

COMPARATIVE POLICY STUDY (2020–2025)

Itinerant Support Teacher Systems in Special Education

China · Malaysia · Singapore

A Comparative Framework of Mobility Mechanisms & Institutional Systems

Background: Inclusive Education



Mainstream Placement

Placing students with special educational needs (SEN) in regular classrooms does not automatically equal adequate support.



Specialist Expertise

High-level professional expertise must reach regular classroom teachers and students where they are.



Workforce Shortage

Specialist human resources remain strictly limited across all regional special education sectors.



Mobile Support

Urgent structural need for flexible, mobile, and networked support mechanisms to bridge local gaps.

The Core Problem: Support Gap



Mainstream Inclusion Gap

Students with SEN enter mainstream schools, but specialized professional support fails to reach them consistently, creating institutional isolation.

-  **Specialist Shortage:** Insufficient specialized staff to assign full-time teachers to every regular school.
-  **Uneven Distribution:** Resources concentrated heavily in urban or specialized centers.
-  **Fragmented Services:** Disconnect between healthcare, therapy, and classroom instruction.
-  **Model Divergence:** Regions adopt contrasting institutional models to move support.

Research Scope & Purpose

What Does This Comparative Study Examine Across China, Malaysia, and Singapore?



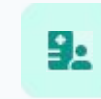
1. Institutional Positioning

Where mobile expertise is rooted in the administrative hierarchy.



2. Policy Genealogy

How policy frameworks shape itinerant service delivery mandates.



3. Target Population

Which student groups receive specialized mobile assistance.



4. Service Processes

Standardized workflows from screening to individualized support.



5. Teacher Training

Qualification standards and professional development pathways.



6. Cross-Sector Linkages

Multi-agency coordination spanning education, health, and social services.

Core Research Questions

Q1

Institutional Location

Where is mobile special education support institutionally located and governed in each system?

Q2

Policy & Delivery

How do national policies and structural mechanisms shape practical service delivery in regular schools?

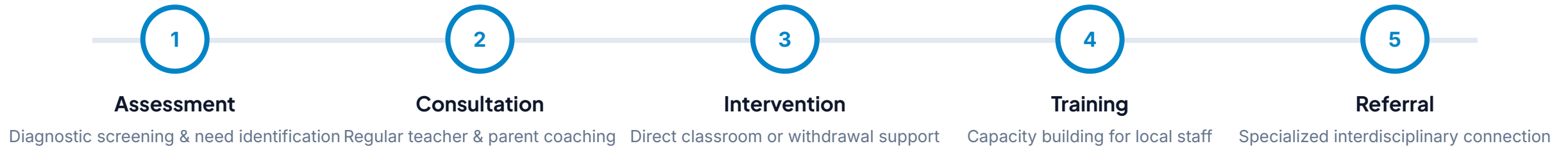
Q3

Mutual Learning

What strategic insights and practical lessons can the three systems learn from each other?

Conceptual Framework

Itinerant Support = A Functional System (Not Just "A Traveling Teacher")



"Itinerant support is a mobile mechanism for distributing specialized functions across network nodes, rather than simply moving an individual job title."

Research Methodology

Comparative Policy & Literature Synthesis

-  **Policy Documents:** Official ministry circulars, legislation, and implementation guides.
-  **Official Statistics:** Government enrollment & staffing data (2020–2025).
-  **Peer-Reviewed Literature:** Academic studies on special education systems.
-  **Authoritative Reports:** UNESCO, MOE, and institutional evaluations.

Non-Empirical Theoretical Study

This study synthesizes policy frameworks and system design mechanisms rather than collecting individual empirical survey data.

Time Horizon Focus

Covers recent strategic transformations between **2020 and 2025** across East and Southeast Asian contexts.

Evidence Framework

Level	Evidence Source Category	Description & Weight	Weight Class
Level A	Official Policy / Statistics	Ministry decrees, national laws, official staffing ratios.	High Rigor
Level B	Peer-Reviewed Research	Empirical academic papers evaluating regional implementation.	High Rigor
Level C	Authoritative Reports	Institutional whitepapers, UNESCO, NGOs, ministry reviews.	Moderate
Level D	Institutional Inference	Logical deduction based on policy structural analysis.	Supplementary

Synthesis Principle: Conclusions rely primarily on combined Level A + Level B evidence to ensure analytical rigor.

Six Comparative Dimensions

1. Institutional Position

Administrative origin, operational hub, and supervisory hierarchy of mobile specialists.

2. Policy Genealogy

Historical progression of national legal mandates establishing itinerant services.

3. Target Population

Eligibility criteria, SEN severity tiers, and student demographic scope covered.

4. Service Process

Workflows: screening, IEP development, classroom support, reassessment, and exit.

5. Qualification & Supply

Certification standards, training pathways, workload accounting, and supply bottlenecks.

6. Cross-Sector Links

Inter-agency coordination between education, health, social service, and community networks.

Resource–Centre–Based Itinerancy

Core Structure: Regional Resource Centre Hub

-  **District Special Ed Resource Centre:** Serves as the professional and administrative hub.
-  **Itinerant Guidance Teacher:** Dispatched from resource centres to mainstream schools.
-  **Mainstream Classroom:** Receives structured cross-school guidance, evaluation, and IEP support.



China: Institutional Structure

Differentiating Two Complementary Roles in China's Special Education System

ROLE A

Resource Teacher (资源教师)

-  **Base:** Fixed at a specific mainstream school's resource room.
-  **Scope:** Supports enrolled SEN students within their home school.
-  **Mode:** Full-time onsite classroom adaptation & withdrawal tutoring.

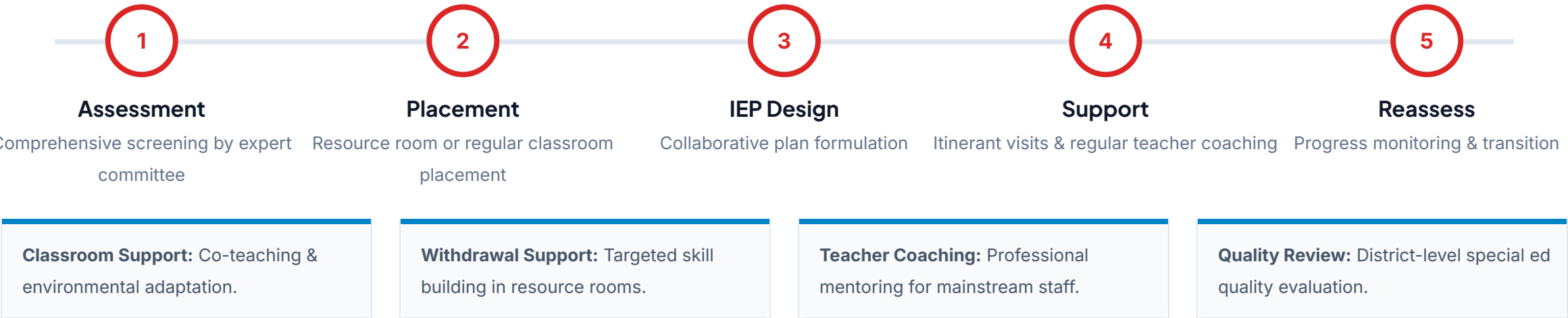
ROLE B

Itinerant Teacher (巡回指导教师)

-  **Base:** Stationed at District Special Ed Resource Centres.
-  **Scope:** Cross-school mobility covering multiple regular schools.
-  **Mode:** Professional supervision, IEP guidance, and teacher mentoring.

China: Service Process

Standardized "One Student, One Plan" (一人一案) Workflow



China: Workforce & Standards

Professionalisation Pathways

-  **Formal Qualifications:** Special education degree or dual-degree certification required.
-  **Provincial Training:** Multi-tiered continuing professional development (CPD).
-  **Competency Standards:** Specialized competencies in diagnosis, IEP, and consultation.

Workload & Implementation Bottlenecks

-  **Workload Coefficients:** Local policies experiment with converting travel hours into teaching workload units.
- Regional Disparities:** Implementation varies widely between eastern coastal districts and inland western counties.
-  **Travel Burden:** Travel time often cuts into direct support time without formal accounting.

Malaysia: Model Overview

MALAYSIA CONTEXT

School-Based Integration + 3PK Regional Outreach



PPKI / Guru PK

Special Education Integration Program (PPKI) teachers based inside mainstream schools dominate daily support.



3PK Service Centres

Pusat Perkhidmatan Pendidikan Khas (3PK) provides regional interdisciplinary itinerant outreach.



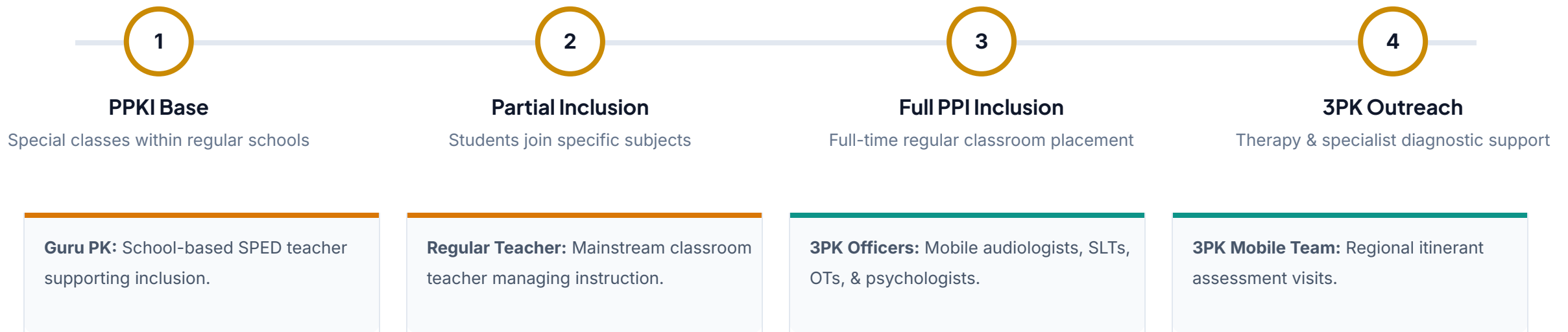
Program Inklusif

Inclusive Education Program (PPI) integrates students into regular classrooms with school-based assistance.

Structural Note: While 3PK provides mobile multidisciplinary services, a dedicated standalone "National Itinerant Teacher Cadre" establishment remains limited in formal policy verification.

Malaysia: Structure & Roles

From Segregated Units to Mainstream Inclusion Flow



Malaysia: 3PK Outreach Model

Interdisciplinary Service Spectrum

Screening

Early identification in rural/urban schools.

Assessment

Audiology, speech, & psychological evaluation.

Intervention

Therapeutic sessions & specialized equipment.

Rehabilitation

Occupational therapy & mobility training.

Target Beneficiaries



Students: Direct clinical assessment and diagnostic intervention.



Teachers: Technical consultation for IEP and classroom adaptation.



Parents: Home-based intervention guidance and counseling.



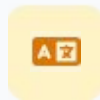
Community: Multi-agency coordination across public sectors.

Malaysia: Key Challenges



Geographic Access

East Malaysia (Sabah/Sarawak) and rural inland areas face severe transport constraints for itinerant teams.



Multilingual Needs

Diverse language mediums (Malay, Mandarin, Tamil) require multi-lingual special education resources.



Specialist Supply

Acute shortage of qualified speech therapists and educational psychologists in public 3PK centres.



Travel Standards

Absence of formal public workload standards for travel time compensation across school visits.

Singapore: Model Overview

SINGAPORE CONTEXT

Embedded School-Based Support + Service Linkages

Embedded Specialist Personnel

-  **AED(LBS):** Allied Educator (Learning and Behavioral Support) deployed in every mainstream school.
-  **SEN Officers:** Onsite specialized intervention and behavioral management.
-  **School-Based Hub:** Primary support provided directly on school grounds.

Mobility via Service Linkage

Key Distinction: Service Linkage vs. Teacher Travel

Specialist expertise moves via structured organizational networks, MOE Psychological Services, SPED school satellite partnerships, and social service agencies—rather than individual itinerant teachers traveling daily.

Singapore: Two-Track System

Mainstream Inclusion & SPED School Dual Provision

TRACK 1

Mainstream Schools (Mild SEN)

-  **Staffing:** AED(LBS) / SEN Officers onsite.
-  **Support:** MOE Educational Psychologists.
-  **Focus:** Dyslexia, ADHD, mild Autism Spectrum.
-  **Partnerships:** Social Service Agencies (SSAs).

TRACK 2

SPED Schools (Moderate to Severe)

-  **Staffing:** Specialized SPED educators & multi-therapists.
-  **Support:** High-density therapeutic environment.
-  **Focus:** Intellectual, multiple disability, severe ASD.
-  **Transition:** Satellite partnerships with mainstream schools.

Singapore: Support Network

Networked Institutional Support Ecology



Mainstream School

Regular classroom teacher + Onsite
AED(LBS)



MOE Psych Services

Itinerant specialist diagnostic evaluation



SPED / SSAs

Therapeutic consultation & resource sharing



SG Enable / Transition

Post-secondary, vocational & employment
pathway

Ecosystem Principle: Integrated case management ensures seamless transition from school identification to adult workforce inclusion.

Institutional Models Compared

Dimension	China 	Malaysia 	Singapore 
Mobility Mechanism	Cross-School Teacher Travel	Regional Interdisciplinary Outreach	Organizational Service Linkage
Institutional Hub	District Resource Centre	Regional 3PK Centre	Mainstream School / MOE Network
Key Specialist Role	Itinerant Guidance Teacher	Guru PK & 3PK Specialists	AED(LBS) / SEN Officer
Primary Focus	IEP guidance & school consultation	Therapeutic & diagnostic screening	Onsite behavioral & learning support

Professional Authority Location

Where Does Specialized Professional Expertise & Authority Reside?

CHINA

Regional Resource Centre

Authority is concentrated in centralized District Resource Centres, which evaluate regular schools and dispatch expert guidance.

MALAYSIA

School + Regional 3PK

Authority is shared between school-based PPKI units and mobile regional 3PK clinical multidisciplinary teams.

SINGAPORE

Embedded School + Network

Authority is embedded directly within mainstream schools via AED(LBS), backed by MOE psychological networks.

Service Processes Compared

Country	Identification & Screening	Intervention & Support Mode	Reassessment & Transition
China 	District Expert Committee assessment	"One Student, One Plan" (IEP) + Resource room guidance	District-level quality review & annual evaluation
Malaysia 	School screening + 3PK clinical evaluation	PPI inclusion support + 3PK mobile therapy sessions	PPKI placement review & vocational integration
Singapore 	School-based SEN identification matrix	AED(LBS) onsite co-teaching & small group intervention	Continuous MOE monitoring & SG Enable transition

Teacher Professionalisation

CHINA

Degree & Certification

-  Special education university degrees.
-  Workload accounting experiments (converting travel to units).

MALAYSIA

Specialised SPED Cadre

-  Bachelor of Special Education degrees.
-  Multilingual instruction demands across vernacular schools.

SINGAPORE

Competency Framework

-  Structured MOE AED professional career ladder.
-  Continuous multi-agency interdisciplinary training.

Shared Workforce Bottlenecks

The Universal Supply-Demand Bottleneck Chain



1. Limited Supply

Insufficient qualified special educators & clinical therapists.



2. Uneven Distribution

Resources concentrated heavily in major urban centers.



3. High Workload

Travel burdens cut into direct student interaction time.



4. Service Gaps

Burnout and inconsistent follow-up in regular classrooms.

Cross-Sector Coordination

Moving From Isolated Teachers to Integrated Multi-Agency Networks

-  **Education Sector:** Mainstream classroom instruction & adaptation.
-  **Health & Therapy:** Clinical diagnosis, SLT, OT, and mental health.
-  **Family Support:** Parent coaching, home training, and counseling.
-  **Social Services:** Community support, welfare, and lifelong transition.



Technology as Reach Extender

■ Telepractice & Remote Support

Remote consultation, online parent coaching, and virtual case conferences bridge rural distance barriers.

📱 Digital Management Platforms

Shared digital IEP tracking enables specialists, teachers, and parents to monitor progress transparently.



AI in Special Education



Assistive Augmentation — Not Autonomous Replacement

✓ What AI Can Support

-  Generating differentiated reading & learning materials.
-  Producing easy-to-read & multi-lingual resources.
-  Automating administrative drafts and IEP reporting.
-  Organizing behavioral tracking data efficiently.

✗ What AI Must NOT Replace

-  Clinical diagnostic evaluations and formal assessments.
-  High-stakes placement and legal accommodation decisions.
-  Human relational empathy and professional ethical judgment.

Mutual Policy Lessons

FROM CHINA

Resource–Centre Hub

Establishing clear district resource hubs to centralize professional supervision and cross-school guidance.

FROM MALAYSIA

3PK Interdisciplinary

Deploying mobile clinical teams (therapists + psychologists) for holistic regional outreach.

FROM SINGAPORE

Embedded Linkage

Embedding SEN personnel directly in regular schools while leveraging structured service networks.

Synthesis Framework: Post + Platform + Process + Outcome

CONCLUSION & STRATEGIC DIRECTION

From "Teacher Travel" to "Professional Support Systems"

"The fundamental research question is not simply 'Who travels?', but 'How does specialized expertise reach the classroom to empower regular teachers and enable student participation?'"

Replicate Systemic Mechanisms Before Replicating Job Titles.

Image Sources



https://manyskools.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/ChatGPT-Image-Dec-15-2025-04_46_48-PM.png

Source: manyskools.com

 Thumbnail
for
stockcake.com

https://images.stockcake.com/public/2/9/6/2964a105-4c39-4849-8436-b15b6fd438a6_large/team-meeting-discussion-stockcake.jpg

Source: stockcake.com



<https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/07/watson-institute-special-education-careers-1024x307.png>

Source: www.thewatsoninstitute.org