

UNIVERSAL DESIGN



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UNIVERSAL DESIGN

PHILOSOPHY AND SELECTED APPLICATIONS IN
MALAYSIA

EDITORS

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Asiah Abdul Rahim

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8 Designing inclusive educational space for autistic children

Farjana Rahaman & Asiah Abdul Rahim

INTRODUCTION

Inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream setting is now an internationally accepted phenomenon. Evidences have shown that inclusion benefits both group of students whether with ability or disability. According to the Salamanca statement (1994) ⁽¹⁾ at the World Conference of Special Needs Education, “ Schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic or other conditions”; and “regular schools with this inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all.”

While inclusive educational space requires inclusion of children with all types of disabilities, current building codes and standards only address physical access to certain group (e.g. wheelchair bound, vision impaired and hearing impaired) but people with autism often remain out of the picture. Autism is a unique and unusual condition but highly ignored by the architects and excluded from building design standards till now probably because of lack of knowledge in general. But it is not an isolated case. As more and more children are going to be diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder each day, an increasing number of children will be enrolled to the public schools in the coming years. Architects can no longer escape their responsibility to create inclusive learning environment which will house these children according to their physical and emotional need. Therefore, a complete understanding of autism condition with its demand on the environment is required from the architect's and design professional's part.

The objective of this chapter is to investigate the previous written documents on autism condition (weaknesses and strengths) and its environmental needs to establish a single matrix for professionals to understand the relationship between these variables which will address the existing gap in this area.

BACKGROUND

Currently incidence of autism is increasing at alarming rate. Study identified average increase of 57% in ASD prevalence in United States of America (USA) from 2002 to 2006 (2 There 1 in 110 children is estimated to fall under the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and prevalence of about 1% with 4: 1 male: female ratio (Prevalence of Autism Spectrum Disorder, 2006) ⁽²⁾. Similar results are found in United Kingdom (UK) where appeared prevalence rate is 1 in 100 children (Autism and Asperger syndrome, 2011) ⁽³⁾. In 2006