

A Comparative Study of Parental Satisfaction with the Private and Government Special Needs Programs for Children with Learning Disabilities in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

While many types of special education programs have sprung in Malaysia throughout the recent years - each with its own guarantee of a promising opportunity for education - these settings can be classified by private and government type according to the requirement of fees. This mixed method research study was conducted to answer the question: *'Is quality of the programme simultaneous with the cost it demands?'* whereby quality is measured based on parents' level of satisfaction through surveys and interviews conducted for this study. The level of satisfaction of two groups of parents with children with disability - one enrolled into a private special education programme and the other into a government setting are studied concerning two aspects of quality indicator, namely, curriculum modification, as well as teachers' role effectiveness in conducting the curriculum. The finding shows that there is not a significant difference between the level of satisfaction of parents towards government school ($M = 69.07$, $SD = 11.25$) and private school ($M = 70.50$, $SD = 7.75$); $t(58) = -0.58$, $p > 0.05$, however, the qualitative data has identified a contradiction - showing that the inadequacy of teacher-parent collaboration and parental expectations based on cost are major factors conducted to the quantitative findings.

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Introduction

As individuals who are responsible of bringing life to their children, the roles that parents play in the development of a child is mandatory, exceedingly significant and definitely multifarious. They are the very first educators of the child, as well as prime investors of a child's growth, wellbeing and education, the stakeholders which contribute immediate resources to realize the goals and ends (Landry, 2008). If the field of education is described with an economic concept, parents are also the greatest consumers, who try to make the best schooling decisions for their children by paying for the skill and academic outcomes of their child's learning (Epstein, 2013). It is widely known that the cost of a child's upbringing from birth to tertiary education could go up to millions and it is even more so for parents with a child with special needs to be met. Finance is undoubtedly a major concern for parents (NSO & ORC Macro, 2003; Gobrial, 2018; Resch et al., 2010) and this burden can be substantial to overwhelm a tipping point of the family (Sanjay Reddy & Jan Vandemoortele, 1996; Anderson, Dumont, Jacobs & Azzaria, 2007) in various aspect in order to sustain their lives. Education takes a lion's share of a parents' expenditures as the common understanding of 'you always get what you pay for,' suggests a close correlation between price and quality in the consumer goods market. It is illustrated by researcher Imkamp (2018) that consumers may typically use prices as quality indicators, perceiving that something that is more expensive is better or of higher quality. Hence, a trend of perceiving more costly choice of education, such as, private sector schools has better quality or of the contrary, government sector schools to be lacking in performance parameters contributes to parents' choice and financial burden especially in terms of special education provisions. The Malaysia Education Statistics (Educational Data Sector, 2018) reported that the number of enrolment into special needs education

classes or schools has increased from year 2010 (48,140 students) to 2017 (79,836 students). In correlation to that, based on statistics provided by the Ministry of Education, 20,000 students enrolled in international schools in 2013 compared with the previous year which only reached 15,000 - private sectors in Malaysia has emerged as an essential source of imparting education at all levels over the last few decades (Yaacob, Osman & Bachok, 2014). Though Malaysians with special needs who are enrolled in a national school are entitled to a monthly (Curriculum Development Centre Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2008), and do not have to pay for school fees, parents still opt for private education for their special needs children, in spite of the massive cost, as compared to education in the government sector. This led to a pressing question, *'Is our public programmes failing to provide a quality education, or are the private programmes as good as the price it demands?'* This study emphasizes on analyzing parents' level of satisfaction based on their experience in terms of exploring the strengths and weaknesses of both government and private programs to determine if the quality of the programme is simultaneous with the cost it requires. Given the above and based on the literature review, two main factors are highlighted as elements of quality of indicators, which are: a) *Curriculum Modification* and; b) *Teachers' Role Effectiveness*, whereby qualitative and quantitative methods will be used as discover differences of parental satisfaction towards the respective type of school as well as factors contributing to the results, henceforth discussed in the further sections.

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the level of satisfaction of parents with children with learning disabilities towards the current practices of 2 elements of quality indicators in their child's enrolled government or private special education programs in Malaysia.
2. To compare the differences between level of satisfaction of

parents with children with learning disabilities in government special education programs (Group 1) and parents with children in private special education programs (Group 2) based on the 2 elements of quality indicators.

3. To investigate the factors that contribute to parents' level of satisfaction towards their child's enrolled government or private special education programs in Malaysia.

Theoretical Perspectives

About Government and Private Special Education Programmes in Malaysia

The Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 defined people with disabilities (PWD) as those who have long term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which full and effective participation in society may be impeded with the various physiological barriers faced (Abdullah, Hanafi & Mohd Hamdi, 2017). The PWD Act mandates the rights of persons with disabilities and imposes obligations on government, private sector or non-government organisations to provide for and ensure children with disabilities are supported in receiving appropriate education. In Malaysia, services to children with disabilities (MBK) of the government sector are the responsibility of three ministries, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development and the Ministry of Education. The focus of this study would be on the Integrated Special Education Program for MBK whereby it is administered entirely by the State Education Department, and considered the biggest nationwide provider of education for MBK based on the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013. Given a brief historical timeline of this establishment, the Integrated Special Education Program (PPKI) (Merger Plan) was introduced for primary school children with disabilities since 1962 (Ministry of Education Portal, n.d.), and it is a programme only attended by students with special needs, which

could be categorised with sensory impairments, learning disabilities, physical disabilities or multiple disabilities in a special class within the compound of a government or a government-aided school (Buku Pengoperasian PPKI Ministry of Education Malaysia, n.d.). The programme is conducted using guidelines which are provided in a manual called Buku Pengoperasian PPKI, which consist of comprehensive information that encompasses aspects such as procedure of opening a PPKI class, the administrative, pedagogical as well as management framework that is necessary for execution as well as the type of support provided, and job scope of different stakeholders in a PPKI environment which are set up as consistent standards of procedure for PPKI classes across Malaysia. In terms of fees, there are no fixed monthly cost required for MBK enrolled in a PPKI class, whereas beginning from 2006, all students who are registered with the special education programmes are eligible to receive a monthly allowance (Lay & Hui, 2014).

On the other hand, preschools or programmes established by the private sector are viewed as an alternative from the government setting to provide quality education to parents who are able to afford the cost. Education Act 1996 (Act 550) has defined ‘private school’ or ‘private educational institution’ as a school or an educational institution which is not a government or government-aided school or educational institution. According to the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education Malaysia, there is also a widespread and expanding system of private preschools (Early Childhood Care and Education Policy Implementation Review 2007), believed to be largely driven by parental demands and expectations (Kanesh Gopal, 2017). Private special education programs are more free and self-supported, mostly run and fully-funded by private individuals, organizations or religious groups (Thanerajah & Razilan, 2017). In addition, method of delivery of a private special education school is decided by the school board. The school administrators also have independent

authority to decide the fees, admission and educational or adaptive curriculum implemented in the classes, whereby the monthly charges can go as low as RM20 or as high as RM3000 or more (Mustafa & Azman, 2013).

Government vs Private: Difference in Curriculum

The content and methodology of instruction can also be referred as the educational curriculum (Borrowman, 1989). It was found that the *modification of teaching methodologies* in an adapted curriculum is crucial to help students with learning disabilities to engage better and succeed in the learning process (Demirdag, 2014). In this context, all special education preschool classes in the government sector conducts the National Preschool Curriculum (Special Education) as stipulated in the manual of PPKI operations (Buku Pengoperasian PPKI Ministry of Education, n.d.) The medium of instruction is in the national language, Bahasa Malaysia, as concurred by the Education Act (1996) (Act 550). Besides, in Chapter 3: Implementation of the PPKI operation manual, has also listed a segment on Individualized Education Plan (Rancangan Pengajaran Individu, RPI) whereby the Education (Special Education) Regulations 2013 has defined it with, ‘RPI is a record of details in the way which it was determined by the Head of Enrolment (Ketua Pendaftar) about the educational plan of each student with disabilities. The RPI is formed based on the students’ specific needs whereby screening instruments and diagnostic tests are used as a guideline to follow, and the plan is consented by parents. A multidisciplinary team of 3PK professionals, namely, audiologists, psychologists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists would be included in the planning of the RPI in order to provide advice or support throughout the implementation progress to meet the students’ developmental growth. However, a study by Ahmad (2013) has sought the lacking of professionals such as speech therapists in the country, and Abdul Nasir and Erman Efendi (2016) has researched about the lack of appropriate teaching

materials, resources and assistive devices in government special education classroom, whereby inherently contributes to lower levels of quality of the setting.

The educational programs has to be deliberately planned and developed in multitudinous ways that will satisfy a diversity of needs which special education should be able to cater to (Eskay & Oboegbulem, 2013). Curriculum in the private sector are very much diverse in comparison to the government sector, as private special education programmes do not have to adhere to any standard of curriculum, instead can freely adapt research-based curriculum and pedagogical methods adapted from different educational beliefs, philosophy or experiences of the founder. The Education Act 1996 (Act 550) has defined these establishments as a school or an educational institution which is not a government or government-aided school or educational institution. stated under Part VII 'Private Educational Institutions' of the same document, it was written that the minister have power to make regulations for supervision and control of the standard of education in these private settings. In addition, the medium of instruction can be the National Language, Chinese, Tamil or English (Masnan, Mustafa & Hosshan, 2017). Additional therapies are typically engaged and attended separately in a private school curricula whereby has a fee of its own.

Government vs Private: Difference in Teacher Quality

Curriculum and teacher quality are interdependent factors in such a way that teachers have to understand the curriculum vision in order to achieve the curriculum goals. This could be illustrated by Khoza (2015), who stated that a vital part of curriculum refers to the implementation, also known as curriculum in action, which is the actual process of inferring knowledge and skills to students, the modus operandi of teaching conducted by a teacher. According to the PPKI operational manual, the government special education

classes is to have a PPKI program teacher (coordinator), teacher and an assistant teacher. The Ministry of Education Malaysia have planned and implemented intervention programmes for the preschool age group since year 2000, however, these programmes were initially conducted without any allocation or training for the preschool teachers (Masnan, Mustafa & Hosshan, 2017). Following up in 2003, a Teacher Training Division of Ministry of Education has started to provide courses to their teachers to attain at least a diploma level of all public and private sectors to acquire a certification (Ministry of Education, Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2025).

The Economic Transformation Program states that teacher training is now one of the segments in Malaysian private education sector (2010) in order to train more quality teachers to cater to the growing educational needs in Malaysia. However, most teachers in the private programmes are also trained in the private sector, such as completing a professional practice component in the teaching training programme for a minimum of 16 weeks. A study by Devarajoo et al. (2016) has found that the Diploma and Bachelor courses for teaching offered by private universities which fulfills the required regulations is a significant source of training teachers for the private sector. These teachers are trained to meet individualized needs and demands of the private educational programmes.

Government vs Private: Parents' Choice

A few studies will be scrutinized to outline the trend of parents' choice of education setting and the factors that contribute to the choice. A study by Dronkers and Avram (2010) on choice and effectiveness of private and public schools of seven countries has found that that private-dependent schools are appealing in terms of providing educational setting that are aligned with the parents' cultural and religious heritage, as well as discovering that achievement scores of students from private-dependent schools are

outperforming public schools. Besides that, Goldring and Phillips (2008) has found that parents from Nashville, USA, perceive private schools to have a larger pull in terms of providing higher levels of parental collaboration in terms of involvement and communication which are contributing factors to their levels of satisfaction. In addition, a study conducted by Yaacob, Osman and Bachok (2015) on assessment of influencing factors on parents' decision when choosing a educational setting for their children on Selangor, Malaysia has found that the private setting is becoming more apparent as the obvious choice for most parents with eight reasoning factors such as a the school environment, academic performances, demographic factors such as distance, location, social status and income levels, teacher quality, school syllabus. The findings of Mustafa and Azman (2013) has also supported the evidence that private centers are taking the lead against public centers in terms of several aspects such as on teaching and learning, teacher qualifications, curriculum implementations and such. It was found that parents are attracted to the uniqueness of each private centers as well as driven by the flexibility of operating hours. The table below shows a list to illustrate the differences that Mustafa and Azman (2013) has found upon studying the trends and contributing factors of parents who prefer to register their children in a private setting. The discussed items are specifically focused on the management, pedagogy areas such as the curriculum, as well as teacher quality which are quality indicators of this very study. Findings from the aforementioned studies will be cross-referenced with the findings of this study to discuss the reason of the pull towards private educational programmes.

Table 1.

Public vs Private Preschool in Malaysia.

Item Discuss	Public Preschool	Private Preschool
Rules and	● Government	● Each private institution

regulations	authorities	authorities
Teaching and Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teacher-centered ● Drill technique ● Limited learning materials and facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Child-centered ● Classroom conducive for learning ● Appropriate learning materials and facilities
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasize social and emotional development ● Follow the government goals and objectives ● Intermediate Language: Malay ● Funded by government ● Program organized and controlled by the government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasize cognitive development ● Adjustable goals and objectives by the potential of children ● Intermediate Language: Malay, English, Chinese and Tamil or mix languages. ● Run by NGOs or individuals, for profits or welfare purposes. ● Include enriched programs
Teacher Qualification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Locally trained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Locally and abroad trained

Note. Reprinted from “Preschool education in Malaysia: Emerging trends and implications for the future”, by Mustafa, Lily Muliana & M.N.A, Azman. 2013, *American Journal of Economics*, 3, Pg 350.

Methodology

Research Design

This is a mixed method research study whereby quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Despite the fact that information obtained from interviews with parents is reliable to some extent, the questionnaires can also, promoted additionally validity and reliability when more information from more parents are added (Creswell, 2005). Interviews are conducted to reinforce, support, or

to review the data garnered from the questionnaires survey. secondary data are collected through accredited sources such as online journal references, websites, conference proceedings, official documents and papers to provide a better insight to supporting evidences relevant to the research objective. The strategy of this study is inductive and the outcome is descriptive.

Research Participants and Sampling

According to Professor John Merrifield (2005), parents' output or feedback would be more positive in general if the services and provisions of the school are aligned or suited with the abilities or interests of children. Therefore, the participants for this research is targeted at parents of children with learning disabilities in Malaysia, as the main decision-maker of a child's to-go educational setting. Selection of participants (parents) is regardless of their child's category of learning disability, severity of condition, gender, ethnicity, age, academic qualification, socio-economic status, nationality and location, given that they are parents whose child/ children with disabilities are currently enrolled in a government or private special education program in Malaysia. 60 parents has responded with the survey and 4 parents are interviewed to acquire an insight to their level and reasons of satisfaction towards the respective programmes.

Research Instrument

Questionnaire Survey and Focus Group Protocol and Interview Questions

The questionnaire and interview questions are derived from an ongoing national project in collaboration between the National Child Development and Research Centre (NCDRC), Sultan Idris Education University as well as SEGi University (Kota Damansara) titled, '*Development of a Comprehensive and Integrative Model of Quality Malaysian ECCE*'. The referred research project aims to examine current government policies, regulations and legislation

pertaining to Malaysian Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) contextualized in nation-wide policy and practice. The study also intends to identify and discover output of the various governmental and non-governmental bodies for ECCE, whereby it involves a segment on special education. Henceforth, section B of the questionnaire designed for parents of children with learning disabilities, whereby parents' opinion and feedback are required, has been adapted in this research paper pertaining to the research objectives. Responses for this study is tabulated and applied using the Likert scale, commonly known as one of the most basic and frequently-adapted psychometric tools in the field of educational and social sciences research (Joshi, Kale, Chandel & Pal, 2015).

Data Collection Method

Questionnaires survey are distributed in two forms - google online survey links as well as printed copies. Consent of participants are obtained prior to questionnaire distribution. 60 sets of responses from parents of children with learning disability is garnered for the purpose of this study. Interviews are schedule by the researcher and sufficient time is provided for every session.

Data Analysis

60 responses have been obtained through the questionnaire surveys and tabulated using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 16 to answer the questions of the study. An inferential statistical test of analyzing the independent variable, Type of School (TOS) with dependent variable, total score for level of satisfaction (sLOS) using an independent t-test for two samples was used to determine possible statistical significant difference between the means of parents' level of satisfaction for the private or government special education programme based on the 2 elements of quality indicators. Thematic analysis is used to analyze the data acquired from the interviews using a Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), NVivo. Then,

findings from both method will be analyzed, justified and discussed in the upcoming segment.

Findings

Quantitative Data Findings

A: Answering RQ 1 - What are parents' level of satisfaction (LOS) towards the provisions of 2 elements of quality indicators that their child with learning disabilities receive in the enrolled private or government special education programs in Malaysia?

Table 2.

Parents' Level of Satisfaction.

	ToS	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
sLoS ent	Government	30	69.0667	11.24625	2.05328
	Private	30	70.5000	7.75375	1.41564

From table 1, it is found that the mean score for parents' level of satisfaction towards the government special education programme is 69.07 with a standard deviation of 11.25 ($M = 69.07$, $SD = 11.25$). On the other hand, the mean score for parents' level of satisfaction towards the private special education programme is 70.50 with a standard deviation of 7.75 ($M = 70.50$, $SD = 7.75$).

B: Answering RQ 2 - Is there a significant difference between the level of satisfaction of parents with children with learning disabilities in government special programmes (Group 1) and parents with children in private programmes (Group 2) based on the 2 elements of quality indicators?

Table 3.

Independent samples T-Test output for sLOS of parents.

Independent Samples Test									
		Levene's Test for		Equality of Variances t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper
sL	Equal	1.108	.297	-.575	58	.568	-1.43333	2.49399	-6.42559 3.55892
oS	variances assumed								
	Equal			-.575	51.489	.568	-1.43333	2.49399	-6.43906 3.57240
	variances not assumed								
	assumed								

From Table 3, an independent t-test was conducted to compare parents' level of satisfaction towards private or government special education programmes in Malaysia. There was not a significant difference in the scores for parents' level of satisfaction towards government school ($M = 69.07$, $SD = 11.25$) and private school ($M = 70.50$, $SD = 7.75$); $t(58) = -0.58$, $p > 0.05$. Hence, the result suggests that the type of programme has no effect on parents' level of satisfaction. In other words, parents of the government setting and private setting have similar levels of satisfaction towards their child's respective programs.

Survey Findings: Thematic Analysis

A: Respondents' Demographic Profile

Table 4. *Interviewees' Information*

Respondent	Career	Child's Diagnosis	Length of Enrolment
Government Parent 1 - Mrs A	Housewife	Down Syndrome	5 years
Government Parent 2 - Mrs B	Housewife	ASD and ADHD	1 year

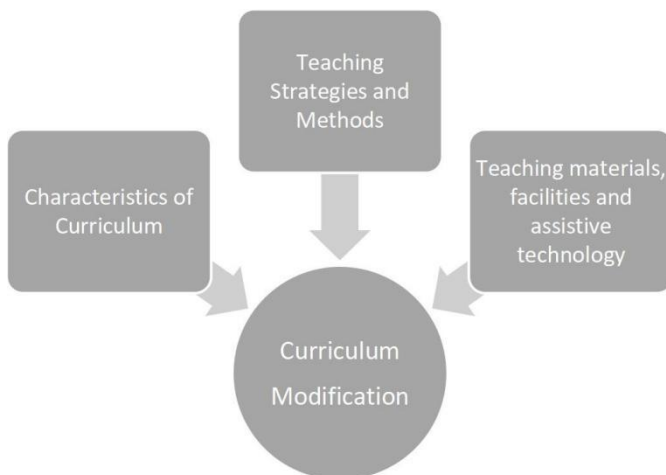
Private Parent 1 - Mrs C	Housewife	ASD	5 years
Private Parent 2 - Mr D	Engineer	ASD (Asperger's Syndrome)	5 years

B: Answering RQ 3 - What are the factors that contribute to parents' level of satisfaction towards their child's enrolled government or private special education program in Malaysia?

Factor 1: Curriculum Modification

Figure 1.

Aspects included under 'Curriculum Modification'.



On Characteristics of Curriculum

A: Government

One interviewee has stated that the curriculum conducted in the government special education programme are described to be homogenous across the same standard - the same textbooks are used for every student in the class. Students are divided according to age group in the same way as the mainstream classroom are placed, and

if one student is unable to follow along the syllabus, he or she will be transferred into the previous standard - however, if he or she still got not move forward academically, the student will still be placed forward regardless of progress. Besides, the same interviewee also stated that the students are grouped according to capability within the class as well, as the ones who are faster will be placed together whereas the slower students will be grouped as another and learn easier content, citing *"Yes - the ones which are slower are even slower, they are just like repeatedly learning kindergarten content."* when the researcher confirmed if there is a separation level within the class.

Both interviewees stated that curriculum in the government school are not conducted using their mother tongue, which is mandarin, and instead are taught in Bahasa Malaysia, citing *"My son speaks English and so it is completely impossible for him to understand what they are saying."* Materials in the school such as story books are printed in Bahasa Malaysia as well, as one of the interviewee replied with, *"Their books are completely in bahasa."* in respond to my question about a kind of story book which allows students to listen to the pronunciation of words using a pen.

On the other hand, there are some positive points from both interviewees who commended on socially-enriching factors of the curriculum environment in the government special education setting - which includes exposure to culture of a different ethnicity, such as learning how to speak the language of Bahasa Malaysia, as well as learning how the students' muslim peers pray. Citing the first interviewee, *"In the SK she learned how to pray like the muslim teachers and peers, will come back and do the same. Her command of language for Bahasa Malaysia is also very good. So her English, Bahasa Malaysia and Mandarin is quite good."* Besides, the second interviewee also commended on the fact that the setting provided an extensive social platform for her child to be part of due to the large

amount of students in the same setting, citing, *“He just got to experience being in a big group and in such an environment.”*

B: Private

It was found through both interviews of parents with children enrolled into private special education programme that the curriculum conducted for their child in the school are individualized and an IEP is designed for their specific learning needs. The second interviewee with his son enrolled in the same school for 5 to 6 years mentioned that, *“it is the syllabus, the tailor-made, it is so individualized.”* to answer to one of the greatest difference of the private special education school compared to public schools. The same parent also mentioned that, *“we are tailoring his courses in (the private school) - less education, and more on independence and social skills so to help him when he goes out to a bigger kind of environment.”* in order to prove his point that the syllabus is individualized to his child’s immediate needs. Besides, in terms of the types of intervention or therapy provided, it is found that the private special education school which child of the second interviewee is studying in provides occupational therapy as well as basic ABA programme followed by home-school programme for the students in advanced levels. One of the interviewees made the decision to enroll 5 years ago, *“because (the private school) also offered basic education things other than OT things”*, whereas transitional schooling is mentioned by the other interviewee, *“They started the home school syllabus, the teachers went for training - I heard there are two students who are currently enrolled in the home school now.”*

On Teaching Strategy and Methods

A: Government

All teaching and communication in the government special education programme are conducted in Bahasa Malaysia, citing one of the interviewees, *“Therefore it is very difficult for my son to*

communicate because the language is different.” Both interviewees also mentioned that there are no adapted methods used to teach their children, one of them saying, “No, they are just like taking care of my child.”, and the other, “Basically this SK does not do that.” when the interviewer asked them if there are any modifications or any special effort made to help the students learn. Besides, one of the interviewee said that she is uninformed of the teaching methods used for teaching literacy skills - the interviewee expressed that, “No.. she does not bring any textbook home, and she does not bring her homework home too.” when the interviewer asked about the interviewee’s awareness of any special methods being used to teach. Besides, when it comes to methods used to teach living skills, the same interviewee laughed and said, “I do not know too”.

B: Private

In terms of the methodologies used to conduct the lesson such as behaviour management in the classroom, both interviewees agreed on the same point that adapted methods are used for their children to learn living skills, literacy skills and communication skills. The first parent’s daughter was unable to use a cup to drink when she first enrolled, and the (private) school got her to, *“put on shoes and then to drink with a cup. As for the process, they first got us to buy a sippy cup, then change different cups, until now she is able to use a normal cup.”* guiding the child in a sequence from simple to complex according to her specific needs. This aspect was also stated with satisfaction as the parent said, *“We do not know the steps - how to start, this is good because ABA can break down the steps from simple to complex.”* to state how helpful was the strategy of breaking down steps into sequence was for their child to learn. The same parent’s child also recently learned how to coordinate both hands to eat with a fork and a spoon, and was very satisfied with the progress shown even at home, citing, *“Last time she when she reaches the end of the bowl she would bring down her mouth to the bowl and scoop the remnants up, but now I realised that she knows*

how to use the spoon to push the food. Although I cannot say she has mastered the skill entirely, but I could see her progress, that she knows the function of the fork now after practicing in school.” noting her positive response towards the development of independent skills.

On the other hand, another parent noted on his son’s individualized living skills programme of being able to generalize knowledge learned in the classroom by going out into the community such as, *“Bringing them out for shopping is one,”* when being asked what program are used to teach living skills. Moreover, the same parent brought out the programme ‘Bubble Talk’ as a successful method to teach his son communication skills, whereby the teacher and student got to role-play and communicate appropriately in different situations. The interviewee also mentioned how communication skills and expansion of his son’s vocabulary helped him be more sociable and is able to be guidance to the other students in the (private) school, citing, *“(The private school) mix them around, from what I see is that over the years, my son has become some sort of like a guidance for the other students. That he takes lead for the other students that are unable to do things - those who are unable to it he would lend a hand. We are really happy to see him do that. In other words he is willing to guide students who are unable to do things as good as he can.”* whereby this parent expressed his satisfaction towards his son’s development over the years and also noted on how the school allowed students of varying capability to be participating in activities together. On the same topic, the other interviewee also expressed a positive note that the teachers in the (private) school got her child to do pairing in the classroom, citing, *“Going into pairing is one of it because in the beginning when she is in OT she also did the activities (physical) individually, then now she is moved into a group.”* and her positive note was also contributed by the fact that she is very satisfied with her child’s positive progress in interacting with other students and making

friends, citing, *"She is very happy because she is starting to make friends, and she like friends. I also think communication is a big part of social skills."* Besides that, she also expressed her satisfaction on the fact that her child could address other people in the family and friend circle as well, citing, *"but I could witness my daughter's progress from being completely empty to now that she is able to call us, therefore I think this is really good."* On the same topic of social skills, this parent brought up the Autistic Movement Therapy (AMT) as a very useful method to get students to interact with one another to build on their social skills.

This interviewee also spoke about the strategy of learning reading from guided to independent practice through, *"For reading skills, he has to read a book or story, and then they try to find a summary of this story, find the main character and what they have learned from here."* When the child is able to answer structured questions, he could understand the story better and now is able to read on his own and answer a variety of questions, citing, *"He now reads by himself a lot. After reading I will ask him whether he understands, and he would say, 'yeah!' and I will ask him some basic questions so I know he is reading from there."* In the same aspect, writing skills was also taught beginning from drawing, proving a point on the application of teaching in sequence - from simple to complex - whereby this interviewee displayed satisfaction about his son progress from drawing to be able to write in paragraphs now, citing, *"Ah, besides travelogue, last time there is a lot of drawings. Last time the travelogues was a lot of drawings to express, and now the drawings become more words - that was quite a leap for him. Because he draw to express his experience, and now he writes."* as well as, *"He can do, still short, but it is okay better than last time. Especially that there is karangan, comprehension things."* in respond to his son's writing for his current school work.

Besides, one of the interviewees has also stated that one of the

strategy used by teachers in the (private) school is to ensure that their methods are interest-appropriate to the individual child. This could apply to ensuring the child's attention during particular programme using interest-appropriate reinforcers, or make use of items that are appealing to the child for less preferred programmes. For example, citing the first interviewee on incorporating items that interest the child into programmes which are less so to allow the child to go through it smoothly, citing, *"She does not like reading at all, she would shout when it is time for reading. The teachers in (the private school) will see which book she likes and then they will choose that book (for reading). Because some books have pictures which interest her, therefore they will use these books,"* Besides, it was also stated that teachers would make use of effective reinforcers which are interest-appropriate to the child, citing, *"Kai likes to eat, she really likes food, so when they use food as a reward, it is very effective. She does not like math in general, any subject which requires her to think. There is a reward when she counts so she would do it."* or when training for certain skills, *"sometimes she could scoop her reward also using the fork and spoon."*

On Teaching materials and School Facilities

A: Government

On questions about facilities to learn other than books, such as toys, one interviewee said that *"I never seen it before, we do not go into the classroom and only drop her off at the gate everyday. They only use books to learn."* suggesting that this interviewee is uninformed of the facilities used in the classroom her child is in. While on the same topic, the other interviewee expressed that, *"If we are talking about proper equipment, I don't think it is available."* The same interviewee also said, *"They have those like we have at home, a board with puzzles where you can fix and put inside (alphabets, car, police station) these are those I saw, there are also blocks, quite a normal selection."* as for teaching, it was mentioned that the teacher in a government setting would talk rather than using

materials, citing *“If it is mathematics, I think teacher talk more rather than using materials. That is the greatest difference between government and private setting.”*

When being asked if there are any facilities used to teach communication skills, as it was mentioned as one of the primary goals of the interviewee, it was stated that *“No. It is just like a normal primary one, two school, the teachers teach and if you do not speak then that’s about it.”* Meanwhile, in terms of materials, three types of materials were mentioned throughout both interviews, one being books, which has already been cited in the aforementioned sub-themes, followed by flashcards, whereby one of the interviewee said, *“I am not sure if they use pictures or flashcards - oh but I know they teach ‘toilet’ then there are pictures of items in the toilet like soap, and if it is ‘kitchen’ then there are plates, wok. That is to get them to learn nouns, in terms of interacting with people, there isn’t anything special.”* Both interviewees spoke about their children watching TV in school, one answering it as part of her response to the question about facilities used to teach communication, and the other interviewer talked about the same facility by saying, *“There is also tv and cd to watch, but feels unhelpful because it is just there for students to be distracted, not for learning.”* mentioning that the TV is used as a facility for behaviour management. On the topic of toys and TV, the same interviewee also said that, *“The time when they give materials is when the students are making a fuss or throwing a tantrum, then they give the toys so the students will play on their own and not disturb others. And if the student still can’t then they will put them in front of the TV.”* Both interviewees also expressed that the students watch TV a lot in school. This point is expressed when one of the interviewee said, *“Generally, I would say they watch tv a lot.”* when the interviewer asked about the subjects the child has in school.

B: Private

The same material mentioned in the findings section for 'Government Parents' was also repeated in this section, as one of the interviewees mentioned flashcards as a commendable material used to teach her child words not just through auditory method but visual method as well, which was helpful for her child's acquisition of vocabulary as well as application of the words through association, citing, *"Card, flashcards. It is because they start with teaching colours, then objects, then now she knows how to use words like 'yellow shoe', she is unable to understand if she only hear the words, she needs to see the pictures too. So after she has mastered a type of flashcard then another, she is able to associate the items together."* Besides, the same parent also mentioned that tactile methods are used and was helpful as well, citing, *"when they draw this kind of things, she likes to touch it too, so she knows."* on the topic that students got to paint, and do hands-on art and crafts.

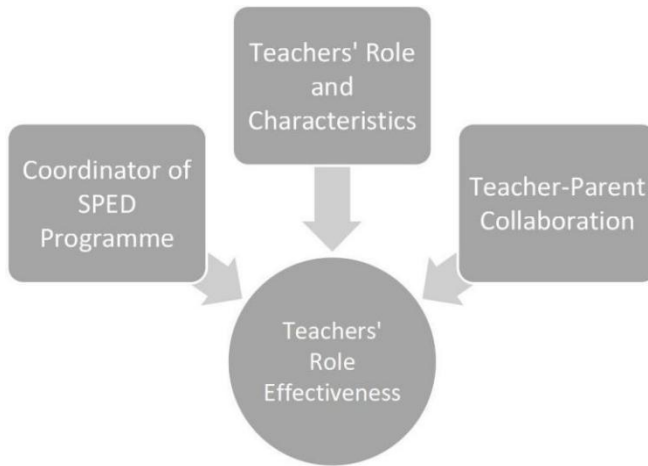
As for materials used to teach writing skills, assistive technology such as the pencil holder is used, citing the first interviewee, *"they use this thing where they put at the pencil to assist with her writing."* In terms of communication skills, the same parent mentioned that a form of stimulation training called 'Talk Tools' is used by the program coordinator to help stimulate her daughter's oral motor muscles in order to produce speech with more clarity, citing, *"Teacher (Programme coordinator) helped my daughter brush the insides of her oral cavity using a cotton bud, that is a type of stimulation. She also used the popsicle stick.."* Some material was also stated by the other interviewee which helped his son overcome sensory issues, such as by using a brush to desensitize his hands and successfully help him get used to these sensory stimulations to react better to his OCD, citing, *"Long time ago, we are told to improve his sensory by having a brush. The brush is used for the sensitive area on his hands, to improve and at the same time minimize his sensitivity, for him to get used to the feelings. He has improved a lot."*

But he still has a bit of OCD on cleanliness.”

Factor 2: Teachers’ Role Effectiveness

Figure 2.

Aspects included under ‘Teachers’ Role Effectiveness’.



On Coordinator of SPED Programme

A: Government

Both interviewees agreed that there is a coordinator for the special needs programme in the government setting which is accessible through phone. In terms of the role of the coordinator, one interviewee mentioned that the coordinator is in charge of coordinating activities and only hears about progress updates during the report card day, citing, *“She (referring to programme coordinator) organizes parties for them, should be thrice a year, January to April once.. she also will get us to sponsor some money or bring food and drinks for potluck. Rarely we talk about academics or what Yen has learned in school, that only happens during the report card day.”* whereas the other interviewee said that the coordinator will call to ask why her child is absent, but also infrequently as she stated, *“I only heard from the teacher after I did*

not send (my child) over for about 3 to 5 months.”

B: Private

Both interviewees representing private special education setting readily agreed that the coordinator of their child’s special education programme can be contacted conveniently and frequently through phone calls or text messaging, besides having a scheduled parent-teacher dialogue every half a year or every few months. One of the interviewees stated that, *“typically we have a parent-teacher meeting, but I do not meet her because we contact one another very frequently.”* while the other interviewee gave similar comments on the same aspect, citing, *“Aside from PTM, we also have very frequent text messages, because off and on, not necessary there is a formal situation that we have dialogues, there are also non-formal situations that we have dialogues. She would update us on what my son is doing.”* demonstrating that parents are satisfied with the accessibility of contact with the programme coordinator which are two-way feedback from school and from home.

Besides, both interviewees also commended that the programme coordinator of their child’s programme is attentive to not just their child’s needs, but also suitable adjustments to be made to the family to better-adapt, and takes the initiative to suggest necessary steps to be taken. One of the interviewees stated that, *“(The programme coordinator) is really attentive, she remembers things we never even thought about”*, referring to a book on acceptance towards siblings with disability that the coordinator introduced to her and encouraged her other daughter to read in order gain awareness and understanding towards her sibling’s condition. This point is further emphasized by the other interviewee when he mentioned how his programme coordinator suggested him and his wife to help their son be more independent by allowing him to sleep with his brother instead of being with them, citing, *“(The programme coordinator) asked if we could get him to move to his own room or to his*

brother's room." which he knows is a contributing factor to how his son is very independent now, as he learns through imitating his brother. The same interviewee also spoke about how his programme coordinator shared findings of studies that may be helpful to them to train their child even at home to bring up his skill level, citing, *"(The programme coordinator) do share a lot of exposure in some findings or new teaching methods that can be applied to (my child). She will share all these things with us, and normally we will take over and see whether the new findings or methods can actually meet our objectives."* While on the same page, one of the interviewees also brought up the fact that her programme coordinator played an important role in recommending supplementary classes for her daughter, and even took initiative to get her enrolled as the place typically refuses children with disabilities, expressing satisfaction towards the progress of her child in the place and thankfulness towards the programme coordinator for the recommendation.

On Teachers' Role and Characteristics

A: Government

A skew towards lower levels of satisfaction in this area concerning the teachers of the government special education programme can be proven through the mutual feedback from both interviewees on the aspects of - Lack of provision of IEP, negative comments on unconcerned attitude of teachers, as well as teaching methodology which includes choice of behaviour management in the classroom and day-to-day lesson conduct. Both interviewees mentioned the lack of provision of IEP, the first interviewee said, *"No, there is no such thing in (my child's) school."* and the other interviewee stated that, *"No, they have one syllabus for everybody - they learn chapter 1, 2, 3 together."*

Regarding the attitude of teachers, both interviewees commented that teachers in the government special education programme seemed unconcerned and was only focused on getting their job done,

citing, *“Whether they do it or not also they get paid so they just do their responsibility - such as the teacher is only in-charge of teaching, so that is what they do.”* whilst the other interviewee gave a similar respond of, *“The mindset of the teachers are just like, ‘you come and I teach’.”*

Besides, a big part of both interviewees’ dissatisfaction towards teachers’ role stemmed from the teachers’ methodology in conducting the lessons in the government school setting. In terms of the day-to-day sessions, one of the interviewees mentioned that classes are very short and lack constructiveness, citing *“I think they do not really have classes, even if they do, it is very brief in a day.”* and she also reasoned with, *“So like my son will jump everywhere and they just talk and talk and talk and it is up to you how much you learn in the class.”* A similar excerpt used prior to this that could be applied in this area is that the same parent mentioned the greatest difference between government and private setting is, *“I think teacher talk more rather than using materials.”* Besides, in terms of behaviour management, it was mentioned in Theme 1: Curriculum Modification that the teachers would mostly give toys to the students who are throwing a tantrum or making a fuss, if the first strategy did not work, they would then put the student in front of the TV.

Both parents provided justification for their dissatisfaction towards the teachers’ role in the government special education programme, as both interviewee mentioned that there is a high number of students in the school in contrast to low numbers of teachers. Citing the first interviewee, *“There are not enough teachers, there is a quota and especially for special needs teachers. They could not care for so many students.”* whereas the second interviewee spoke about an estimation of students registered for the programme, citing, *“The registration number for the school is very high, 200 to 300 students.”* The same interviewee also talked about how administrative

workload is burdening and affects the teachers' performance and quality of teaching as well, citing, *"I think government schools are like that, but I can also understand because the teachers have to teach until the expected level, or the chapter, and they have to write a report for it, so they have no choice but to keep on teaching."*

B: Private

Both interviewees' children are learning in a one-to-one setting whereby teachers conduct their child's ABA programme daily, individualized to specific needs. Therefore, both parents commended mainly on the teachers' character and effort to ensure their child's learning as well as to keep parents informed of teaching methods in order to align lessons at home and in school. Both parents commended on the teachers' effort of sending daily reports through the parent-teacher group in Whatsapp to keep them updated of their child's daily progress in detail - from programme updates to general updates, citing, *"The whatsapp group is a great help, where we get daily reports from teachers."*

When being asked about the parents' thoughts of the teachers in her child's setting, one of the parent responded, *"Love, full of love."* Followed by the elaboration that the teachers treat her child with genuinely love, care and empathy, whereby it was demonstrated through the reaction that was given by the teacher when her daughter was abused in another school back then. The teacher cried when she saw her daughter's photos, and she stated, *"This really shows that the teacher has a relationship with the child and therefore able to have a reaction such as that"* as a response.

Besides that, the teachers also convey tested and successful methods of conducting a skill to the parents so that they could be inform and do the same at home. In addition to that, teachers would take videos of the child's progress and performance in order to allow parents have a better grasp of their child's level and to have their

expectations adjusted too. The first parent spoke about how the teachers taught her daughter to put on shirt and pants, whereby they sent a video of her child doing so for her to know what her child is capable of doing on her own at home, citing, *“So the teachers will tell me that they have tried a few ways and let me know which one works best, so I can use the same way when I get her to take off shirt at home. Kai put on pants while sitting on the floor, she does not know how to do it while standing, so teachers will let me know that they teach her to put on pants seated on the floor. Sometimes they will also take videos so that I know to use the same method while practicing it at home.”* The same parent expressed in a positive note regarding the effort as she is able to practice the same with her child at home, citing, *“Plus they also let me know what she already know, so I do not have to help her anymore”* as the videos helped her have a clear picture of what her child could do.

On Teacher-parent collaboration

A: Government

Both interviewees expressed that there is a lack of school-home collaboration as the information of school-work, methods used to teach and progress of student is not conveyed to them. Aforementioned above, parents are uninformed of school work done during the lessons as the child does not bring their books or home-work home during the course of study. Besides, it was also mentioned that the parents are uninformed of teaching strategies and methods particularly for literacy skills and living skills. The first parent commented that the teachers does not recommend methods of teaching for them to practice at home in order to align the student's learning as well, citing, *“They don't tell me methods to teach, they only tell me that she is studying ok. I do not know what methods they use.”* The same interviewee also stated that she meets the teachers infrequently by expressing, *“No.. just meeting once a year, they do not give advice or offer any help for her to learn or improve. They would just tell me how she did for her test.”* The

second interviewee also responded with, *“No, I have no idea.”* when being asked if she was aware what was learned in school. Both parents are mutually uninformed of the learning content, ways of conduct and facilities provided in the programme, except given a hint of notion only through their child’s report card. It could be cited from the second interviewee on this feedback, *“I only know their exam consist of Science, Math, Bahasa Malaysia and English, therefore I know these are the few subjects they have. So when I see his report card I know roughly what he studies.”*

The same interviewee, when speaking about feedback from teachers, also said that the advice given by teachers does not consider the student’s background and are more suited to the teacher’s needs rather than the student’s. When being asked how was the teacher-parent collaboration done in order to help with her child’s learning, she said, *“The teacher will tell me, ‘Oh.. he is not really good in saying this, need to talk more to him at home’ or to speak more to my son in Bahasa Malaysia. But generally we do not use any bahasa at home, and it might be very confusing for him too. So they will give some of these advice, but mostly these advice are according to their needs or their convenience, rarely it is for our needs”*, expressing her exasperation towards the feedback given by the teacher. The same parent also mentioned about the infrequency of feedback or follow-up by the coordinator and the teachers in the government special education setting.

B: Private

In this area, it is clearly seen that both interviewees expressed satisfaction towards how a two-way communication is implemented in their contact with their child’s programme planning, progress updates as well as management of their children’s educational and character-building outcomes whereby they are closely informed and updated about. Some of the methods of collaboration that was mentioned in the prior sub-themes are such as - daily Whatsapp

reports, videos of child's performance, suggested methods to align training at home and at home as well as scheduled parent-coordinator meetings within 4 to 6 months in a year, as well as frequent and accessible contact to teachers and coordinators in the private special education programme. In this sub-theme, a closer look on the successful conduct of home-school collaboration will be looked into, the feedback from parents with children in the private education programme is positive and shows great deal of parental involvement in their child's learning. The first interviewee stated that, *"Oh now they have to borrow a book from school every Wednesday, and then we have to read with them and then sign. She gets to choose the book she likes"* referring to the reading plan implemented both at school and at home, followed by her input of how the (private) school teachers would update her on her child's performance through sending videos. Besides, the same parent also mentioned that the school would collaborate in helping her be aware of her child's bad habits for correction in generalized settings, citing, *"Or they will also let me know her little habits which are not so good, that I have to take note of and stop her from doing at home. Sometimes like she hold her pencil wrongly, so the teachers will mention to me, that if I observe then I will correct her at home too."* and subsequently adding the point that the teachers would tell her what are the tested and successful methods for her daughter to adopt certain living skills as well. The second interviewee also mentioned that the school would collaborate with them to prepare their child for his lessons as they would update them the child's current programs whereby the parents could also let the teachers know what their son knows, citing, *"So it helps for them probably in his coming class to bring this topic to attention, to see what is his reaction to that. That is also I would say make the class less boring for him."*

Table 5.

List of qualitative findings

Quality Indicator/ Parents' Comment	Government	Private
Curriculum		
a) Characteristics of curriculum - Language of conduct	Homogeneous: Standard Not in Mother Tongue Bahasa Malaysia	Individualized: IEP Not in Mother Tongue English
b) Teaching strategies and methods	Uninformed and Unaware	Adapted and Structured Simple to complex approach, effective reinforcers
c) Teaching materials, equipment and resources	Uncertain Books, TV, basic selection of toys	Varied Flashcard, tactile materials, level-appropriate, hands-on activities, pencil holders, talk tools, culturally-appropriate
d) Learning environment and facilities	Acceptable Clean, good ventilation, seating arrangement convenient, basic deco	Comprehensive Library, gym, sensory corner, occasion-appropriate deco
Teachers' Role Effectiveness		
a) Programme coordinator	Infrequent Contact Host events, rare communication	Frequent Contact Takes initiative, accessible, pay attention to child's needs, give recommendations

a) Teachers' role and characteristics	Unconcerned Attitude Lesson lack constructiveness, ineffective behaviour management	Genuine and Helpful Relates to the child, desmontrate empathy and love, resourceful
b) Teacher-parent collaboration	Lacking PTM once a year, advices given suited to teachers' convenience only	Daily Whatsapp reports, update parents about habits or teaching methods

Discussion and Recommendation

Research Question 1 and 2: What are parents' level of satisfaction and are there any significant differences towards the provisions of 2 elements of quality indicators that their child with learning disabilities receive in the enrolled private or government special education programs in Malaysia?

It was found that there are no distinct differences in level of satisfaction between parents with children enrolled in the private and government school, and both groups of parents are almost identical in how satisfied they are towards the provision of curriculum modification and teachers' role effectiveness in their children's school. The results of this study does not support the findings of Rhinesmith (2017) mentioned in the cited literature in chapter 2. The cited study has compared parent satisfaction towards private and public schools in the United States through reviewing literature and found that parents with children in private schools show higher level of satisfaction compared to the differing group, besides, the same results was also generated when compared with the study conducted by Goldring and Phillips (2008) who wrote a similar report which suggested that there is a 'pull' towards private schools, described through how parents perceive better-quality and

higher-value in home-school collaboration in the private school setting compared to the public school setting. There was no significant difference in the scores of parents' satisfaction towards both types of programme, suggesting that the type of programme has no effect on parents' level of satisfaction. However, the contrary of quantitative and qualitative results will be further discussed in the following segment.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that contribute to parents' level of satisfaction towards their child's enrolled government or private special education programs in Malaysia?

It was found in the thematic analysis conducted in chapter four that there is a contrary between parents' satisfaction of both groups which supports the cited literature by Van Pelt, Allison and Allison (2007), Rhinesmith (2017), Goldring and Phillips (2008) that affirms the raise of the private setting as parents' choice of education as they perceive higher quality and potential for their children's future, however, quantitative data shows that there are no significant differences. In this segment, the researcher will highlight two factors which are perceived as core reasons of the contrary between the quantitative and qualitative findings.

Factor 1: Parent-Teacher Collaboration = Involvement and Information of Parents

Effective communication is the bridge of relationships, knowledge and information, and it is the route to organizational success (Hargie, 2016). When ideas and thoughts are communicated, the possible outcomes are that people arrive at a mutual understanding, they receive information that allow them to form their own perception, standards and expectations. On the other hand, if communication is ineffective within any organization, one of more parties of the same group would find it a challenge to understand the specific or urgent needs in order to make a decision (Pozin et.al., 2018). Through the findings of this paper, there is an obvious difference particular to

this aspect. This could be illustrated by the limited feedback given by parents representing the government special education program on their feedback regarding the curriculum modifications provided, such as the strategies and methods implemented to teach their child. Both participants' comments from the government sector could mostly be summarized as being uninvolved and uninformed. On the contrary, feedback of parents with children in the private setting have provided many examples of the same segment, mentioning about adapted methodologies used for their child's learning which are categorized into the main skills, namely, literacy skill, communication and social skills as well as living skills, in addition to that, descriptions of specific devices, strategies or methods was also shared during both interviews.

An explanation of the above phenomena was given when the interviewees describe relationship between the parents, coordinator and teacher in their respective settings. It could be concurred that there is a lacking of communication between parents, coordinators and teachers of the government special education programme, with only an annual parent-teacher meeting and very infrequent contact during the rest of the time. The only other occasion for communication that was mentioned by the same group of parent is when the hosting of class parties requires contribution from parents. A complete opposite for the same aspect was shown in private programme parents - parents express highly positive feedback regarding the frequent interaction between parent, coordinator and teacher, as well as a shared experience of achieving the child's educational and non-academic performance, progress and goals.

It is evident that information, knowledge and understanding are critical ingredients to construct a standard, a belief, a judgement or criticism. Without information, knowledge or understanding towards a particular matter, one would not be able to formulate a perception in order to make a comment or form an expectation.

Information, knowledge and understanding comes from communication, and in this context, communication between the educator and the parent. The lack of communication in the government parent group is the reason that this group of parents have insufficient information, knowledge and understanding of their child's educational programme for them to determine what is satisfying or not. On the contrary, the private parent group does not only receive sufficient and frequent communication with the coordinators and teachers, they are also the higher SES group which are individuals with higher education levels, who could be more exposed to different fields and have better access to information. A comparison of the feedback from both groups of parents displayed a clear picture that supports the findings of Goldring and Phillips (2008) as well as McEwan (2001) which has concluded that parent-teacher collaboration and parental involvement in the child's education programme is an essential factor. Henceforth, the government parent group has rated a considerably satisfied feedback due to the lack of information and involvement, whereas the private parent group who are consistently informed and involved are able to be more critical with their judgement.

Factor 2: Parental Expectation = Consumer Behaviour

Quality refers to the totality of attributes in a product or a service that satisfy the demands of a consumer (Kotler et al., 2002). A customer relationship could be built when their expectations are met for the price that they have paid, and with the demand for quality service as an emerging trend, consumers are more driven and concerned for the value and quality of services provided than ever before (Angelova & Zekiri, 2011). Therefore, it could be inferred that as parents from the private special education programme group are paying a substantial cost for their child's education, therefore, their expectations and standards of judgement would also be high. A study conducted by Shahabadi & Nemati and Hosseinidoust (2018) has also found that level of education of an individual affects the

amount of income. Thereupon, it can be stated that the higher the level of education of the parents, the higher is the average household income and the more likely it is for their child to be enrolled in a private education setting. High levels of education are attributes to more extensive knowledge and higher life-style expectations, which could justify the feedback of parents representing the private special education setting which are not significantly different from the government setting, although other literature suggests otherwise. In addition to the extensive knowledge as well as information gained through parent-teacher collaboration, parents of the private group would have created specific goals, standards and expectations for their child's development, hence raising the bar of satisfaction. On the other hand, the government setting does not require any fixed monthly payment from students, and furthermore, enrolled students could even receive an allowance, parents from the government group would be content, hence considerably satisfied.

To illustrate the contrary of perspectives between these two groups of parents, it is evident in Table [2] that both types of program are not conducted in the child's mother tongue - government programmes only conducted in Bahasa Malaysia and private settings typically in English. Based on the findings, although both programmes are not conducted in the mother tongue, however, it was perceived that the government setting parent consider it a positive aspect because her child could speak varying languages fluently and contribute it as part of being 'culturally-enriching', whereas the same aspect was considered negative to the private setting parent because it was not individualized enough.

Limitation and Recommendation

One of the limitations is such as the sample size of N=60 for quantitative data analysis is a minimal amount and may result in minimal significant differences in the statistical findings. This could

be lacking to ensure a representative distribution of the population, causing a sampling bias and affects the validity of the results to be generalized or transferred across settings. Besides, the responses generated using the questionnaire may be subjected to respondents' personal biasness, self-interpretation, attitude whilst answering the questions, or even level of education, which may affect the understanding of items on the questionnaire. These are factors which could contribute to unconscious responses which are not authentic evaluation towards the given situation.

Parents are the prime investors of a child's education journey, however, are also the most lacking in professional knowledge, understanding and skills within the team of educational stakeholders. It is recommended by the researcher that the district educational offices implement professional services whereby parents could bring their child for a thorough screening and diagnosis in order to formulate a list of necessary, specific services. For example, a child who has mild ASD should be allowed to attend a government special education programme alongside one or two therapies which are focused on his or her needs. Professionals and educators are equipped with the competency to measure what are the only interventions required and could ease the budget and expenditure of the parents with a child with special needs. Moreover, UNESCO estimates that in Malaysia, only 1% of the population has been identified as having special education needs, versus a global estimated average of 10% - this suggests an underestimation of the number of special education needs children in the country and active provision of screening services are urgent needed. Last but not least, further study to discover parents' satisfaction towards diverse types of school which includes those which are set up by non-profit organizations, community rehabilitation centres or even home-schools will be highly encouraged to unearth the feedback from a minority group as well as to perceive the reality of acquired services for realistic improvement in the special education

provisions of Malaysia.

Conclusion

Quantitative findings report that there are no significant difference between parents' satisfaction towards government or private special education setting, which differs from views of a majority. However, qualitative findings has reported that there are indeed a difference of parental satisfaction, and the result can be largely inferred by factors such as parent-teacher collaboration which are interrelated with parents' level of awareness, involvement and information of the respective education programme, supported by studies on collaboration among stakeholders of education which are often linked to effective schools and academic achievement (Reed, 2003; Eaker et al., 2004). Besides, parental expectations also varied with the cost whereby the respective special education programme demands for - higher expectations result in higher level of difficulty to achieve satisfaction and vice versa. Therefore, it is concluded that there is no one-size-fit-all education system - government schools may not have individualized instructions, but the system offers socially and culturally enriching learning environment; whereas private schools may be lacking in social groups or may even be too individualized, but the setting offers a smaller setting for better teacher-student focus. It is up to the stakeholders to decide what the child needs specifically and provide it accordingly to measure cost and outcome to a higher accuracy so that parental satisfaction can be improved and financial burden can be removed.

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