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In Malaysia, children with special needs have the opportunity for education in special schools as well as in integrated and inclusion programs conducted in mainstream primary and secondary schools. Children who benefit from these integrated and inclusion programs include those with autism alongside many other categories of special needs. Children from the integrated program who are high functioning have the privilege to be included in mainstream classes. Many questions remain, however, on how to best implement the inclusion programs in Malaysian schools. As such, the challenge of inclusion remains. In this article, we describe the smart initiatives since 2005 by the Malaysian Government and the Non-Governmental Organisations in overcoming the challenge of including children with autism into the mainstream classes. A research visit was conducted with the aim of gathering insight into the successful inclusion of children with autism in the mainstream classes in one of the primary schools located in metropolitan Kuala Lumpur in the Klang Valley, Malaysia. Children with autism in the inclusive classrooms were allowed to participate in classroom activities and to respond to teachers’ questions to enhance their experiential learning. Few key features towards successful inclusion such as smart collaboration, co-teaching, peer learning, after-school coaching and experiential learning were identified. This smart initiative has spearheaded few more inclusion programs throughout Malaysia.

Keywords: Inclusion, mainstream classes, smart collaboration

Special education in Malaysia has been emphasized by the Malaysian government even before the country gained independence in 1957. The emphasis then focused on the provision of special education to the visual and hearing impaired students. In the mid 1990s, more emphasis has been given to the development of special education for students with learning disabilities who make up the biggest group of special needs in Malaysia. They include children...