

## POULTRY FARMING SKILLS AS A CAREER TRANSITION FOR SPECIAL STUDENTS (MBPK)

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### ABSTRACT

Despite the Malaysian government's target of a one percent employment rate for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) in the public sector, the current rate remains low at approximately 0.31 percent. Therefore, career transition programs are crucial in preparing Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) for the workforce, post-school education, and independent living. To support this objective, a Poultry Farming Skills Project was conducted by SEN students from SMK Dato' Abu Bakar Baginda, Sepang, Selangor, in collaboration with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM). The five-month study involved 24 SEN students and was carried out in two phases. The first phase focused on knowledge transfer through both theoretical and practical training at the Institute of Tropical Agriculture and Food Security. The second phase involved monitoring (both virtual and on-site) and reporting. The aim of this study was to provide students with a solid understanding and practical skills in poultry farming, enabling them to apply their knowledge in managing a poultry farm. Moreover, the study sought to nurture individuals who are capable, independent, and productive, thereby contributing to national economic development. The project also aimed to enhance the overall well-being of SEN students, while reflecting UPM's commitment to sharing agricultural knowledge with underserved communities. Additionally, this initiative has supported teachers in guiding students' career pathways more effectively. Overall, the study has had a positive impact on strengthening the relationship between the university and the school, while equipping SEN students with relevant skills to improve their future employment prospects.

**Keywords:** Poultry Farming, Career Transition, Students with Special Educational Needs

## INTRODUCTION

The agricultural sector in Malaysia plays a crucial role as a primary provider of food resources for the entire population. The advancement of a nation is now often measured by its level of food sufficiency and security, which are considered fundamental pillars of a developed country. According to *Astro Awani* (February, 2023), efforts to increase youth participation in the agricultural sector have become a key focus of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (KPKM). In line with the aspirations of *Malaysia Madani*, youth with disabilities (OKU) should not be left behind. Although individuals with disabilities in Malaysia have access to special education and vocational training, they continue to face challenges in being fully accepted into the open job market and securing meaningful employment opportunities. In response to this gap, the **Poultry Farming Skills Programme for Career Transition among Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)** is proposed as a strategic initiative to equip this group with practical knowledge and provide them with the opportunity to apply these skills in real-world working environments. Furthermore, educators from Universiti Putra Malaysia can contribute advanced agricultural knowledge and support special education teachers in establishing meaningful career pathways for youth with disabilities, thereby ensuring a more inclusive and sustainable future for this marginalized group.

To bridge this gap, the implementation of a career transition course focused on poultry farming is viewed as a strategic initiative to equip youth with disabilities (OKU) with relevant technical skills and competencies in the field of poultry care. Through a hands-on, experiential learning approach, these youths are given the opportunity to acquire fundamental poultry farming skills, including livestock management, animal health care, food preparation, and basic entrepreneurial knowledge related to the agricultural industry.

This program not only empowers youth with disabilities (OKU) to face competition in the job market but also supports the nation's efforts to expand the involvement of a skilled labor force in the agricultural sector. In turn, it also contributes to the enhancement of national food security through the provision of a competent workforce in the local poultry farming industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The agricultural sector, particularly poultry farming, is one of the key contributors to the economic stability and food security of a nation. In facing global challenges such as climate change, food crises, and population growth, the development of a skilled workforce in the agricultural sector has become increasingly critical. People with disabilities (OKU), as part of the potential workforce, should be given fair and inclusive opportunities to participate in this sector. However, the reality shows that the participation of youth with disabilities in agriculture remains low due to barriers such as limited access to appropriate skill training, a lack of career transition support programs, and negative perceptions of their abilities.

The MADANI concept focuses on integrated and holistic approaches as a foundation for a more humane administration (Office of the Prime Minister, 2023). Through the reforms of Malaysia Madani, people with disabilities (OKU) are not left behind in their pursuit of a fulfilling and meaningful life, just like other members of society.

## PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Malaysia, the reality is that the employment rate of people with disabilities (OKU) in the public sector remains low, at around 0.31%, despite the Federal Government's target of 1%. Therefore, career transition programs need to be implemented to assist students with disabilities (OKU) in navigating the world of work, further education after school, or achieving independent living. In fact, efforts to implement career transitions for students with special educational needs (MBK) have been outlined in the Malaysia Education Development Plan (PPPM) 2013–2025.

Poultry farming is a practical and promising field that can serve as a career pathway for youth with disabilities (OKU) because it does not require complex technical skills at the basic level, is easily adaptable to individual capabilities, and offers continuous entrepreneurial opportunities. However, without early exposure and structured skills training, these opportunities are difficult to fully maximize by this group. Humans are beings endowed with six senses by God. According to Pulley, humans are considered "visually oriented" creatures who primarily learn through sight. Although they listen and read, what they hear and read is typically visualized in their minds to gain a clearer concept or meaning. Pulley's statement aligns with the words of Confucius, a Chinese philosopher and scholar: "...If I hear, I forget; if I see, I remember; and if I do, I understand..."

## OBJECTIVE

- a. Understanding and Identifying Proper Poultry Farming Methods
- b. Applying Acquired Knowledge in Poultry Farm Management
- c. Shaping individuals who are potential, independent, and proactive towards the improvement of the nation's economy.

## IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has several significant contributions:

### A. Importance to Youth with Disabilities (OKU):

This study provides practical technical skills training opportunities for youth with disabilities (OKU), which can enhance their ability to be independent, secure employment, or venture into entrepreneurship in the poultry farming sector. This, in turn, empowers the OKU community in terms of socio-economic development and self-sufficiency in life..

### B. Importance to the Education Sector:

The results of this study can serve as a reference for special education institutions and skill training providers to develop more inclusive career transition programs, focusing on practical and relevant agricultural and poultry farming fields that cater to current needs.

### C. Importance to the Agriculture Sector:

By introducing more trained workers from the youth with disabilities (OKU) community, this study can contribute to the stability and sustainability of the nation's agricultural sector, particularly in the production of essential food items such as poultry.

### D. Importance to Policy Maker:

The findings of this study can assist authorities in formulating more inclusive policies or support programs to engage people with disabilities (OKU) in the agricultural sector, in line with social inclusion policies and the National Food Security Action Plan.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopts an action research approach based on the cyclical model (plan-act-observe-reflect) and uses Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic, and Tactile (VAKT) techniques to enhance technical poultry farming skills among youth with disabilities (OKU). Action research was chosen because it allows the researcher to implement interventions directly, observe changes, and make continuous improvements based on feedback throughout the study period. Dilip Mukerjea (1996), in his book *Super Brain*, states that through mind mapping, one can "learn more, remember more, use less paper, and invest less effort," meaning that the use of VAKT techniques can help students learn more effectively, improve their memory, and reduce paper waste. This is particularly suitable for poultry farming activities, which often involve hands-on, field-based work.

According to the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (DBP), *multi* means various, and *sensory* refers to the senses. The multisensory technique is a teaching approach that engages visual (sight), auditory (hearing), kinesthetic (movement), and tactile (touch) senses. This approach can enhance the sensory development of special education students. By using multisensory techniques, students' senses—such as sight, taste, hearing, and touch—are stimulated, which helps the brain translate what is learned into a more concrete form. Multisensory techniques were introduced by Dr. Samuel Torrey Orton in the mid-1920s. He later collaborated with Anna Gillingham to develop the Orton-Gillingham method, which became known as the multi-sensory technique. According to Reid (1998), nearly 60% of students can master learning when they have tactile and kinesthetic learning styles. According to the theory of Claxton and Murrell (1987), auditory and visual learning styles are effective in strengthening memory retention.

This study also applies the *Gestalt Theory*, specifically *Cognitive Learning Theory*, based on a *Focused Approach*.

### Study Location and Cost Estimation

This study was conducted in collaboration with Dr. Suriya Kumari Ramiah from *the Institute Pertanian Tropika Dan Sekuriti Makanan*, Universiti Putra Malaysia. The research was carried out at the UPM Animal Research Farm. This location was chosen due to its basic facilities for small-scale poultry farming activities. The study received a Unimadani Grant from the Ministry of Finance to cover the expenditure cost of 20K.

## Sample and Participants

The study consisted of 22 students with special educational needs (MBPK) aged between 16 and 19 years, who were enrolled in the Special Education Program for Learning Disabilities. The selection of participants was made using purposive sampling, based on the following criteria:

- 1) Students who are interested in the field of poultry farming.
- 2) Students with disabilities (OKU) in the category of mild to moderate learning difficulties.
- 3) Able to follow basic instructions in practical activities.

## Intervention Design

The intervention involves the implementation of a career transition course based on poultry farming, which will be conducted over 10 weeks, starting from August 2, 2024, to October 4, 2024. This course covers:

Phase	Programme	Description
Phase 1	Program introduction and parental consent application.	Explanation of the Program to Parents and Students. Request for Parental Consent for Children to Participate in the Program. 22 students have received parental consent to participate in the program.
Phase 2	Knowledge transfer module.	Briefing on Poultry Workshop 1- 9.8.2024 by Behn Meyer Workshop 2- 16.8.2024 by Rhone Ma Workshop 3- 23.8.2024 by Cargill Field Visit to Itafos UPM Farm: August 28, 2024, focusing on biosecurity on the farm.
Phase 3	Practical transfer module	Over a 5-week period, from August 29, 2024, to October 7, 2024, poultry farming training will be conducted at the Itafos farm. This will include exposure to poultry feeding, drinking, and vaccination practices. Each week, the students will weigh the chickens and the chicken feed to monitor the growth performance of the chickens under their care.  Each day, four students will be assigned to tasks at the farm, including feeding, health care, and cleaning the poultry houses.

Phase 4	Regular Monitoring	Monitoring will be conducted weekly by assessing the condition of the chickens and reviewing growth data. This data will help ensure that the chickens are being effectively managed by the students. Training will be provided through hands-on methods, demonstrations, direct guidance, and self-reflection sessions.
Phase 5	Economic and Entrepreneurship	Students are provided with exposure to the basics of economic management in poultry farming, including the sale of chickens for profit and an understanding of entrepreneurship.
Phase 6	Assessment and Evaluation	After completing the 5-week practical training, all participating students were given an assessment test to analyze their level of understanding and the poultry farming management skills they had learned.

## RESULT AND FINDINGS

According to the Department of Veterinary Services Malaysia (2023), selecting suitable and potential breeds is crucial for ensuring high-quality yields and profitability. The management of chicks at the early stage is important and can be quite complex in poultry farming. A poultry enterprise will not succeed if the chicks are not properly managed. Careful management is required to fully benefit from the genetic potential of the breed being raised. In this study, chicks of the Cobb breed, which are of high quality, recognized, and suitable for the market, were selected. A total of 200 chicks were placed in the poultry house on the first day. By day 35, the harvest yielded 192 chickens, with only 8 chickens lost.

The table below shows the average weight of the chickens raised for 35 days at the Itafos farm. All the chickens exceeded 2kg in weight, which is heavier than the typical market-weight chickens.

**Table: AVERAGE CHICKEN WEIGHTS / CHICKS ON DAY-35**

G	IW	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	Chicken Weight (1-3W)	Chicken Weight (4-5W)	Total Chicken Weight (g/B)
A	47.16	164.24	361.00	543.40	640.60	661.78	1068.64	1302.38	2371.02
B	46.68	161.55	354.43	525.02	637.19	672.27	1040.99	1309.46	2350.45
C	47.40	159.31	359.68	542.84	651.40	648.53	1061.83	1299.93	2361.76
D	47.08	166.68	365.09	563.02	602.27	656.12	1094.79	1258.39	2353.19

(G: Group, BA: Initial Weight, W: Weeks)

#### A. PRODUCTION AND ECONOMIC RETURN

##### • Chicken Sales Revenue:

- The students successfully sold their poultry products to the school community and local residents, demonstrating their ability to manage the economic cycle of poultry farming. A total of RM 1,767.66 was earned from the sales. The profit from the sales was distributed among the students as a reward for their efforts.

##### • Income as Motivation:

This achievement not only boosted the students' confidence but also opened opportunities for them to view poultry farming as a potential source of future income.

#### B. KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Twenty-two students were involved in this study. Their range of scores for knowledge and skill is between 60 to 100, with only one student scoring 40 points.

#### C. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PRE AND POST ANALYSIS

The students with Special Educational Needs (MBPK) from SMK Dato' Abu Bakar Baginda had never been exposed to poultry farming management in school, as agricultural topics are not included in the MBPK curriculum. However, after participating in this program, they gained a deeper understanding of key aspects of poultry farming, including management, care (both theoretical and practical), and its related economic potential. These outcomes present a very encouraging picture of the program's implementation and impact.

## IMPLICATIONS

These results reflect several key points, including:

### **A. PROGRAMME EFFECTIVENESS (PRACTICAL AND THEORY)**

This program successfully achieved its main objective, which was to help MBPK students develop practical skills in poultry farming. It demonstrates that the methods used during the program, including practical training and interactive activities, had a positive impact on the students' understanding and confidence.

### **B. INCREASE IN STUDENT CONFIDENCE**

The MBPK students involved in this program not only gained new knowledge but also built self-confidence to apply their skills in the real world, whether for a career or as an additional source of income.

### **C. SUPPORTS FROM COMMUNITY**

Positive responses indicate that the program was well-received by various stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and the community. This signifies that the program is relevant, practical, and aligns with the needs of MBPK students.

#### **a. Impact on Socioeconomy**

In addition to benefiting the students, this program also exposed them to the economic aspects of poultry farming, such as generating income through the sale of chickens. This directly contributes to their understanding of basic business principles and resource management.

#### **b. Potential for Program Development**

The 100% positive response provides justification for expanding this program to other schools or involving more MBPK students in the future. It can also serve as a reference model for other skill-oriented programs for students with special needs.

## Conclusions

In conclusion, this program not only successfully achieved its objectives but also left a significant positive impact on the development of the students and the acceptance of the community. The program also fostered values of responsibility, teamwork, and entrepreneurial spirit. Continued support from all stakeholders, including sponsors, teachers, and parents, is essential to ensure that programs like this continue to benefit MBPK students in the future.

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