

To Integrate or Not to Integrate: *Systemic Dilemmas in Hong Kong*

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This article examines the policies and implementation of and barriers to integration within the parallel system of general and special education in Hong Kong. The article begins with a discussion of the history, organization, and current status of special education. Then, policies supporting integration and efforts to implement integration are discussed, followed by an analysis of systemic problems for integration and challenges to effective integration. Prospects for future special education services are considered. The author concludes that successful integration and quality provision of special education will rely on policies and governmental leadership in eliminating systemic problems such as elitism, a nonaccepting school culture and teacher attitudes, inadequate teacher training and qualifications, and inefficient resource allocation and monitoring.

In line with the worldwide trend toward inclusive education, Hong Kong officially started this an effort to integrate special and general education in September of 1997. The rationale behind integration is commendable, but a number of issues related to the other education policies and the current system have caused concern as to how integration can be implemented successfully. The future of integration is closely tied to the future of special education. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to examine and analyze the current special education provisions, the integration policy, barriers to integration, and future prospects for effective integration. This article begins with a brief introduction to Hong Kong and its history of special education services, followed by consideration of the current organization and status of special education, integration, and the future of special education. Attention will be given to challenges in implementing integration and insights into the future direction of special education provisions.

About Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a small region on the southern side of mainland China. It is six times the size of Washington, DC, with a land mass of 1,098 square kilometers and a population of nearly 8 million. It is considered the most densely populated and extremely urbanized region in the world. Over 95% of its population is Chinese.

Prior to the arrival of the British, Hong Kong was a small fishing community and haven for travelers and pirates in the South China Sea. In 1842, Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in perpetuity. In 1898, Britain acquired the New Territories on a 99-year lease. The constant influx of capital and manpower from China led to the establishment of light manufacturing throughout the territory by the 1950s and 1960s. Meanwhile, Hong Kong's tax policies began to attract growing foreign investment, further adding to the territory's rapid growth. The flow of refugees from China continued into the 1970s, adding to the workforce in Hong Kong.

This small territory was the first developing economy to enter the world's top 10 economies. The change of sovereignty from Britain to China in 1997 has not affected Hong Kong's political and economic stability. Hong Kong is still one of the world's largest exporters with a bustling free market economy highly dependent on international trade. To maintain its status as a prime international city, Hong Kong must draw on its biggest natural resource: people. Education has always been highly regarded in the Chinese culture, but the competitive knowledge economy also makes it even more important. In fiscal year (FY) 2000–2001, the government spent 22.9% of its budget on education, approximately 52.6 billion Hong Kong dollars (1 U.S. dollar is approximately equivalent to 7.8 Hong Kong dollars), the biggest single category of expenditure (Hong Kong Government, 2002). Education is apparently among the most important responsibilities of the government.

A Brief History of Special Education Services

To understand the development of special education services in Hong Kong, one must have some knowledge of the history of educational provisions in the region. Hong Kong's education system was organized under the British model, which it still heavily resembles. At present, preschool education consists of 3 years of kindergarten for 3- to 5-year-olds. Elementary schooling comprises 6 years and ends with a public examination to determine which secondary school a child will attend. Secondary schooling lasts 5 years, commonly referred to as Forms 1 to 5, and ends with the Hong Kong Certificate of Education examination Examination, which qualifies a person to be a high school graduate. Those who meet the requirements through their examination results may further their education for another 2 years, commonly referred to as Forms 6 and 7, an option that is designed for those who aspire to pursue tertiary education. The Advanced Level Examination ends this 2-year stage of schooling. For the tertiary education, university programs typically last 3 years.

Education provisions began to expand only in the last two decades of the British administration. There was no free public education in Hong Kong until 1971, and the free and compulsory education was initially confined to Grades 1 through 6. In 1978, free public education was extended to Grade 9. Despite the implementation of compulsory public education, Hong Kong's schools have maintained a strong tracking and elite system. Public examinations were established for determining school placement and as gateways to further education. Schools compete and strive for a higher ranking in the school league tables.

The development of special education services in Hong Kong has followed a path similar to that of North America and Europe. For many years, such work was mainly the prerogative of missionaries and philanthropic organizations. In 1863, Catholic Canossian sisters founded a home for the blind, and other missionaries founded the first school for the deaf in 1935. Special education was considered mainly caregiving, and the government's role in special education was minimal. Volunteer and charitable organizations played a major role in building special schools and residential facilities to provide care and education for children with special needs (Yung, 1996). The government became more active with the establishment of the Special Education Section within the Education Department of the Hong Kong government in 1960 (Board of Education, 1996) and has gradually taken over the financial responsibility and control of all special education services. Between the 1960s and the 1980s, special education services continued to expand through an increase in the number of special schools. The concept of integration was introduced to Hong Kong in the 1970s and was promoted as the goal of special education, but the government did not take any action to support its implementation until 1997, when Hong Kong came under the Chinese sovereignty. In the 1990s, growing concern for human

rights and equal opportunities gave greater momentum to the development of special education. In this climate, integration was able to establish itself firmly as an important component of the government's education policy. Implementing integration was perceived as a symbol of Hong Kong's alignment with developed nations and regions in promoting and protecting human rights and equal opportunities (Board of Education, 1996).

The government perceived integration as a less intense form of inclusion because only children with selected categories of disabilities could participate in the official integration scheme, and those children, with support, were expected to follow the standard curriculum of the general schools. The Hong Kong government was only willing to commit to the provision of integration, not full inclusion.

Current Status of Special Education

Schools

Although almost all special schools in Hong Kong were originally built and operated by religious and charitable organizations, they are now fully funded by the government, based on formulas spelled out in the *Code of Aid for Special Schools* (Education Department, 1996). In return, the government has control over curriculum, management, and personnel and resource allocation. However, schools originally funded by religious or charitable organizations may seek donations through those organizations to provide the money for additional personnel or equipment. The government also determines the number of schools for each category of disability, such as mental retardation, physical disabilities, visual impairment, and hearing impairment. The government provides stability for schools to operate but also restricts their autonomy. Some international schools in Hong Kong have special education units within their schools. These schools have full control in all aspects because they do not seek funding from the government.

Teacher Training and Qualifications

It has been a long-standing policy that special education teachers are not required to have training or college degrees prior to employment. As such, they were typically teachers with no degrees or training when they began. Most of them would receive some type of training after they had secured employment. Qualifications of special education teachers have, however, greatly improved in the past few years because of the economic recession. College graduates and those with general education training are now more willing to work in special education settings during this period of a tight job market. Between 1996 and 2001, the percentage of trained teachers rose from 70.3% to 83.5% and the number of special education teachers with college degrees increased from 748

to 1,042, whereas the number of teachers without degrees fell from 715 to 587 (Education Department, 2002).

At present, there is no preservice special education training program because of the lack of policy support for the enrollment of in such programs. Currently, the accredited higher education institutions consist of eight universities and the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED). Of these institutions, only the University of Hong Kong and HKIED offer special education training programs to inservice teachers. The University of Hong Kong offers a 4-year part-time first-degree program for teachers with secondary education and a 2-year part-time certificate program for teachers with college degrees. HKIED offers a 1-year full-time program for inservice teachers who are released from work with pay. The government pays their tuition and the salary of the substitute teachers. This program is costly. It only benefits a small number of teachers and will be eliminated in 2 or 3 years because of its high cost. Special education teacher training is an area in great need of policy support.

Organization of Special Education Provisions

In the 2001–2002 school year, the total student population from kindergarten to secondary schools was 1,115,246, of which 9,354 students (0.8%) were served in special schools and 157 students (0.01%) in special classes in general schools (Education Manpower Bureau, 2003). The figures for special classes only refer to students with more severe visual or hearing impairments who are placed in general schools. They are not part of the integration scheme. In addition, about 2,000 special education students were included in the integration efforts. The percentage of students in special education in Hong Kong was significantly smaller than that of countries such as the United States, where 13.22% of the total student population was served in special education for the 1999–2000 school year (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002).

Children with special needs may be served in three ways: (a) in special schools, (b) in general schools but not as part of the integration scheme, and (c) in general schools within the integration scheme. These three types of provisions in special education will be outlined and discussed below.

Provisions in Special Schools

At present, segregated settings are still the major mode of service delivery. In the 2002–2003 school year, there were 74 special schools of six different types: three levels of mental retardation (mild, moderate, and severe), physical disabilities, hearing impairment, and visual impairment. Many of them had boarding facilities for students whose homes are too far away for convenient travel. The class size of special schools ranges from 8 to 20 students, depending on the types of children served. Based on students' needs, educational psychologists,

speech therapists, audiologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, school nurses, and social workers may be made available to serve in these schools. Special schools typically provide education up to Grade 9. There is some degree of flexibility. For example, if schools for children with mental retardation have a vacancy, a 15-year-old student with unforeseen needs may apply to stay for another year or longer. In the 2002–2003 school year, a pilot scheme to provide a 2-year extension was introduced. The government hopes to make this provision a long-term commitment. Schools for students with physical disabilities are now operating up to the last year of high school. However, students with visual or hearing impairments, severe emotional difficulties, and social maladjustment still need to find a place in general schools or look for employment after completing the ninth grade.

In addition, there are practical schools and skills opportunity schools. In the 1995–1996 school year, it was estimated that 900 secondary students enrolled in practical schools and another 900 in skills opportunity schools (Board of Education, 1996). They are funded like special schools but are not officially considered special schools. Practical schools were established to meet needs of students who are unmotivated and skills opportunity schools to meet needs of those with severe learning difficulties (Board of Education, 1996). Students of both types of schools spend about half of their learning time working to acquire practical job skills to prepare for future employment. These two types of schools only admitted students from Grades 7 to 9 prior to the 2002–2003 school year. In the name of integration, the government converted all practical schools into general schools to offer 5 instead of 3 years of secondary education in 2001. At present, skills opportunity schools continue to offer 3 years of secondary education and students may continue their education in general schools but must compete with those students who are already in general schools to get a place. If they fail to enter general schools, they may have to join the workforce or attend evening schools for adults.

Provisions in General Schools: Nonintegration

Students with learning difficulties, if identified, are largely served in general schools through various types of remedial approaches, but the provisions are not part of integration services funded by the government. Services for these students are different at elementary and secondary levels.

Provisions at the Elementary Level. A screening/referral procedure is established for early identification at the end of first grade. First-grade teachers use Teacher Observation Checklists to identify children who may have difficulties that require special services. The checklists are then sent to educational psychologists employed by the Education Department, who decide which children need to be assessed. Those who do are assessed using achievement tests on Chinese, Eng-

lish, and math. If a child performs substantially below grade level in two of the three subjects, he or she is considered to have learning difficulties. Retention is a common recommendation at this stage. Remedial instructions will be provided when the child reaches Grade 3. Types of remedial instructions include pull-out resource classes from third to sixth grades, before- or after-school in-school tutorials, and after-school or weekend tutorials at designated resource teaching centers. Regardless of the setting, teachers and students are obliged to adhere to the prescribed curriculum, and students have to take the same examinations at the end of the semester.

Resource class. Because schools are not mandated to provide special instructions, only a small number of elementary schools have established resource classes. Similar to the concept of resource rooms in the United States, resource classes are designed to help students diagnosed with learning difficulties in the subjects with which they struggle. These students are pulled out of their general education classrooms during those periods. Schools normally assign up to 16 students from two grades for each resource class period. However, both the resource teachers and their students are still responsible for the standard curriculum, and these students have to take the same examinations as other students at the end of the semesters. Resource teachers typically do not have any training in working with children with various types of learning difficulties.

Non-pull-out, in-school tutorials. Schools that do not want to pull students out of the classrooms may choose to provide small-group tutorials, with normally up to 10 students per class, to students with identified learning difficulties. Half-day elementary schools may offer tutorials before or after school, depending on the school session to which students belong, whereas all-day elementary schools typically offer them after school.

Resource teaching centers. The Education Department of Hong Kong has also established a number of resource teaching centers for students whose schools do not offer any remedial help. These centers are basically out-of-school resource classes. The government's education officers, who are former teachers, provide tutorials to small groups of 10 students identified with learning difficulties in the subjects they struggle with. These officers normally have no training in working with students with learning difficulties. Students may choose to attend two sessions after school on weekdays or one prolonged Saturday session.

Provisions at the Secondary Level. As mentioned earlier, students with severe learning difficulties may be placed in skills opportunity schools. Students with mild to moderate learning difficulties, however, are likely to remain in general schools and to be placed in schools of lower banding. Many secondary schools have remedial classes for the two subjects: math and English. Students performing in the bottom 10% to 25% of their grade may be placed in remedial classes for math and English. These remedial classes are formed by splitting a

class of 40 students into two classes of 20 each and are taught by general education teachers who typically do not have any training in working with students with learning difficulties.

Provisions in General Schools: Integration

In 1977, Hong Kong's Board of Education, in *Integrating the Disabled Into the Community: A United Effort*, proposed integration as a desirable policy goal for the first time and laid down some principles for implementing an integration policy. As a result, a system of diagnosis, classification, and referrals was devised. The policy of integration was reaffirmed in the *Report of the Sub-Committee on Special Education* (Board of Education, 1996). In September 1997, Hong Kong's Education Department launched a pilot project to integrate students with disabilities into general schools. Only students who are pulled out of special schools to receive education in general schools are considered participants of integration.

The 1997 pilot project included students with the following types of disabilities: (a) mild mental retardation, (b) hearing impairment, (c) visual impairment, (d) physical disabilities, and (e) autism with average intelligence (Mittler & Poon-McBrayer, 1998; Poon-McBrayer, 1999). Seven elementary and two secondary schools participated during the 2-year pilot stage. Each participating school was given 50,000 Hong Kong dollars in nonrecurring funds, 1,000 Hong Kong dollars per student per year, a resource teacher for admitting five students, and another teaching assistant for admitting three additional students. One educational psychologist was assigned to support four to five schools in curriculum and instructional adaptation as well as behavioral management. A few training workshops and seminars outside of school hours were also arranged for participating schools prior to their participation and during the period of the project. The Education Department commissioned a team of researchers from the University of Hong Kong to support the nine schools conducting action research and the Hong Kong Institute of Education evaluating the pilot project (Mittler & Poon-McBrayer, 1998; Poon-McBrayer, 1999, 2000).

The pilot project encountered several difficulties and raised a number of concerns. The key problems encountered were the following:

1. a lack of experienced teachers willing to participate,
2. reluctance on the part of schools to provide assessment accommodations or to adapt their teaching methods and the prescribed curriculum to meet the needs of students with disabilities,
3. inadequate support from administrators in class scheduling and workload distribution, and
4. a lack of guidelines on the use of the extra monetary resources to improve students' learning (Poon-McBrayer, 1999, 2000).

Although principals were advised to appoint experienced and effective teachers to serve as resource teachers and employ new teachers to take their original positions, only two principals could convince their experienced teachers to transfer to such positions. Consequently, most resource teachers were new or inexperienced teachers.

Although the integration project is still receiving negative criticism, it has nevertheless expanded in the past 5 years. In March 2002, 110 students with visual impairments, 715 with hearing impairments, 220 with physical disabilities, 619 with mild mental retardation, and 202 with mild autism were integrated into general schools. In the 2002–2003 school year, 116 schools participated in the project (Education Department, 2002) and 26.26 million Hong Kong dollars were spent for this purpose (“Inclusive Education,” 2002). The Education Department remains committed to the policy of integration and will extend the project to 140 elementary and secondary schools (10.7% of 1,311 schools) by the 2004–2005 school year.

Based on some reports from commissioned consultants (e.g., Sin & Tao, 2000a, 2000b), my own involvement as the principal investigator in helping schools conduct action research during the pilot project, and personal contacts with school personnel through conducting training on implementing integration, I have identified four systemic problems that affect the successful implementation of integration: elitism, school culture and teacher attitudes, teacher training and qualifications, and resource allocation and monitoring.

Systemic Problems for Integration

Even though integration was implemented more than 5 years ago and school participation has rapidly increased quantitatively, Hong Kong is far from reaching its goal. Special education provisions are still primarily achieved in segregated settings, and effective integration is not within sight. The difficulties lie in the barriers created by the current education system.

Elitism

Hong Kong’s general education system emphasizes both school autonomy and competition among schools. Even with the implementation of free and compulsory education in the 1970s, the culture of elitism still persists today. Like schools in Singapore (see Lim & Tan, 2000), schools in Hong Kong are still under great pressure to attract bright students who can help them win higher rankings in school league tables. The goal of achieving higher school rankings exerts a powerful influence on school leadership. The competitiveness is a result of the current examination-oriented system that has helped to sustain curriculum rigidity. Entrance examinations have been set up even for 3-year-olds attempting to enter kindergartens and for 6-year-olds entering first grade. Parents would even place their unborn or newborn babies on the waiting list for

an elite kindergarten or a kindergarten connected to an elite elementary school. Administrators push their teachers and students to deliver the highest scores possible in the achievement examinations at the end of elementary and secondary school. Examinations are designed largely to reward rote learning rather than critical and independent thinking. This elitist system discourages teachers from accommodating individual learning needs, as they are fully occupied with the need to cover the curriculum and drill their students to perform well in examinations. As Corbett (1999) concluded, tensions between inclusive educational values and the emphasis on competition and selection exist.

School Culture and Teacher Attitudes

A large body of research on the relationship between integration and school culture has accumulated. On the whole, its findings have been reasonably consistent (e.g., Carrington, 1999; Carrington & Elkins, 2002; Corbett, 1999; Rodriguez & Tompkins, 1994; Zollers, Ramanathan, & Yu, 1999) in that positive school culture facilitates the implementation of integration. Investigations of teacher attitudes (e.g., Forlin, 1995, 2001; Forlin et al., 1996) have found that teachers are generally positive in principle about the idea of inclusion, particularly for students with physical and sensory difficulties, though less so for students with emotional and behavioral problems. However, attitudes differ in practice. When faced with the prospect of having a child with disabilities in their class, teachers are less positive. Australian researchers (e.g., Forlin, 1995) have found evidence that many classroom teachers dislike teaching children with special needs and experience high levels of stress when faced with such children. Some U.S. data (e.g., Wood, 1998) suggest that general education teachers who were initially skeptical and detached gradually become prepared to collaborate and work as part of a team, provided that the inclusion process was carefully managed. One common theme reflected from in all these research studies is that a positive school culture is significant to the success of integration.

Even though the concept of integration was introduced to Hong Kong three decades ago, general education and special education remain two separate systems. General education teachers are not accustomed to having students with special needs in their classrooms, or even their school. The fear and hostility shown by some Australian teachers is common among Hong Kong school personnel (Ho, 2000). The school culture is still characterized by an obsession with high academic performance. This contributes to teachers’ fear or resentment toward students with special needs, to teachers’ concentration on the middle achievers of the class, and to resistance to any change in the curriculum (Dowson, 2000). Against this background, a nonaccepting attitude toward children with special needs is common among school personnel in Hong Kong.

The nonaccepting school culture was apparent when the Education Department solicited participation in the integration pilot project. The recruitment of participation was met

with both open criticism and passive resistance. Of the more than 1,200 general elementary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, only 9 agreed to participate in the project. The 9 participating schools received little support from their teachers and students' parents. Principals found it difficult to convince their experienced teachers to serve as resource teachers, as they had originally planned—some of the schools had to hire fresh college graduates who did not have any training as resource teachers. Some teachers thought that their principals had agreed to implement integration in their schools solely in order to gain more resources and that they did not care how teachers could really help the students (Poon-McBrayer, 1999). Resource teachers were the only teachers who accepted that they had a responsibility for the integrated students. There was a striking lack of cooperation between general education and resource teachers (Mittler & Poon-McBrayer, 1998; Poon-McBrayer, 2000). Even though 116 schools participated in the integration scheme in the 2002–2003 school year, extra resources remains the key incentive for participation. School culture has made minimal progress in accepting students with special needs.

Teacher Training and Qualifications

Systems of teacher education and teaching requirements pose another problem for promoting and entrenching integration in Hong Kong. First, there are no qualification requirements for teachers working with children with special needs. Second, the lack of policy support to hire trained teachers discourages higher education institutions from offering a preservice training program to prepare teachers of children with special needs. Yet, teachers are probably the most crucial element in determining the success of integration. Placing the responsibility of teaching children with special needs on the shoulders of inexperienced and untrained teachers demonstrates a lack of commitment to integration and does a disservice to those children. Such teachers also find their work stressful and frequently lose confidence in their ability to teach (Poon-McBrayer, 1999).

Resource Allocation and Monitoring

Although some monetary incentives have been provided to encourage schools to participate in integration, the resources provided have not been sufficient for long-term support. The one-time grant of 50,000 Hong Kong dollars (approximately equivalent to 6,200 U.S. dollars) is not sufficient to cover the ongoing expenses of acquiring teaching and learning materials to meet different needs. Monitoring the use of personnel resources is another issue that needs to be resolved. For example, the additional resource teacher allocated for integration work generally shoulders the same teaching load as the other teachers and has the added responsibility of coordinating and arranging special services and accommodations for these children. On the other hand, other teachers expected to teach children with special needs generally have an extra plan-

ning period to facilitate their co-planning with the resource teacher. However, because of their heavy workload, teachers seldom use the designated planning period for co-planning (Poon-McBrayer, 2000). They also do not know how to co-plan properly. Consequently, this strategy fails to enhance integration. Adapting teaching approaches to facilitate integration has little hope of success as long as class sizes remain large and teachers are not employed in a way that makes the best use of their skills.

Future of Special Education

Systems and policies play essential roles in the provision of special education and, in turn, integration. The future of integration is, therefore, closely tied to the future provision of special education. One factor that will likely exert great influence on future special education provisions and integration is the education reform introduced in 2000. This education reform sets a clear direction for integration. When fully implemented, this education reform will blur the boundary between general and special education because it aims to construct a diversified school system that allows learners “to make choices according to their own needs, interests, abilities” (Education Commission, 2000, p. 34). Aspects of this reform that will influence special education and integration include the following:

1. fully integrating children with special needs in the preelementary years,
2. restructuring the education system into 9 years of basic education and 3 years of senior secondary education,
3. eliminating public examinations for sixth graders so that children can go through 9 years of basic education without interruption from achievement examinations, and
4. reforming the curriculum to become school-based and diversifying teaching methods to meet needs of all students.

If these measures are taken, they will solve or minimize some of the system's problems that adversely affect the implementation of effective integration. Full integration during the pre-elementary years will help children, parents of children without disabilities, and teachers to be more accepting of children with disabilities. Without the pressure of high scores in achievement examinations, teachers will not have to teach to the test and might be more willing to accommodate various learning paces and needs. If the curriculum is going to be school-based, teachers will have more flexibility to adapt and accommodate to meet diverse needs.

In spite of these reform measures that favor the implementation of integration, a number of challenges still lie ahead. I have identified four broad areas that are barriers to

the effective implementation of integration: elitism, rigid instructional approaches and curriculum, nonaccepting school culture and teacher attitudes, and inadequate teacher training.

Reducing Elitism

The sentiment for elitism is still strong, especially among elite schools. In the 2002–2003 school year, several elite secondary schools chose to change their status from subsidized to semi-private schools. They still receive some funding from the government but have to charge for tuition in order to meet all expenses. This arrangement gives the schools the freedom to choose high-achieving students from another school district. Parents of children who are not offered a place but want to attend these schools will have to pay a portion of the tuition fees. The schools hope to maintain the high level of student performance in the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination and the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination. Reducing elitism remains a challenge to the policymakers and school personnel.

Expanding Instructional Flexibility

At present, most general schools still hold students with disabilities responsible for the standard curriculum and evaluate them through the same examinations in the same format as their nondisabled peers. The government's requests to adapt formats and content of instructions, assessment, and homework have had little effect. Accommodations on public examinations at the end of secondary school leavers are limited to increasing the time allotted for writing. No other formats are allowed. Expanding formats of accommodation in instruction and assessment is necessary to truly create a diversified school system. As Lloyd (2001) insisted, equal educational opportunity will remain a myth if the organization of schooling, curriculum, and assessment and testing procedures remains unchallenged.

Improving School Culture and Teacher Attitudes

Zollers et al. (1999) found three underlying characteristics of the school's culture that can contribute decisively to the success of its integration program: (a) an inclusive leader, (b) a broad vision of school community, and (c) shared language and values. These, they argued, combine to create what they term an *inclusive school culture*. Other researchers have found that essential ingredients for successful reform include (a) a commitment to a central philosophy and belief system, (b) teacher initiatives supported by the building principal, and (c) structures that support ongoing change and continuous improvement (Kugelmass, 2001). These findings indicate that leadership, collaboration, and shared and compromised vision are central to the evolution and maintenance of a school's inclusive culture. Both the principals and the teachers need to see the value

of including special needs students. Teachers are reluctant to accept any education reform when they do not participate in decision-making, their workload increases because of the reform, and their concerns are neglected.

Improving Teacher Training

Teacher training remains a major challenge to the future provision of special education in Hong Kong. As mentioned earlier, the current teacher education system that contains only inservice training programs is obviously inadequate. A policy that requires preservice training is necessary to encourage higher education institutions to design training programs for individuals who aspire to be special educators. In addition, most existing training programs must be redesigned because they are subject-oriented and include little information on classroom management, curriculum adaptation, and instructional modifications, all of which are significant in meeting diverse needs. As advocated by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (1993), a concept that must be rooted in teachers' mind during their training is that *all* educators should be prepared to educate *all* children. This, in turn, will help general education teachers be more willing and able to work with students with disabilities and other special needs.

Conclusion

Education for children with special needs will continue to be valued worldwide. The future development and direction of education for children with disabilities in Hong Kong will continue to be affected by its own societal development and the global trends. Resolving the systemic problems identified earlier will require the Hong Kong government to set an example and assume leadership in working toward the goal of a unified education system (Center for the Studies of Inclusive Education, 1997) through adopting sensible principles and policies. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has stressed that it is essential to develop national capacities for policymaking and systems management in support of inclusive education and to bring forward the concerns of people with disabilities (UNESCO, 1999). Hong Kong can greatly benefit from other nations' experiences, particularly the experience of the United States—the first nation to use laws to provide an impetus for implementing integration and designing a system of accommodations. The U.S. experience and research remind us of the essential elements for quality provisions of special education and effective integration: accountability, system unity, resource allocation and monitoring, curriculum planning, restructuring of staff development, training for collaborative decision-making, responsibility, and education for all (Council of Administrators of Special Education, 1993). The Hong Kong government's leadership in introducing policies to eliminate the problems in the present system is fundamental to the future of special education and effective integration in Hong Kong.

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