three, fitted with hearing aids and attending speech therapy at the age of four. Only Ben and Caliph were identified before they turned two and attended speech therapy before three years old. Research has shown that children receiving cochlear implants and learning to speak before 24 months have attained some aspects of language comparable to their normal-hearing peers (Yoshinaga-Itano et al. 2010). Although support from educationalists was not available prior to attending school at the age of seven, access to speech therapy has enabled the deaf children to gain literacy skills (Section 8.3). Attending mainstream school
helped Zack, Ben and Caliph to develop spoken language despite having severe to profound deafness.

Another important factor that has influenced the children’s spoken language development is access to powerful and consistent usage of hearing technologies. Deaf adults such as Zack and Yuyu did not have the opportunity to consider cochlear implants when their deafness was identified, but children in a developed state such as Selangor that were born after 1995 following the establishment of HUKM Cochlear Implant Centre have had an alternative option than those previously reported. Rapid advancements of technology have also changed the quality of hearing aids such as presented in Ben’s case (Section 8.4). Deaf children who see the benefit from wearing the devices also see the value in wearing them, so they are motivated to wear them more consistently despite being teased and having to tolerate a noisy background (Section 6.3). It is therefore crucial for parents and professionals to manage the acoustic environment, maintain the hearing technologies and increase awareness about deafness within the school environment so that children can wear their hearing aids more consistently (Iantaffi et al. 2003).

There was a general assumption that the impact of mild to moderate deafness is lesser than those with severe and profound hearing loss, even in developed countries such as the UK (Archbold et al. 2015). This assumption led to the negligence of usage of hearing technologies and ability to hear in noisy backgrounds. Bella and Badrul depend on visual cues such as lipreading to support their hearing, yet, only a small amount of speech is represented on lips and sounds such as /b/ and /m/ have similar mouth shape (Leybaert and Alegria 2003). Cued speech is argued to support this limitation, yet, this service is only provided in a private school administered by the National Deaf Association of Malaysia with little evidence of success (Yasin et al. 2013).

A lack of specialist knowledge and equipment such as qualified teachers of the deaf and hearing technologies in low-income countries such as Uganda is a common issue even in special schools for the deaf (Kristensen et al. 2006). Although the SEIP is a specialist facility designed to accommodate deaf children,
there was a lack of trained teachers of the deaf, the walls between the classrooms were not soundproofed, and deaf children find the background noise distracting. Gregory (2005) argues that mainstream schools need to provide specialist support pertaining to deaf children’s linguistic, deaf identity and social development, as well as meeting children’s audiological and academic needs, in order to ensure deaf children’s inclusion in education. Therefore, both mainstream and specialist provision has to be transformed to be able to accommodate deaf children within mainstream settings to be regarded as centres of expertise to support inclusion. However, as De Raeve et al. (2012) have demonstrated, the management of this kind of service centre in Belgium includes ensuring that the staff have the skills to meet these challenges. Application of this initiative in middle-income countries such as Malaysia must also consider the cost and availability of experts to train professionals within the context.

Findings from this study also revealed the limited collaboration between ministries to support deaf children’s language and communication needs. Professionals involved in the deaf children’s education are mainly perceived to be the teachers. Support from health-related services such as doctors, audiologists and speech therapists (Archbold and O’Donoghue 2007) and community such as deaf adults (Miles et al. 2011) were not recognised as part of the educational plan for individual children. Parents managed these needs separately such as advocated by Caliph’s mother who is one of the founders of an NGO for parents of deaf children with hearing technologies. This study has documented this emerging trend among parents to advocate for the right of their children to receive an education that meets their child’s needs. Professionals working with deaf children need to be trained to deal with the different opinions about which mode of communication to use, where to educate a deaf child, and what are the best methods to use to teach deaf children, because these have been ongoing sources of controversy and seem likely to continue to be debated.
9.3 Disability rights and “wrongs”\textsuperscript{5}

As the first disability rights legislation, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities (UNCRPD) is glorified due to a variety of reasons, and one of them is because it shifts the promotion and protection of the rights of people with disabilities from medical or charity model towards social model which adopts human rights-based approach (Shakespeare 2013). Findings from this study, however, reflected that school stakeholders including the two deaf adults have limited capacity to claim rights, even though the Malaysian government signed and ratified the law in 2010. While issues such as the right to inclusive education were highly debated in countries of the North (Rieser 2008; Beco 2014), it had a limited realisation within the Malaysian education context. This is partly because special education is still the dominant approach to educating children with disabilities, and inclusive education is defined as part of the continuum of educational provision (Education Act 1996 1998), instead of the rights of all children (UNESCO 2015b).

The complexities inherent in the discourse of disability intensified the debates about the rights of persons with disabilities. Disability is argued to have multi-factorial connections with the social reality of an individual's lived experience, and these factors are not only resided in the structural or attitudinal barriers within the society but also how impairment is perceived and experienced by the individual (Hughes and Paterson 2006). Struggling with basic needs is amongst the reasons for disability rights to receive less priority in countries with poor resources (Katsui et al. 2016). Findings from this study are in line with this argument since schools and families have limited capacity to even provide sufficient trained teachers (Section 7.4) and limited resources to support the initial language and communication needs of deaf children (Section 8.3 and 8.4).

The fact that some Deaf scholars associate deafness as an identity further complicate the disability-rights movement (Scully 2012). There are other forms of identity such as race and a range of intersecting factors such as an individual’s

\textsuperscript{5} The title is borrowed from Tom Shakespeare book, “Disability rights and wrongs revisited”
social status, socio-economic position, human and social capital which are inevitably intertwined and can result in completely different experiences and opportunities. For example, Anjali associated herself with other Indian children in her school (Section 6.3) but not with the deaf children in the SEIP like Akwan and Aisyah. Usage of audiological devices such as hearing aids and cochlear implantation has added yet more heterogeneity within the deaf population including the age of hearing aid fitting and implantation, type and quality of devices, and management of the intervention system (Archbold and Mayer 2012). With access to hearing technologies, deaf children were also reported to have associated themselves as both deaf and hearing (lantaffi et al. 2003).

Another difficult argument about the rights of deaf individuals is related to empowering the teaching and learning of sign language to preserve the collective cultural rights of the Deaf community (Snoddon and Underwood 2017). The use of audiological devices and speech training are considered by some to be threatening to the Deaf population (Anglin-Jaffe 2015). However, the rights-holder, deaf children as in this study, are too young to decide about their deaf identity when their deafness is identified and delaying the decision for fitted of hearing technologies limit their ability to develop spoken language (Yoshinaga-Itano et al. 2010). In order to exercise children’s rights to have their voice heard (Sandland 2017), deaf children need to receive support to develop their (spoken, language or written) language skills as a pre-requisite for equal participation. As this study has illustrated, resources to support for spoken language development are more advanced and have provided deaf learners with more opportunities to use their hearing more effectively and develop greater spoken language abilities compared to resources for sign language learning (Ow et al. 2007). The fact that sign language has no written form (Mayer 2007) further complicate the deaf children’s ability to develop literacy skills to communicate through written language.

It is important to explicitly state here that in putting forward these arguments, I am not making a case for not supporting the teaching of deaf children through sign language or that sign language approach is not ‘inclusive’. I argue that deaf learner’s experiences of inclusion are multi-dimensional and experience of one dimension of inclusion cannot be understood in isolation from the others (Section
5.2). By raising these issues, I am highlighting the complexities inherent in the realisation and practice of deaf children’s rights in education. It is equally important to recognise the ubiquity of support for deaf children. Despite the advancement of resources to develop deaf children’s spoken language, the high cost of hearing aids and cochlear implants limits the number of children who can benefit from this technology since not all parents can afford this (Section 8.3). The availability of technology alone is not sufficient. Daily maintenance is required if it is to be used reliably and appropriately (Archbold and O’Donoghue 2007). This study also highlighted the gap between the advancement of resources to support spoken language and the training of the professionals to cater the changing needs of deaf children (Section 7.4).

This study confirms the complexity to fulfil the rights to inclusive education. Since ‘inclusive education’ was introduced into the Malaysian education act as part of the continuum of services for children with disabilities, there have been children who are regarded as not being eligible for this ‘inclusive education’ provision (Section 7.3). This means that some children are already identified as not being entitled to the ‘rights of inclusive education’. The placement of deaf children in the mainstream classroom was argued to prepare children for postsecondary academic and success (Angelides and Arvi 2015). However, the rigid examination-oriented curriculum within the Malaysian mainstream education system makes it difficult for deaf children to follow the fast-paced lessons. Separate educational provision for deaf children who do not speak and use sign language such as Aisyah was argued to be more ‘inclusive’ (Jarvis 2002), but the very small number of children in these separate classrooms means that they have limited opportunity to develop communication skills and to socialise. One possible way forward is for schools to monitor the many different dimensions of inclusion (social, curricular, organisational, linguistic and acoustic) and so evaluate the effectiveness of educational provision for deaf learners.

Although there are limitations and challenges in the development of inclusive education in the three schools, I argue that the process of educating deaf children in the schools has increased deaf awareness among the school stakeholders and at the same time empowered the deaf individuals and their family. This is indeed
as part of the Government’s plan to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities. Teachers and children who spent time with deaf children in mainstream classrooms were found to learn about the needs of deaf children despite not having any guidance from a specialist (Section 6.3 and Section 7.4). Chad and Anita had learned how to communicate with their deaf peers even when the hearing devices did not work. Daily interaction with the deaf children has enabled Teacher Amal and Teacher Chantek to develop teaching that is inclusive.

9.4 The bigger picture: Beyond schools and classrooms

The questioning and challenging of education practices must never slip out of the overall aim and purpose of education – despite these too are contested. In reality, deaf children of today are the citizens of tomorrow with all the rights and responsibilities to contribute to the ‘people and planet’ (UNESCO 2016a). The basic principle of education provided to all children including deaf children that reflect this wider agenda is argued to be necessary to promote sustainable futures.

School stakeholders, including policymakers, will need help in understanding that it is not enough to simply ‘include’ deaf children in a classroom environment. To include deaf learners on an equal basis in all the dimensions of inclusion identified in this article will require inter-ministerial collaboration, as well as a step change in the awareness of professionals about disability and deaf education. Early and timely intervention is crucial where teachers and health-related professionals such as audiologists and speech therapists, work together to meet the needs of the children. While access to hearing technologies is increasingly made available, the whole society needs to be taught to communicate with individuals who wear them, and this includes positive attitudes toward the limitation of the devices.

Inclusion requires a broader systemic reform to be part of the family and wider society socially and culturally than just moving the deaf individual from one classroom to another. Community involvement is needed to enable deaf children to be included not only in school but also within the society. Miles et al. (2011) presented a successful case in Uganda where the schools, parents, governments and local community worked together to have positive attitudes towards deaf
children and enable them to attend school in their communities. Every individual has a role to play in supporting the education of a child regardless of how small it may be. I have argued in this study that classmates and teachers who have positive attitudes toward the children’s deafness were responsive to meet the needs of the children (Section 6.3 and Section 7.4).

There is also a need to broaden the understanding of education to be about all aspects of life, not just the school hours. Education, as promoted by the SDG4, includes holistic and life-long learning perspective (UNESCO 2016b) where every individual is provided opportunities to update their skills continuously. Aisyah attended school and learned to communicate using sign language, but none of her family members learns sign language until recently. With limited language and communication skills, she had limited literacy skills to help her communicate through written language either. Yuyu’s experience highlights the importance of gaining literacy skills as they have profound and lasting repercussions for the lives of deaf individuals (Mayer and Akamatsu 2003). Support for deaf children to develop a language is critical to enable their inclusion in the wider society, employment and independent living. Interactive skills though are essential in most careers and deaf individuals who are perceived to have challenges when interacting with other people may not be as competitive or marketable for a professional position (Kelly et al. 2016).

Some scholars argued that inclusive education should be promoted to tackle social justice (Polat 2011). This argument has other complex discourses and arguments due to the complexity of its interpretation and factors that are beyond the scope of individual impairment and their environment (Norwich 2014). This study found that the unequal access to hearing technologies and the level of curriculum, increase the gaps within the population of deaf people. As reported by Goh et al. (2018), more than half of the recipients of cochlear implants are Chinese which illustrates the socio-economy gaps between races in Malaysian society. The rapid technological advancements are mainly available in urban areas, and this increases the gap of deaf children in less developed states.
Findings also reported that there was no indicator that boys are prioritised over girls such as reported previously (UNESCO 2018). The national educational report found that females always outperformed males across the level of education (Ministry of Education 2013c). In my study, I found that male and female deaf children have similar educational opportunities as in the case of Bella and Badrul. Both children are included in the mainstream classroom as a preparation for the national examination. In this case, gender does not appear to be the indicator to be included in mainstream classrooms but it depends on the child’s examination performances instead. In terms of access to hearing technologies, the previous study reported that out of 121 recipients of cochlear implants, 52% are female (Yusoff et al. 2017). This study found that the provision of hearing technologies depends on parents’ capacity to pay for the cost of the devices rather than the gender of the child.

Other structural issues within the education system such as funding and lack of inter-ministerial collaboration as discussed previously are big challenges that need to be resolved to ensure the sustainability of inclusive education. At present, there are limited mechanisms to hold the government accountable with regards to the rights to inclusive education, partly because it was introduced as part of a service for children with disabilities than the rights of all children. There is a need to transform the way it was conceptualised to include all children, hearing status notwithstanding.
Chapter 10 Conclusion

In this study, I have examined the diverse views of inclusive education, debates in deaf education and the Malaysian school stakeholders’ experiences in relation to the discourse of deaf inclusion. Throughout the thesis, I have suggested that academics, researchers, activists, policy makers, parents and staff members need to engage with the complexity of developing inclusive education for deaf children. To conclude, I reflect upon my personal journey, present the thesis contribution, discuss the implications and evaluate the strengths and limitations of this study. I have also included some recommendations throughout this conclusion.

10.1 Personal reflections

I embarked upon this journey with the aim of conducting an inquiry into understanding the implementation of inclusive education in Malaysian schools for deaf children. Yet I had a narrow and naïve understanding of these complex issues. I had a plan to follow but realised along the way that the answer was very complicated.

My initial understanding of inclusion is reflected from the Malaysian Education Act, that says inclusive education is “for pupils with special needs and who are able to attend normal classes together with normal pupils” (Education Act 1996 1998, p.341). There is no Malay word for ‘inclusion’, and the term ‘inklusif’ is used to mean the official placement of pupils with disabilities in mainstream classrooms. I am conscious that I did not discuss the broad idea of addressing diversity because the Malaysian government’s use of the term ‘inclusion’ is specifically for children with disabilities. I also learned from my MA dissertation that Malaysian mainstream and specialist teachers have limited collaboration in supporting children with disabilities (Khairuddin et al. 2016) (See Appendix G).

Prior to embarking on data collection, I viewed inclusion as something that could be achieved and it could be measured by a checklist. I conceived the placement of children with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, from the teachers’ perspective, as a task of acquiring new instructional strategies. I have come to realise that
inclusion is a process of improving practices and of developing new thinking about teaching and learning.

There have been many challenges in conducting the research because this type of research has not been done before. This has required me to address my own interpretations and assumptions to understand the dilemmas and debates within the literature in learning about inclusion and the education of deaf children. This involved reflecting on my training as a teacher of the deaf in Malaysia, learning about the education of deaf children in the UK and to the intense and sometimes bitter disagreements in the fields of inclusive education and deaf education – two fields of study which rarely connect with each other in academic studies.

Researching inclusion, particularly of deaf children, is a difficult task due to; the complexity of defining the contested concepts of inclusion and deafness, my limited knowledge that was confined to the Malaysian context and some knowledge of the views of the University of Newcastle’s special education and disability centre. I was almost always on a steep learning curve. Attending seminars, Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC), conferences and participating in discussions has enabled me to question my previously held assumptions and understandings. Conducting this study has been a valuable learning experience which has gradually expanded my awareness of the contrasting views. I learnt that inclusion involves being included in the family, in employment, having relationships with peers, and is not just about school.

10.2 Contribution of the study

This study presents a novel approach to researching deaf children’s perspectives of their experience of being included in mainstream schools. The methods used and the empirical findings reported here contribute to the small amount of literature in the fields of inclusive education and deaf education. The research presented here has the potential to inform the further development of the education of deaf children in low and middle-income countries by informing policy makers and school stakeholders how to develop inclusive education for deaf children. I argue here that this thesis has made four main contributions.
10.2.1 Adaptation of the NATSIP framework

This is the first study to adapt the National Deaf Children’s Society and National Sensory Impairment Partnership Quality Standards for the inclusion of deaf children framework for use in Malaysia. In this sense, I have made a methodological contribution to the way views and experiences of inclusion are explored. The framework was developed in the UK to guide best practice of educating deaf children in mainstream schools and focused specifically on the learning environment (National Deaf Children’s Society and National Sensory Impairment Partnership 2011). The Inclusive School Environment section of the framework was selected (QS03 – see Appendix A). The themes used to develop the individual semi-structured interview schedules included: positive attitudes; making reasonable adjustments; respect; friendship; communication; achievement; embedded specialist provision; training for staff; and developing acoustic settings. I developed interview schedules for different stakeholders – deaf adults, school leaders, mainstream teachers, specialist teachers, parents, deaf children and classmates, and have presented a detailed description of the process (see Appendix C).

10.2.2 Listening to unheard voices

Children’s and families’ perspectives are an essential part of developing more comprehensive and responsive approaches to deaf equality in educational settings, and this study represents an important step in this direction. There had been no qualitative research prior to this study which had reported deaf children’s perspectives of their experiences of being included in mainstream schools in Malaysia. Although the children in this study were sometimes shy and only spoke (or signed) in very short phrases, they raised issues that none of the teachers and parents mentioned, such as the background noise in the classrooms, their difficulty with the curriculum, feeling bored in school or their social isolation. There tends to be a lack of advocacy for children, especially in contexts where adults are respected as part of the culture. Telling the teachers to slow down when speaking could be considered to be a rude interruption, for example. Therefore, including
children’s voices in this research has provided a platform for them to express their thoughts.

It is also important to note that at least 30-40% deaf children have additional and sometimes complex disabilities. Teachers need to be trained to address the needs of these children (McCracken and Turner 2012). Although this was not part of the design of the study, one of the deaf children had been identified as having a learning disability – so reflecting this group of children. She spent most of her time at school with children with learning disabilities, not with deaf children. Inadvertently, deaf children with mild learning disabilities were represented.

This study also highlights the voices of parents who are missing from the Malaysian literature, and not prominent in the global literature. While parents of children with learning disabilities were involved in their children’s education through the Individual Education Plan (Hasnah et al. 2010), this is not the case for parents of deaf children, as Individual Education Plans have not been made compulsory for deaf children (Khairuddin 2014). It appears that there is nowhere that the voices of the parents are represented or heard within the framework of current educational provision for deaf children and this study has enabled their concerns to be heard. I have presented the findings from the children’s data to a wider society. First, I participated in the University of Manchester Postgraduate Summer Showcase in July 2017 and the poster was selected among the top five of the Faculty of Humanities poster presenters (see Appendix L for poster). I was invited to present at the university’s Postgraduate Researcher Open Day in October 2017 and I presented another poster on staff members’ experiences. These experiences have enabled me to engage with a wide range of audiences to disseminate the voices of the participants.

10.2.3 Challenged and informed inclusive practices

The significance of this study is in highlighting the specific barriers faced by deaf children in achieving their educational potential. The literature on inclusion is characterised by a narrow view of educational placement in the mainstream classroom. Through listening to the perspectives of the ‘key actors’ involved in
Malaysian primary schools, this study has illustrated that there are complex and multi-layered aspects underpinning the conceptual understanding of inclusion.

As argued previously, there are a series of inter-related dimensions of inclusion that need to be considered to understand what inclusion means. Indeed, becoming inclusive is essentially about listening to less powerful and unheard voices and challenging assumptions to inform practices (Rix et al. 2005). As the first research conducted on the inclusion of deaf children in Malaysia, this study represents the beginning of a longer term and more complex evaluation of educational environments in Malaysia. Through this study, I have been able to publish a paper in *Social Inclusion Journal* on the experiences of deaf children using some the dimensions (Khairuddin et al. 2018). This journal is an open access journal which gives free access to those interested in researching and understanding deaf children’s experiences in Malaysian primary schools. I received a feedback from a cochlear implant team member who thought that the work will be useful for further development of the field (see Appendix N)

10.2.4 Documenting and influencing policy and practice in middle-income countries

The fourth contribution adds to the body of culturally and contextually relevant knowledge in inclusive education in middle-income countries, which are often grouped with low-income countries. Most of the available literature on the experiences of deaf children in mainstream education focuses on high-income countries and makes assumptions about the availability of sufficient resources, including the latest technology. This study provides much needed guidance for practitioners and policy makers on how to interpret and develop inclusive practices for deaf learners in similar contexts to Malaysia. Including and listening to the voices of those directly involved in the implementation of the government’s policy on inclusive education, and allowing a space to challenge the assumptions and rhetoric within the current educational provisions. Findings from this study contribute to the further development of professional training and support for family and deaf children.
10.3 Limitations of the study

A strong point of this study has been its breadth and depth of focus at school and individual stakeholder levels. The diverse type of stakeholders including deaf adults, school leaders, mainstream teachers, specialist teachers, parents of deaf children, deaf children and their classmates enabled analysis of the consistency of sources contributed to the validation of the findings. I believe the rich empirical data collected could allow for other interpretations and therefore other conclusions could have been derived. However, the study was nevertheless small in scale given the diverse range of educational setting in Malaysia and the size of the deaf children’s population. Effort was made to obtain a representative sample of the school stakeholders in the schools to gain a balanced portrayal of their experiences.

The first limitation is related to the sampling of the deaf children. The study is limited by having only one deaf child with a cochlear implant in a mainstream school. This is mainly because the Department of Education does not keep this information. I could also have studied the SEIP in more depth since the two schools catered mainly for children who are identified with learning disabilities. The school stakeholders’ experiences may be different in SEIP that caters exclusively for deaf children. The challenge is to identify an SEIP that also offers deaf children the opportunity to learn in mainstream setting. Nonetheless, the fact that data saturation was reached reassuring the reliability of the resulting analysis and conclusions.

Secondly, I did not include observation as a method therefore I was not able to triangulate the teachers’ practices in the classroom. The time limitation of three-months-fieldwork by the government meant this was not possible. Thirdly, the limited time also meant that it is not possible to include the wider participation of the school stakeholders such as deaf adults who had not gone to higher education, and employment and policy makers. However, the views of deaf adults and school leaders are included substantially. The study also focussed on the most highly developed state in Malaysia. Research in rural areas where availability
of support for deaf children’s audiological technologies is limited may yield a different range of experiences and perspectives.

Finally, I purposively selected one of 17 aspects of the NDCS and NatSIP (2011) quality standards because my interest is on the inclusive school environment. There are other aspects such as the teachers’ competencies and classroom practices that may be relevant to the Malaysian or low-middle income country context. The framework that I developed has not been tried and tested before, so carries some risks and is experimental. Nevertheless, this predetermined structure of framework has been proved to be useful as an avenue of enquiry in the Malaysian context.

10.4 Implications for policy, practice and research

In exploring deaf children’s experiences of mainstream schools, this study raises more questions than it is able to answer, such as: what is the purpose of schooling and education for deaf children; what would an equal education system look like; and how can there be more flexibility in relation to communication methods and approaches in the education of deaf children?

There are several implications for policy, practice and research in relation to the development of inclusive education for deaf children that are highlighted by this study. Though the arguments are based in the Malaysian context, their significance can be applied to inclusion in education generally, are relevant beyond Malaysia, as referenced in various parts of the thesis.

10.4.1 Educational policy reform

Reform of the inclusive education policy in Malaysia is, I argue, necessary to develop education that is ‘inclusive and equitable for all children’ as recommended by SDG4. The fact that the policy was perceived as a part of a continuum of services for children with disabilities, limits its ability to include all children who are at risk of exclusion from the general education system. This study also highlights the need for holistic and interconnected policies based on the idea that a move
towards inclusive education cannot happen in isolation and requires systemic reform. In particular, decision-making bodies are collaborating more and recognition is growing that inclusive education is key to achieving high quality education for all learners.

10.4.2 Changes in practice

Development of legislation is meaningless without its implementation. Every citizen plays a role in holding the government’s accountable to implementing the national plan. Since inclusion is a complex and multi-faceted issue, evaluation of the dimensions of inclusion to understand the status of a child’s inclusion is needed to assess whether the setting benefits all the children. Friendship between children is something to be nurtured and not necessarily developed even when children are sitting next to each other. School staff members and parents need to develop opportunities to nurture the relationship to learn about diversity.

Early identification and intervention is a key to deaf children’s progress and development. As this study has demonstrated, even where hearing technologies are available, children are not developing language and communication skills to their fullest potential. A recommendation arising from this study, therefore, is that there should be a comprehensive programme to train and support all professionals and family members involved with deaf children.

This study also highlights the importance of broadening stakeholders’ awareness of deafness and its implications. Teaching sign language in school assemblies and painting murals around the school buildings are important first steps, however, there is much more to learn about deaf awareness, such as acoustics, hearing aid maintenance and acceptance of difference. This has implications for the way professionals are trained in future.

10.4.3 Improving research

More research in middle-income countries is needed to understand how deaf children learn in inclusive settings, particularly on the outcome of children fitted
with advanced amplification. Since this study found that staff members are not trained to support deaf children in mainstream setting, there is a need to review the Government’s policy to ensure that 75% of children with disabilities are included in mainstream classrooms by 2025.

There is strong political pressures from supporters of the Deaf community to consider the experience of deaf adults of being included in education (Lane et al. 1996; Anglin-Jaffe 2015). This study acknowledges that the experiences of deaf adults were valuable in understanding the overall experiences of education that have helped them in adult life. More research is needed to understand the implications of audiological advancement for school stakeholders.

This study focusses on one aspect of the NatSIP Framework. There is a potential to further develop and adapt the NatSIP to be used in middle-income countries such as Malaysia through examining the different aspects of the framework in light of the dimensions of inclusion identified in this study. Other dimensions could be identified to build an equivalent framework for Malaysia from these findings.
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Appendices

Appendix A Quality standards resource provisions for deaf children and young people in mainstream schools (National Deaf Children’s Society and National Sensory Impairment Partnership 2011)

Securing inclusion and effective teaching and learning
QS01 The curriculum
QS02 Teaching and learning
QS03 An inclusive school environment

Outcomes for deaf children and young people
QS04 Educational progress, attainment and expectations
QS05 Taking responsibility and making a positive contribution
QS06 Keeping and feeling safe
QS07 Social and emotional well-being
QS08 Enhancing economic prospects

Leadership and management
QS09 Vision and planning
QS10 Financial management
QS11 Staffing
QS12 Use of technology
QS13 Roles and responsibilities
QS14 Service level agreement

Participation and partnership working
QS15 Partnership with parents of deaf children and young people
QS16 Involving deaf children and young people
QS17 Multi-agency working

QS03 An inclusive school environment
The culture and ethos of the school promotes the inclusion and achievement of deaf children and young people and this is fully reflected in the school’s policies and plans.

1. Positive attitudes to deaf children are encouraged- The whole school fosters a positive attitude to deafness and deaf issues, and incorporates deaf awareness into the Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) programme.

2. Reasonable adjustments are made- Reasonable adjustments are made to help deaf pupils to be included in the school.

3. Deaf children feel valued and part of school community- Every deaf child or young person is treated as an individual and feels valued and part of the school community. They take on roles of responsibility within the school and have opportunities to contribute to decision-making.
4. **True friendships for deaf children are established**- There are opportunities for deaf and hearing children and young people to mix together and establish true and equal friendships.

5. **Effective communication is ensured**- There is effective communication between deaf children and young people and staff (whether signed or spoken). Where a deaf child or young person’s chosen communication mode is British or Irish Sign Language, this should involve appropriate hearing children and teachers acquiring competence in signed communication.

6. **Achievements are celebrated**- The achievements of deaf children and young people are celebrated.

7. **Resources are embedded**- The resource provision is embedded within the mainstream school. All provision staff attend appropriate in-service training and are fully engaged in whole school life.

8. **Ongoing trainings are available to all staff**- Training is routinely delivered to all school staff to support the creation of an inclusive school for deaf children and young people. Mainstream staff have the opportunity to access sign language and deaf awareness training which enables them to engage in communication with deaf pupils who use British or Irish Sign Language as their preferred method of communication.

9. **Noise is managed and an optimal acoustic environment is ensured**- The school has undertaken an acoustics audit and made all appropriate adaptations to ensure optimal acoustic learning environments. The acoustic environment of the provision meets the minimum requirements set out in relevant national standards and this is reviewed regularly. Staff understand the importance of noise management and implement strategies to manage noise within the classroom/whole school environment.
Appendix B Fieldwork timetable

### Three months
16 May to 12 August

| Date | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |
|------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| May  |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Not included | Travelling time | Initial visit | Deaf adult 1 | Setting A |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| June |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Setting A | School B | School B | School B |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| July | Data assessment/National holiday |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Setting C |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
| Aug  | Deaf adult 2 | Data assessment | Data assessment | Final data collection | Travelling time |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**Indicators**
- Saturday/Sunday
- School holiday
- National holiday
- Date not included in data collection timetable due to sponsor restriction
- Not a date
Appendix C Interview schedule

Deaf adults

Thank you for your time. I want to try to understand your experiences in schools that you went. There are no right or wrong answers. You can tell me anything. Nobody will know what you have told me. Whatever you say is important to help me understand your experiences. This is not to test your performance or competency. Anything you tell me is private.

Part 1: Personal background

- Can you start by telling me about yourself?
  - age, where do you work

- What school you went to?
  - Year, duration and location, type of settings

- Do you find school was useful? In what ways?

Part 2: An inclusive school environment for deaf pupils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communications are ensured</td>
<td>In your opinion, what makes an effective communication with any deaf children?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you communicate with family, teachers and friends?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do you find talking/signing to them?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What other ways you use to communicate with other people?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are embedded</td>
<td>What type of resources would you like to see in place for deaf pupils in school? Please provide example.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me about examples of family/school events in the school year?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- How was this working for you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reasonable adjustments are made</td>
<td>Can you describe a school that you consider would be successful for deaf pupils?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Thinking about your classroom, describe what the teachers do? Provide example of subject and activities.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What helps you to understand the lesson?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- What else could be done to help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True friendships are established for deaf children</td>
<td>Tell me about your friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Are they deaf or hearing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Where and when do you meet?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you maintain in contact with them?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How could this be improved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How important are these friendships?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Deaf children feel valued and part of school community | How does the school approach new parents and deaf child starting at the school?  
- Tell me about your own experiences  
- Would you like any changes to this?  
Is there any school activity that you like? Tell me about it.  
- If none, what activity you might like?  
- How many times this activity being held? |
| Thinking about all the different things in your school day:  
- done good work  
- helped at school  
- do well with homework  
- do well in extra-curricular activities (e.g sports)  
How did the teachers respond to them?  
How do you think parents of deaf children can help to inform the school about the children’s needs? |
| Noises are managed and optimal acoustics are ensured | How would you describe a conducive visual and listening environment for deaf pupils?  
In a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate your school/classrooms with regards to above descriptions? Give reason for your answer. |
| Ongoing trainings are provided | Teachers must be adequately equipped with knowledge and skills to teach efficiently.  
What do you think about your teachers?  
- How is it different from school to school? Please provide example.  
- What would you like to see in place? |
| Positive attitudes to deafness are promoted | To conclude, how do you feel about the attitudes of other school communities on your deafness?  
- Is the school deaf friendly? Tell me about the teachers/other staff/ other pupils on:  
  • understand lip-reading  
  • understand usage of hearing aids  
  • understand sign language  
  • use of visual-aids  
How do you think, knowledge about the needs of deaf pupils can be shared within your school community? Please give example. |

Is there anything else you would like to say about your school/teachers/friends?
Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview to talk about your experiences with deaf pupils. I'm Fafa and I am a doctoral student at the University of Manchester.

You will have looked at the information sheet I sent you about the project and I’d once again like to reassure you that your name will not at any time be associated with your responses. There are no right or wrong answers. You can say anything. Whatever you say is important for me to understand your experience. This is not to test your performance or competency. All your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Do you have any questions before we start? Could you confirm that you are happy for this discussion to be recorded?

Part 1: Personal background

- Can you start by telling me about yourself?
  - age, years of teaching experiences
  - What kind of training you had and where?
  - How long have you been in this school, how long have you been in administration position for deaf pupils?

Part 2: Teaching in inclusive school environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable adjustments made</td>
<td>Can you describe a school that you consider would be successful for deaf pupils? At administrative level, how do you approach in ensuring the needs of deaf pupils in this school are met?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What can you do for your school community (teachers/teaching assistants/pupils/parents) to meet deaf pupils’ needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are embedded</td>
<td>What type of resources would you like to see in place for deaf pupils in this setting? Please provide example.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How do you manage the supporting staffs and funding for deaf pupils in this school?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- What are the challenging and supporting factors that you may have identified throughout this process?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ongoing training are available</td>
<td>In your opinion, what kind of training will be useful for your staff working with deaf pupils?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What about yourself as school leader? Is there any training with regards to deaf pupils?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What challenging and supporting factors you faced in managing/providing training for your staff?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- i.e Fund, well-trained personnel, teachers’ willingness/unwillingness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication is ensured</td>
<td>In your opinion, what makes an effective spoken communication with deaf pupils? Can you tell me what this would look like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What about communication using sign language? How do you characterise effective communication with deaf pupils?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tell me about your experiences when communicating with deaf pupils?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive attitude to deafness is promoted | How do you think, knowledge about the needs of deaf pupils can be shared within your school community? Please give example.  
What strategies can be done to promote positive attitudes towards the needs of deaf children?  
  - In what ways it will help deaf pupils at school? |  |
| Friendships for deaf children are established | Tell me about the opportunities for establishing friendships at school for deaf pupils. Please explain.  
How do you think such friendships help the deaf pupils? |  |
| Achievements are celebrated | How do you encourage positive performance?  
  - How would you do to respond to challenging behaviour?  
  - How would you encourage very quiet pupils to engage?  
Can you tell me about the parents/family/carers’ participation in your school?  
  - How is this working for the deaf pupils? |  |
| Noise is managed and optimal acoustic is ensured | How would you describe a conducive visual and listening environment for deaf pupils?  
What do you think about the listening and visual environment at school/classroom? |  |
| Deaf children feel valued and part of school community | Thinking about the beginning of every year, what kind of programmes/school activities are available for deaf pupils attending this school?  
Based on your experiences, what opportunities are there for deaf pupils to feel part of this school? Please explain. |  |

**Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?**
Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview to talk about your experiences with deaf pupils. I’m Fafa and I am a doctoral student at the University of Manchester.

You will have looked at the information sheet I sent you about the project and I’d once again like to reassure you that your name will not at any time be associated with your responses. There are no right or wrong answers. You can say anything. Whatever you say is important for me to understand your experience. This is not to test your performance or competency. All your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Do you have any questions before we start? Could you confirm that you are happy for this discussion to be recorded?

Part 1: Personal background

- Can you start by telling me about yourself?
  - age, years of teaching experiences, training
  - teaching what subject, how long have you been in this school

- Can you tell me about the deaf pupils that you teach?
  - How many? Age range?

Part 2: Teaching in an inclusive school environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Positive attitudes to deafness are promoted | What were your expectations when you know you have to teach deaf pupils?  
  - Have those expectations changed/not changed? In what ways?  

  How do you think, knowledge about the needs of deaf pupils can be shared within your school community? Please give example.  

  In your opinion, what’s the attitude within the school community towards having deaf pupils in this school? Provide reason. |
| Effective communications are ensured | In your opinion, what makes an effective spoken communication with deaf pupils?  

  What about communication using sign language? How do you characterise effective communication with deaf pupils?  

  What other ways you use to communicate with deaf pupils? |
| Reasonable adjustments are made | How do you approach accessing the curriculum with deaf pupils?  
  - What about exam preparation, how about marking?  

  Can you describe teaching that you consider would be successful for deaf pupils?  

  Classrooms are busy places, what changes are required to include a deaf pupil? |
| **True friendships are established for deaf children** | Tell me about the opportunities for establishing friendships at school for deaf pupils. Please explain.  
How do you think such friendships help the deaf pupils? |
| **Resources are embedded** | What type of resources would you like to see in place for deaf pupils in this setting? Please provide example.  
Can you tell me about examples of family/school events in the school year? |
| **Deaf children to feel valued and part of school community** | Thinking about the beginning of every year, what kind of programmes/school activities are available for deaf pupils attending this school?  
Based on your experiences, what opportunities are there for deaf pupils to feel part of this school? Please explain. |
| **Achievements are celebrated** | How do you encourage positive performance?  
- How would you do to respond to challenging behaviour?  
- How would you encourage very quiet pupils to engage?  
Can you tell me about the parents/family/carers’ participation in your school?  
- How is this working for the deaf pupils? |
| **Do you receive any on-going training? Please describe the training.** | Do you receive any on-going training? Please describe the training.  
Tell me about your experiences working with other colleagues. How is this working for you? |
| **How would you describe a conducive visual and listening environment for deaf pupils?** | How would you describe a conducive visual and listening environment for deaf pupils?  
In a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate your school/classrooms with regards to above descriptions? Give reason for your answer. |

Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?
Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview to talk about your experiences with deaf pupils. I’m Fafa and I am a doctoral student at the University of Manchester.

You will have looked at the information sheet I sent you about the project and I’d once again like to reassure you that your name will not at any time be associated with your responses. There are no right or wrong answers. You can say anything. Whatever you say is important for me to understand your experience. This is not to test your performance or competency. All your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Do you have any questions before we start? Could you confirm that you are happy for this discussion to be recorded?

Part 1: Personal background

- Can you start by telling me about yourself?
  - age, years of teaching experiences
  - what kind of training you had and where?
  - teaching what subject, how long have you been in this school

Part 2: Teaching in inclusive school environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Resources are embedded | Can you tell me about the range of deaf pupils that you teach?  
What type of resources would you like to see in place for deaf pupils in this setting? Please provide example. |
| Reasonable adjustments are made | How do you approach accessing the curriculum with deaf pupils?  
- What about exam preparation, how about marking?  
Can you describe teaching that you consider would be successful for deaf pupils?  
Classrooms are busy places, what changes are required to include a deaf pupil? |
| Effective communications are ensured | In your opinion, what makes an effective spoken communication with deaf pupils?  
What about communication using sign language? How do you characterise effective communication with deaf pupils?  
What other ways you use to communicate with deaf pupils? |
| Deaf children feel valued and part of school community | Thinking about the beginning of every year, what kind of programmes/school activities are available for deaf pupils attending this school?  
Based on your experiences, what opportunities are there for deaf pupils to feel part of this school? Please explain. |
| Positive attitudes to deafness are promoted | How do you think, knowledge about the needs of deaf pupils can be shared within your school community? Please give example.  
In your opinion, what’s the attitude within the school community towards having deaf pupils in this school? Provide reason. |
|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Friendships are established | Tell me about the opportunities for establishing friendships at school for deaf pupils. Please explain.  
How do you think such friendships help the deaf pupils? |
| Achievements are celebrated | How do you encourage positive performance?  
- How would you do to respond to challenging behaviour?  
- How would you encourage very quiet pupils to engage?  
Can you tell me about the parents/family/carers' participation in your school?  
- How is this working for the deaf pupils? |
| Ongoing trainings are provided | Do you receive any on-going training? Please describe the training.  
Tell me about your experiences working with other colleagues. How is this working for you? |
| Noises are managed and optimal acoustics are ensured | How would you describe a conducive visual and listening environment for deaf pupils?  
In a scale of 1 to 10, how do you rate your school/classrooms with regards to above descriptions? Give reason for your answer. |

Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?
Parents of deaf children

Thank you for taking time to participate in this interview to talk about your experiences as parents of deaf child. I’m Fafa and I am a doctoral student at the University of Manchester.

You will have looked at the information sheet I sent you about the project and I’d once again like to reassure you that your name will not at any time be associated with your responses. There are no right or wrong answers. You can say anything you want. All your responses will be kept completely confidential.

Do you have any questions before we start? Could you confirm that you are happy for this discussion to be recorded?

Part 1: Personal background

- Can you start by telling me about yourself?
  - Age, how many children? Are you working?

- Can you tell me about your deaf child?
  - Current age, age of identification, type of deafness

- Does your child wear hearing aids or a cochlear implant, or both?
  - Tell me about when they first receive these? Has there been any change in the h.aids/CI since then?
  - Did the h.aids/CI make any difference? What did that look like?

  ***If h.aids/CI not used regularly, can you tell me about this? How did this happen?

Part 2: Inclusive school environment for deaf children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communication are ensured</td>
<td>How do you communicate with your deaf child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What does that look like? Provide example of situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>if signing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How did you and other family members learn to sign?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell me more about that; access, cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How useful/relevant the class is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What other ways you and your family use to communicate with your deaf child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable adjustments are made</td>
<td>Thinking about the school that your deaf goes to, how did you decide your child’s school? Was this your first preference?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were the key factors you considered both positive and negative?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How has this setting responded to your child’s specific needs?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are embedded</td>
<td>What type of resources would you ideally want for your deaf child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Tell me about the resources available in this setting. How do those work for your child?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me about examples of family/school events in the school year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic</td>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf children feel valued and part of school community</td>
<td>How do you think parents of deaf children can help to inform the school about the children’s needs?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Positive attitudes to deafness are promoted                          | How does the school approach new parents and deaf child starting at the school?  
  - Tell me about your own experiences  
  - Would you like any changes to this?                                                                                                      |
| How do you think the school can share information about the needs of deaf children? |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|  - Who do you think should have access to this information?           |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Can you share any example of you or your child experienced, where the school community (teachers/other students) have neglected the needs of deaf children? |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Tell me about the opportunities for establishing friendships at school. How is this working for your child?  
  - How such friendships help your child?                                                                                                   |
| True friendships for deaf children are established                    | What sort of opportunities is available for your child to make friends outside school?  
  - Tell me how is that working?                                                                                                           |
| What do you think about the teachers’ approach in their teaching? Provide examples. |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| In your opinion, is there training that would be helpful to improve teachers’ skills working with deaf child in this area? |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Do teachers seem aware of the needs of your deaf child? Please explain your answer.                                                                                                                   |
| What do you think about the listening and visual environment at school? |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|  - What can be done to improve this?                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Has your child ever complained about noise in the school? Tell me about it.  
  - Any complain about lighting in the school?  
  - Is there a problem with seating position?                                                                                                           |
| Achievements are celebrated                                           | How does the school encourage positive performance?  
  Tell me how this is applied to your child.                                                                                                    |
| Is there anything you would like to add that we have not discussed?   |                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
Thank you for your time. I'm Fafa and I study at the University of Manchester. I want to try to understand your views on school. There are no right or wrong answers. You can tell me anything. Nobody will know what you have told me. I will not tell any of the teachers or your parents.

Do you have any questions before we start? Are you happy to be recorded?

Part 1: Personal background

Can you start by telling me about yourself?

- Name, how old are you and what class are you in now?
- Where is your house?
- How long have you been in this school?
- What do you hope to do when leave school?

Can you tell me since when you become deaf?

Part 2: An inclusive school environment for deaf children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Effective communications are ensured</td>
<td>How do you communicate with family, teachers and friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Eg: When you are hungry, how do you tell them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do you find talking or signing to them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Usage of hearing aids:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How long have you been using them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If not using why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable adjustments are made</td>
<td>Imagine you are in a class and a teacher came in to teach. Describe what the teachers do? Provide example of subject and activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What helps you to understand the lesson?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What else could be done to help?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True friendships are established for deaf children</td>
<td>What do you do during recess time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If alone, why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If with other people tell me more about it. With who, what do you do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you have other deaf friends?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do you know them?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Where do you meet?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf children feel valued and part of school community</td>
<td>Is there any school activity that you like? Tell me about it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If none, what activity you might like?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How many times this activity being held?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Achievements are celebrated**

Thinking about all the different things in your school day:
- done good work
- helped at school
- do well with homework
- do well in extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports)

How did the teachers respond to them?

**Noises are managed and optimal acoustics are ensured**

If wearing hearing aids:
- How noisy is your school?
- Where and when?
- What do teachers do to change this?

If not wearing hearing aids:
- What’s the noise and visual setting like in classrooms?
- Can you see clearly the teachers and writings on the board?
- Can you see your friends’ in classroom discussion?

**Positive attitudes to deafness are promoted**

Everyone is different, think about your deafness, what do your friends/teachers think about that?
- Is the school deaf friendly? Tell me about the teachers/other staff/other pupils on:
  - understand lip-reading
  - understand usage of hearing aids
  - understand sign language
  - use of visual-aids

**Is there anything else you would like to say about your school/teachers/friends?**

*** Note: Discussion on “on-going training for school staff” and “embedded resources” are not included because children are unlikely to know about the training for the school staff and whether resources are embedded in the school. However, these topics are implied through other topics.
Thank you for your time. I’m Fafa and I study at the University of Manchester. I want to try to understand your views on school. There are no right or wrong answers. You can tell me anything. Nobody will know what you have told me. I will not tell any of the teachers or your parents.

Do you have any questions before we start? Are you happy to be recorded?

**Part 1: Personal background**

Can you start by telling me about yourself?

- Name, how old are you and what class are you in now?
- Where is your house?
- How long have you been in this school?

**Part 2: An inclusive school environment for deaf children**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>True friendships are established for deaf children</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your deaf friend in school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How did you get to know him/her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other than in class, when and where do you spend time with your deaf friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective communications are ensured</td>
<td>How do you communicate with your deaf friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How do you feel when talking/signing with him/her?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What difficulties arise?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>If signing, where do you learn to sign?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- How long have you been signing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What can you do to help them understand you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable adjustments are made</td>
<td>Imagine you are in a class and a teacher came in to teach. Can you tell me about the class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- What kind of activities do teachers do in classroom?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Provide example of subject and activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Do you think you have the same work/task with your deaf friend?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If different, how is it different?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf children feel valued and part of school community</td>
<td>What can you and your teacher do to help your deaf friend in:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- During extra-curricular activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me what activities you and your deaf friends take part? (i.e competitions, sports)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you learn about your deaf friend from this program?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Achievements are celebrated | Thinking about all the different things in your school day:  
- done good work  
- helped at school  
- do well with homework  
- do well in extra-curricular activities (e.g. sports)  

How did the teachers respond to them?  
- Are these the same for your deaf friend? |
| Noises are managed and optimal acoustics are ensured | When the teachers teach, you need to hear them but sometimes classroom can be very noisy.  
- Have you ever heard your deaf friend complained about the noise in classroom?  
- Have you ever heard your deaf friend complained that they cannot see the teachers, boards or when other friends talking/signing?  

What do you think teachers and you can do to help your deaf friend to hear well in class?  
- Think about when you talk to them, what challenges arise? |
| Positive attitudes to deafness are promoted | Everyone is different, thinking about your friend’s deafness, what do you think about that?  
- Would you like any changes to this? |

Is there anything else you would like to say about your school/teachers/friends?

*** Note: Discussion on “on-going training for school staff” and “embedded resources” are not included because children are unlikely to know about the training for the school staff and whether resources are embedded in the school. However, these topics are implied through other topics.
Inclusion of deaf pupils in Malaysia:
Stakeholder voices from three distinct educational settings

Participant Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research project identified above which is being conducted by Khairul Farhah Khairuddin as a PhD student at the University of Manchester. The research is supervised by Dr Susie Miles and Prof Wendy McCracken from the Manchester Institute of Education.

Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for taking the time to read this.

Who will conduct the research?
Khairul Farhah Khairuddin
Manchester Institute of Education
The University of Manchester M13 9PL
Manchester

What is the purpose of the research?
The purpose of this research is to understand the experiences of school stakeholders in educating deaf pupils in three distinct educational experiences.

Why have I been chosen?
You are chosen as one of the school leaders where deaf pupils are being educated.

What would I be asked to do if I took part?
Participation to the individual interview constitutes implied consent. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to answer questions regarding your experiences in managing the administration of deaf pupils in this school. All interviews will be audio recorded. For those who use sign language interviews will be video recorded.

What happens to the data collected?
After the interview, data will be transcribed. Thematic analysis procedure will be implemented. Themes from the findings will allow reflection on practice to inform development.

How is confidentiality maintained?
After all conversation has been transcribed, all names will be removed and changed to codes. You will be given the opportunity to review and edit the discussion transcript. The school’s identity will also be coded for privacy including the recorded tape. There is an expectation that data will be stored on encrypted devices or in encrypted files. All information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in the Manchester Institute of Education at the University of Manchester for 5 years and then destroyed. The only people with access to the coded records are the researcher and the two university supervisors except as required by law.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?
It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you
are still free to withdraw up to the time you submitted the transcribed interview without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

**Will I be paid for participating in the research?**
Participants will not be paid to participate in the research.

**What are the risks and benefits of participating?**
There are no direct benefits to the participants, although the information you provide may be helpful in informing the provision of support for future deaf pupils to other researchers as well as to the wider community. If you become distressed during the interview then you can choose to terminate or postpone the interview and you will be able to speak to the school counsellor if you wish. However, no known support can be offered directly by University of Manchester.

**What is the duration of the research?**
The interview will take about 30 to 40 minutes.

**Where will the research be conducted?**
The research will be conducted in the school area or a public area outside the school.

**Will the outcomes of the research be published?**
The outcomes of the study will be published as part of student researcher’s degree requirement.

**Who has reviewed the research project?**
The project has been reviewed by the University of Manchester Research Ethics Committee

**What if something goes wrong?**
You should contact the researcher and supervisor named above in the first instance in case you wish to complain.

**Minor complaints**
If there are any issues regarding this research that you would prefer not to discuss with members of the research team, please contact the RESEARCH PRACTICE AND GOVERNANCE CO-ORDINATOR by either writing to ‘The Research Practice and Governance Co-ordinator, Research Office, Christie Building, The University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL’, by emailing: Research-Governance@manchester.ac.uk, or by telephoning +441612757583 or +441612758093.

**Formal Complaints**
If you wish to make a formal complaint or if you are not satisfied with the response you have gained from the researchers in the first instance then please contact the Research Governance and Integrity Manager, Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL, by emailing: research.complaints@manchester.ac.uk or by telephoning +44161275 2674 or +441612752046.

If you have any queries about the study or if you are interested in taking part then please contact the researcher, MISS KHAIRUL FARHAH KHAIRUDDIN through her email: khairulfarhah.khairuddin@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk.

**This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester’s Research Ethics Committee**
Inclusion of deaf pupils in Malaysia: Stakeholder voices from three distinct educational settings

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to myself.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I understand that my data will remain confidential.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded (video recorder - if signing, for transcription purposes).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of participant  Date  Signature

Name of researcher  Date  Signature

This Project Has Been Approved by the University of Manchester’s Research Ethics Committee
Hi! My name is Fafa. Would you like to help me?

I would like to talk to you about what you do and what you think about your school.

Why you?

I want to understand about children who can't hear well in this school. Your ideas are very important to help me helping these children.
What will I do?

I will ask you a few questions about your friends and your school.

I will record your voice
or
I will record your signs

Just remember that there are no right or wrong answers.

You are just helping!
What if you feel unhappy?

You can ask me to stop asking questions. You can talk to your school counsellor or your teacher if you want to.
You will not be paid

You don't have to join if you don't want

You can say anything you want. Other people won't know what you have said. I will keep it secret.
Now what?

Think and talk to your parents, teachers or friends.

Ask as many questions as you want!

Write down your name if you want to help me

Thank you!
"Inclusion of deaf pupils in Malaysia:
Stakeholder voices from three distinct educational settings"

Assent form for children
If you are happy to help me please fill in the box below

Please circle your answer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know I will talk (sign) to Fafa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know my voice or my signs will be recorded</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only Fafa knows my name and what I have said</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can ask Fafa to stop if I want</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to help Fafa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My name: ___________________________ Date: _____

Parents' signature:
Name:
Date:
Appendix E Approval from a native speaker for translated PIS and consent forms
APPENDIX F PERMISSION FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

UNIT PERANCANG EKONOMI
Economic Planning Unit
Jawatankuasa Perdana Mentri
Prime Minister's Department
Block E6 & B8
Pusat Pelancaran Kerajaan Persekutuan
62002 PUTRAJAYA
MALAYSIA

Ruj. Tuan:
Your Ref.

Ruj. Kanti:
Our Ref. UP 40/200/10/3264
(4)

Tanggal:
Date: 30 December 2015

Khairul Farhah binti Khairuddin
No 19 Jalan Jalan U6/8
Mutia Subang
40100 Shah Alam, Selangor
Email: khairulfarhah@gmail.com

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN MALAYSIA

With reference to your application, I am pleased to inform you that your application to conduct research in Malaysia has been approved by the Research Promotion and Co-Ordination Committee, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department. The details of the approval are as follows:

Researcher's name: KHAIRUL FARHAH BINTI KHAIRUDDIN
Passport No./IC No: 860403-08-6776
Nationality: MALAYSIA
Title of Research: INCLUSION OF PRIMARY-AGE DEAF STUDENTS IN MALAYSIAN SCHOOLS: STAKEHOLDER VOICES IN FOUR DISTINCT EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS
Period of Research Approved: 3 MONTHS

2. Please collect your Research Pass in person from the Economic Planning Unit, Prime Minister's Department, Parcel B, Level 4 Block E5, Federal Government Administrative Centre, 62502 Putrajaya, Malaysia. Bring along two (2) colour passport size photographs. Kindly, get an appointment date from us before you come to collect your research pass.

*Mercang Ke Arah Kecemerlangan*
Appendix G Permission from the Selangor state Department of Education

JABATAN PENDIDIKAN SELANGOR
Jalan Jambu Batu 4/3E, Sekayan 4,
40064 SHAH ALAM
SELANGOR DARUL EHSAN,
MALAYSIA

Tel : 03 - 5519 5500
Faks : 03 - 5510 2133
Laman Web : http://jps.selangor.moe.gov.my

Rujukan Kami : JPNS.PPN 600-1/56 JLD.58[12]
Tarikh : 15/02/2016

KHAIRUL FARHAN BINTI KHAIRUDDIN
19 JALAN UTARID US/B
MUTIARA SUBANG
40150 SHAH ALAM
SELANGOR

Deputy Director

Permission from the Selangor state Department of Education

INCLUSION OF PRIMARY-AGE DEAF STUDENTS IN MALAYSIA SCHOOLS: STAKEHOLDER VOICES IN FOUR DISTINCT EDUCATION SETTINGS

Perkara di atas dengan segala hormatnya dirujuk.

2. Jabatan ini lihat halangan untuk pihak tuan menjalankan kajian/penyelidikan tersebut di sekolah-sekolah dalam negeri Selangor seperti yang dinylakan dalam surat permohonan.

3. Pihak tuan dilingkkan agar mendapat persetujuan daripada Pengetua/Guru Besar supaya beliau dapat bekerjasama dan seterusnya memastikan bahawa penyelidikan djalankan hanya bertujuan seperti yang dipaham. Kajian/penyelidikan yang djalankan juga tidak mengganggu perjalanan sekolah serta tiada sebarang unsur paksaan.

4. Tuan juga diminta menghontak senaskah hasil kajian ke Unit Perhubungan dan Pendaftaran Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor sebaik selesai penyelidikan/kajian.

Sekian, terima kasih.

"BERHIDMAT UNTUK NEGARA"

Saya yang menurut perintah,

(HAJI MOHD SALLEH bin MOHD KASSIM SST)
Penolong Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
Jabatan Pendidikan Selangor
b.p. Ketua Pendaftar Institusi Pendidikan dan Guru
Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia

t.k. - Fgl
Appendix H Visual representation of the school leaders’ free nodes, tree nodes and categories in Nvivo

a) Free nodes

b) Tree nodes

c) Codes and categories
# Appendix I

## List of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Akwan</th>
<th>Aisyah</th>
<th>Anjali</th>
<th>Ben</th>
<th>Bella</th>
<th>Badrul</th>
<th>Caliph</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
<td>Malay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Age of identification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Level of deafness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Hearing aids</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Speech therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 years old</td>
<td>7 years old</td>
<td>5 years old</td>
<td>2 years old</td>
<td>5 years old</td>
<td>1.5 years old</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bilateral profound deafness</td>
<td>Mild to moderate deafness</td>
<td>Hearing aids at 2.5 years old</td>
<td>Bilateral severe deafness</td>
<td>Hearing aids at 7 years old</td>
<td>Bilateral deafness</td>
<td>Unilateral deafness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing aids at 3 years old</td>
<td>No hearing aids and speech therapy</td>
<td>Hearing aids at 5 years old</td>
<td>Speech therapy at 3</td>
<td>No speech therapy</td>
<td>Hearing aid at 7 and no speech therapy</td>
<td>Hearing aids at 2.5 years old and a CI at 3 years old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech therapy at 4</td>
<td>Speech therapy at 5</td>
<td>Speech therapy at 2.5 years old</td>
<td>Speech therapy at 3</td>
<td>Speech therapy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Mrs Alia</th>
<th>Mrs Ati</th>
<th>Mrs Ash</th>
<th>Mrs Basha</th>
<th>Mrs Bienda</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>Mrs Chaz</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classmates</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>Anita</th>
<th>-</th>
<th>Budin</th>
<th>Chad</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>SEIP Teacher Ada</th>
<th>SEIP Teacher Adriana</th>
<th>Teacher Amal and Teacher Aminah</th>
<th>SEIP Teacher Badariah and SEIP Teacher Baiduri</th>
<th>Teacher Bisma</th>
<th>Teacher Chantek and Teacher Chinta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| School leaders | Mrs Aini and Mr Ahmad | Mr Bakri and Mrs Bariah | Mrs Citra |
Appendix J Published article: Social Inclusion

Deaf Learners’ Experiences in Malaysian Schools: Access, Equality and Communication

Khairul Farhah Kharuddin 1,2,*, Susie Miles 1 and Wendy McCracken 1

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Submitted: 7 January 2018 | Accepted: 6 February 2018 | Published: 17 May 2018

Abstract
The Government of Malaysia has embraced international policy guidelines relating to disability equality, including the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its aim is to ensure that 75% of children with disabilities are included in mainstream classrooms by 2025 as part of a wider agenda to eliminate discrimination against people with disabilities. Including deaf children on an equal basis in the linguistically diverse, exam-oriented Malaysian school system is an ambitious and complex task given the difficulties they face in developing effective language and communication skills. The data presented here are taken from a larger study which explored teachers', head teachers', parents', and children's experiences of inclusion through in-depth interviews in three Malaysian schools. The study design was informed by a framework developed in the UK to guide best practice of educating deaf children in mainstream schools and focused specifically on the learning environment. This article presents contrasting educational experiences of two deaf adults, and then considers the experiences of four deaf children in their government-funded primary schools. A series of inter-related dimensions of inclusion were identified—these include curricular, organisational, social, acoustic and linguistic dimensions, which impact upon children’s ability to communicate and learn on an equal basis. Poor maintenance of assistive technology, insufficient teacher training and awareness, inflexibility of the education system, and limited home-school communication are some of the factors constraining efforts to promote equal participation in learning. There are promising signs, however, of teacher collaboration and the creation of more equitable and child-centred educational opportunities for deaf children.

Keywords: cochlear implants, communication, deaf equality, deaf learners, deafness, hearing aids, inclusion, Malaysia, schools, sign language

Issue
This article is part of the issue “Global Perspectives on Disability”, edited by Shaun Grech (The Critical Institute, Malta) and Karen Soldatic (Western Sydney University, Australia).

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1. Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine the educational experiences of two deaf adults and four primary age deaf learners in the light of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). We begin by introducing the linguistically diverse Malaysian context, and by examining the influence of the CRPD and other national and international policy guidelines on the development of more inclusive and equitable quality education for deaf children.

The contrasting experiences of the ‘successful’ deaf adults, who were educated prior to the introduction of the national policy on inclusive education and the ratification of the CRPD, highlight a series of complex and inter-related dimensions of inclusion. They also illustrate...
COLLABORATION BETWEEN GENERAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS IN MALAYSIA

Khairul Farnah Khairuddin\textsuperscript{1,2}, Kenny Daly\textsuperscript{2} and Judith Foggett\textsuperscript{2}

\textsuperscript{1}University of Manchester; \textsuperscript{2}National University of Malaysia, Malaysia; \textsuperscript{3}University of Newcastle, Australia

Key words: Beginning teachers, teachers' collaboration, inclusion.

Collaboration between general and special education teachers is a necessary component for the successful inclusion of students with a disability in regular schools, but little is known about how well this is working in countries where inclusive education is a recent initiative. This paper reports on the perceptions of special education teachers in Malaysia about their interactions with general education teachers. As part of a larger study, a survey was completed by 46 special education teachers and eight teachers were interviewed. The findings revealed that there appeared to be good relations between special education teachers and their mainstream counterparts, but only limited collaboration with regard to planning for the inclusion of students with a disability. Concerns are raised about the content and approach of teacher training programs in Malaysia and the adequacy of current policy and legislation governing the provision of education for students with disability in inclusive educational settings.

Introduction

An increasing awareness about the rights of children with a disability to have access to the same educational services as children without a disability has led to the idea of inclusive education (UNESCO International Bureau of Education, 2009). However, successful inclusion is not achieved simply by placing students with a disability in regular classrooms (Ainscow, 2007). As argued by Ainscow, inclusion demands that schools and stakeholders need to collaborate and work together to address any barriers to mainstream education experienced by students with a disability. Collaboration between general and special education teachers is a critical factor when children with disability are placed in regular classrooms and are expected to work alongside their mainstream peers (Fisher, Frey and Thosood, 2003). Best practice evidence for inclusive classrooms suggests that special and general education teachers should share responsibility with the students’ family to make decisions related to the students’ curriculum, teaching and assessment adaptations.

Leatherman, 2009). In addition to the benefits for the students learning and academic and social outcomes, Gehlke and McCoy (2007) suggest that networking with general education teachers will keep special education teachers motivated to stay in the workforce. Billingsley (2004) found that a lack of support from colleagues and administrators is the primary reason given by special education teachers for influencing their decision to resign early in their teaching career.

The focus of this article is to report the perspectives of newly appointed special education teachers in Malaysian schools, about their collaboration with their general education colleagues. The provision of educational services for students with a disability in Malaysian schools is text described.

Special and inclusive education in Malaysia

Education for students with disability in Malaysia has evolved following a global movement towards inclusion. The evolution of special education programs in Malaysia is based on the government’s policy and international declarations such as the United Nations’ World Program of Action Concerning Disabled Persons and the World’s Declaration on Education for All (Ela宽敞和 Mohd Ali, 2012). The education system is centralized to only one ministry with the Ministry of Education responsible for all special education programs. There are three types of special education programs which include ‘Special Schools’, ‘the Special Education Integrated Program’ (SEIP) and ‘the Inclusive Program’. A Special School means students with a disability are placed in a school exclusively catering for students with a disability and are segregated from other general students. The SEIP is comprised of special education classrooms located within a general school. In the SEIP students with disabilities are placed in a separate classroom but share the school’s facilities with general education students. The Inclusive Program in Malaysia means students with disabilities are placed in a mainstream classroom (Ministry of Education, 2004). Most students with disabilities in Malaysia who are being educated in an inclusive context are enrolled in the Special Education Integration Program (Malaysia Educational Statistic, 2013). There are three types of
Appendix L Poster presentation at the Postgraduate Summer Research Showcase

Deaf children’s experience of Malaysian primary schools
Khairel Farhah Khairuddin,
University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Introduction
- Improved access to hearing aids – more deaf children developing spoken language and being included in mainstream classrooms.
- Yet, teachers of the deaf – only trained to use sign language to teach deaf children.
- Government’s focus on inclusive education – primarily on children with learning difficulties.
- Little is known about inclusive education for deaf children in Malaysia.

Debates in the literature
- Article 24 United Nation declaration - inclusive education as a right of people with disability.
- No universally agreed definition of inclusive education.
- Disagreement on how deaf students should be educated.
- Very little research on inclusive education for deaf students in low and middle-income countries.
- Rapid technological developments are impacting Malaysia.

Inclusive education environment: A conceptual framework
Quality Standards for deaf children’s inclusive education in mainstream school, developed in the UK context, were used to identify four themes:

- Attitude
- Communication
- Socialisation
- Achievement

Discussion
- The most frequently mentioned word is “friends.”
- Majority of the children reported enjoying school, having friends, and using speech to communicate.
- One child had no friends, relied entirely on sign language, and was socially isolated.
- Some profoundly deaf children face real difficulties in developing sufficient language competence to pass the national exams.
- Noisy classroom is a challenge for deaf children to consistently wear the hearing aids.

Research questions
1. How is inclusive education experienced by school stakeholders (school staff, deaf children, parents, or deaf children’s peers)?
2. What do schools currently do to support inclusive education for deaf children in Malaysia?

Thesis contributions
- Allowed the voices of a wide range of school stakeholders to be heard.
- Views of deaf students about their own education – for the first time.
- Conceptualisation of inclusive education for deaf children in Malaysia and internationally.
- The outcomes would be helpful to researchers and all other stakeholders involved in developing an inclusive education for deaf students.

Acknowledgements
Dr. Susan Miles & Prof. Wendy McDowall University of Manchester
Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia
National University of Malaysia.
Appendix M Poster presented at Postgraduate Research Open Day

Professionals’ experiences of inclusive education for deaf children in Malaysian primary schools
Khalil Farhat Khairuddin, University of Manchester, United Kingdom

INTRODUCTION
- Improved access to hearing aids → more deaf children developing spoken language and being included in mainstream classrooms
- Yet, teachers of the deaf – only trained to use sign language to teach deaf children
- Government’s focus on inclusive education – primarily on children with learning difficulties.
- Little is known about inclusive education for deaf children in Malaysia

DEBATES IN THE LITERATURE
- Article 24 United Nation declaration - Inclusive education as a right of people with disability
- No universally agreed definition of inclusive education
- Disagreement on how deaf students should be educated
- Very little research on inclusive education for deaf students in low and middle-income countries
- Rapid technological developments are impacting Malaysia

METHODS
- Study design – exploratory qualitative study
- Conceptual framework – Quality Standards for deaf children’s inclusive education in mainstream school
- Sampling – purposive sampling strategy
- Research participants – school leaders (5), mainstream teachers (5), teachers of the deaf (5), teaching assistants (3)
- Data collection – Semi-structured interview
- Data analysis – Thematic analysis

FINDINGS
- “We inclusive means they students with disability can mix with mainstream students [...] They are not only within the special education world. When they finish school, they have to mix with the society anyway. We have to learn to accept these students [with disability]. They are part of the society too.” (Leader Baki)
- “I don’t know what to do in the class. I just waited and looked at the clock to finish school quickly.” (Assistant Amin)
- “I don’t care what their background is. I want them all to pass. I will find ways to make sure they can pass the exam.” (Teacher Amea)
- “It was difficult. Some of them are very weak students. They can connect words but hardly able to create complex sentences. Their sentences are like Year 1 level.” (Teacher Amea)
- “To be honest, I don’t like deaf students to go to any of the assembly or joint activities. I don’t think the deaf students can understand the speech. During assembly, they can sing during the play of the national anthem. During the teachers’ speech, I cannot translate a few main points. I will tell them again in the SEF class.” (Teacher of the deaf Aikko)

DISCUSSION
- Different understandings of what ‘inclusion’ means and in what manner deaf children can be included in schools
- Tying their best but had limited knowledge and support to address deaf children’s educational needs
- Exam oriented curriculum and pressure led to narrow view of education and achievement
- Threatens professionals’ commitments and risks deaf children’s education

THESIS CONTRIBUTIONS
- Allowed the voices of a wide range of school stakeholders to be heard
- Conceptualisation of inclusive education for deaf children in Malaysia and internationally
- The outcomes would be helpful to researchers and other stakeholders involved in developing an inclusive education for deaf students
- Inform the future direction of deaf students’ education

Acknowledgements
Dr Susan Miles & Prof Wendy McComb
University of Manchester
Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia
National University of Malaysia
Great article!

Nadira Hanim Mannan <nadirahmannan@ukm.edu.my>

to me 31 May

Assalamualaikum Fafo,

Ramadhan Kareem. If you remember me, we were in contact last year as I was asking you about your PhD. How’s things? Back in Malaysia?

This morning Prof Siti Zamratol forwarded me your article (attached). I thought it was well-written and it will definitely be a handy reference for my own PhD. InshaAllah planning to start this July (still pending a few things), to be attached with Faculty of Education Monash Australia. Topic will be looking at stakeholders’ perspectives on CI children entering mainstream school; stakeholders include the clinicians (audiologists & SLPs).

Congratulations on the published article. Hope to be in touch and see more of your work inshaAllah :)

Wassalam,

Nadira

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