THE "SAME" PROJECT: ACHIEVING "ONE CURRICULUM FOR ALL" IN HONG KONG

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Special schools, along with an increasing number of mainstream schools that implement inclusive education in Hong Kong, have been making efforts to develop their own school-based curriculum to echo and support the spirit of "one curriculum for all" since the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) of the Education Bureau (EDB) released the consultation document on education reform at the beginning of the new century (CDC, 2001; Fok, 2008; Lian, 2001a, 2001b). However, several concerns surfaced in the process of developing an appropriate and effective curriculum: (a) it was difficult to help students with special education needs (SEN) access the central (i.e., mainstream or compulsory education) curriculum due to the lack of guidance; (b) a common language, as well as a teaching and evaluation system, has not been used with agreed-upon performance standards to describe students' learning progress and attainment; and (c) the phenomena of having low expectations for children with learning difficulties (CWLD) is common due to high emphasis on skills training-oriented education, a lack of direction in teaching and the understanding of Hong Kong's nine generic skills to be developed through the eight key learning areas

(KLAs). This paper is, therefore, in an attempt to (a) review the trends and related studies on "access to central curriculum" from international experiences; (b) discuss the concerns on assessment and curriculum development for improving access to central curriculum for students with SEN in Hong Kong with respect to "one curriculum for all"; and (c) describe a project (the SAME project) in Hong Kong and to highlight the accomplishment of the Phase 1 of the project. The implications to the field are also discussed.

Introduction

The notion that every single student has the right to access the same curriculum is a vital concern and has been discussed in the past few years in countries such as the United Kingdom and the United States. (Abell, Bauder, & Simmons, 2005; Askew, Millett, Brown, Rhodes, & Bibby, 2001; Forlin & Forlin, 2002; Forlin & Lian, 2008; Kluth, Biklen, & Straut, 2003; King-Sears, 2001; Muijs & Reynolds, 2001; O'Leary, 2001; Wehmeyer, Lance, & Bashinski, 2002; Westwood, 2002). Although "one curriculum for all" has been emphasized in the field of special education in Hong Kong since the release of the consultation document on education reform in 2001 (CDC, 2001), the guidance on direction and ways for achieving this is lacking. Each special school in Hong Kong currently develops its own "school-based" curriculum, making a great amount of effort in delivering the eight key learning areas (KLAs) and related subjects. A high incidence of schools (about 80% of local special schools) claimed in a survey that their school-based curricula make reference to the central curriculum (The Special Education Society of Hong Kong, 2002); however, the survey showed no details to the extent of references made. A study of contemporary trends and experiences in accessing Hong Kong central curriculum becomes urgent in the effort to move towards "one curriculum for all."

The purpose of this paper is to (a) review the trends and related studies on "access to central curriculum" from international experiences; (b) discuss the concerns on assessment and curriculum development for improving access to central curriculum for students with special education needs (SEN) in Hong Kong with respect to "one curriculum for all"; and (c) describe the SAME Project in Hong Kong and to highlight the accomplishment of Phase 1 of the project. The implications to the field are also discussed.

International Trends

Equity of Learning Opportunity

Accessibility of central curriculum for ALL students is being discussed around the world in numeral places like the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, Taiwan as well as Hong Kong. The need to ensure that all students, including those with SEN, are treated equally by being able to access appropriate programs under the same universal curriculum has recently been advocated (Abell, Bauder, & Simmons, 2005; Forlin & Forlin, 2002; Forlin & Lian, 2008; King-Sears, 2001; Kluth, Biklen, & Straut, 2003; O'Leary, 2001; Wehmeyer, Lance, & Bashinski, 2002; Yung, 2006). Researchers including McLaughlin (1999) and Browder, Spooner, and Bingham (2004) have stressed the need for students with SEN to have access to the general curriculum due to the educational equity of offering the same opportunity to learn. Their emphasis is consistent with Cole's (2000) promotion that every student has the right to become an educated person by enhancing his or her curiosity of the world around him/her. The UNESCO (1999) posited the right to a higher standard of education to clearly imply that objective measurement and qualitative improvement should take place in order to raise the level of educational achievement of learners who have SEN.

For example, in the United Kingdom, "one curriculum for all" is a practical reality for many schools. Byers (2004) cited that the set of purposes of the National Curriculum includes the statement that education is a route to equality of opportunity with a strong emphasis on providing effective learning opportunities for ALL learners. In Western Australia, levels of "foundation" are developed under the first key stage to include all students in the curriculum framework (Education Department of Western Australia, 1998).

Curriculum Adaptation and Development

The first step to ensure access to the central curriculum for students with SEN, especially those with intellectual disabilities (ID), would be the curriculum planning and design process and the development of a list of standards (Wehmeyer, Sands, Knowlton, & Kozleski, 2002). As Nolet and McLaughlin (2000) suggested, a holistic view on curriculum development in the field of special education while using the model for universal curriculum in the project would serve this purpose.

Over the past fifteen to twenty years, the provision for children and young people,

who are now described as having severe learning difficulties, has moved from the medical/care model of treatment in various settings onto the education of these individuals in school classrooms. This advancement has led to creative thinking in many areas of the field of education that ensures greater access to a wider curriculum for the learners (Bovair, 1991). Similarly, McLaughlin (1999) stated that a balance between remediation and instruction is necessary because of the tendency of special education teachers to work solely or mainly on remediation. In the past, teachers tended to focus on functional skills drilling in daily lessons while an important instructional content may have been missed.

According to informal sharing and conversations with field experts and school heads on development of universal curriculum, experiences in the United Kingdom showed that in using the model for universal curriculum, many schools have greatly benefited in having a common language in student performance, a clear direction of teaching, and a brief and concise report of information for tracking student progress. The importance of this model can be reflected by the number of schools joining the scheme in the UK; and the number of schools in the scheme has increased from around ten to more than a hundred in five years.
Westwood (2002) stated that all students follow a common curriculum with varied amount of assistance in achieving objectives. This would fit the idea of central curriculum access for students with SEN.

Controversy over Accessing Central Curriculum for Students with SEN

Among studies on accessing general education curriculum and assessment for students with SEN, there have been arguments against the model for universal curriculum. They mainly focus on problems encountered and teacher's perception and attitude towards the change. In Agran, Alper, and Wehmeyer's (2002) study, the major concern is the teacher's disagreement on the need of students with severe disabilities to access the general curriculum and the need to assess and evaluate students against academic contents and standards. Two other studies have also found a major rejection from teachers to using the model. Teachers felt that the purpose of assessing and evaluating students with severe disabilities was to detect very subtle changes in behavior (Donnelly, 2005) and complained about the larger paperwork involved (Abell, Bauder, & Simmons, 2005).

Common Concerns in Hong Kong

In developing the curriculum and assessment for students with SEN, especially those with intellectual disabilities (ID), there are several issues that concern special school practitioners in Hong Kong. The first is the difficulty in helping students with ID access the central curriculum by developing a school-based curriculum and assessment system. Based on the principle of "one curriculum for all," students with SEN, including those with ID, are expected to be under the same curriculum framework as those in the mainstream or general education schools and to be offered the same essential learning experiences (Curriculum Development Council, 1997, 2001; Lian, 2007, 2008); however, many local schools complained about the difficulties in compliance since there is no guidance on how to fit these students into the central curriculum framework.

Second, a common "language" has not been used for special schools to describe students' learning progress among and within the schools, especially relating to the eight key learning areas. The "missing gap" in Hong Kong is that there are no agreed-upon performance standards to describe students' attainment in each key learning area for reference.

Third, with the legacy of the traditional perspective on individualized and segregated education, teaching in special schools has placed over-emphasis on skill-based training by looking solely at the students' daily living needs. Students with SEN (particularly those with lower-end ability) may show restricted learning needs due to their very limited cognitive and expressive abilities (e.g., students with profound intellectual disabilities without verbal expression could hardly demonstrate their interest in learning science if they have never had a chance to be exposed to the related context); this may result in limited learning experiences and opportunities and, thus, under-expectations for these students.

Fourth, the guidance for helping students' access to central curriculum is lacking; the ultimate goals or the rationale for teaching each item in every key learning area would easily be overlooked by teachers in special schools. The direction of teaching would then be focused on skills-oriented tasks such as each step in toilet training, grooming, and using spoon for self-feeding, etc.

The lack of direction of teaching, high focus on skill-based training, and the low expectations often lead to under-achievement of students with SEN, which appears to be the common weakness in schools according to verbal reports from building

principals and class observation data from the research centre (Lian, 2006). This phenomenon reflects exactly the results of "A Study of the Effectiveness of Special Schools" as reported by the Education and Manpower Bureau (2005).

In summary, the above factors led to the motivation for establishing a network among some (if not all) special schools in Hong Kong in their attempt to find a way forward in resolving these problems and concerns, ending up with the birth of the SAME Project.

The SAME Project

Background of the SAME Project

Prior to the project, a local research centre, the Centre for Advancement in Special Education (CASE), called for meetings in order to gather views on and discuss with practitioners of local special schools the future direction of curriculum and assessment for students with SEN. During the meetings, participating schools voiced their concerns and needs on development of an appropriate curriculum and assessment system. With these concerns, the centre tried to explore development models from overseas countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States as reference. The centre came across a model for universal curriculum derived from the UK that a local special school affiliated with the English School Foundation (ESF) in Hong Kong has been using for more than five years. This school pointed out its advantages in terms of assessment, curriculum content, teacher planning, student program, and reporting system.

The model was then introduced to the local schools; many of which were impressed and inspired by the conceptual framework comprising of (a) sets of agreed-upon performance scales; (b) a corresponding assessment package; (c) schemes on key learning areas based on the central curriculum; and (d) a student performance profiling system for tracking learning attainment and achievement, as a model for developing the universal curriculum for students with SEN. Accordingly, the centre initiated the SAME Project with nine special schools to develop a local curriculum framework for delivering the same curriculum for students with SEN (especially those in special schools) in a local context, by using the development model derived from the UK. It perfectly matched the principle of "one curriculum for all" as proposed by Hong Kong Education Bureau.

Aims of the SAME Project

The SAME Project (Systematic Approach to Mainstream Education) is aimed at:
(1) raising the standard of educational achievement for all students in special schools;
(2) giving all students in special schools the equal opportunity to have access to the Hong Kong central curriculum; and
(3) supporting teachers in achieving these goals (Humphreys, 2006b).

Rationale

The project is based on the equity of learning opportunities in accessing the central curriculum, with the ultimate goal of raising the standard of education achievement of students with SEN. In the model for developing a universal curriculum, there are two meanings conveyed in the term 'universal.' One is the universality of curriculum conceptualization for the school-based curriculum of special schools and the mainstream school curriculum. Its focus is to match the principles of "one curriculum for all" for students with SEN, which has been promoted by the CDC since 2001. The other meaning is the universality of different school-based curriculum. With this universality, different special schools have compromised in using shared and agreed standards, learning objectives, a curriculum framework (with key learning area based), and an assessment and reporting system.

Components of the SAME Project

In the model of universal curriculum in the SAME project, four main components are involved, namely, the Central Curriculum, Attainment Scales, SAME Curriculum Assessment for Learning Effectiveness (SCALE) and Schemes of Work. They are four individual components, (i.e., schools would have flexibility to use any one of these or any combination among these) but closely inter-related with each other. Each of these components and their relations will be briefly introduced in the following sections.

The Central Curriculum

The Curriculum Development Council recommended that "the central curriculum includes the aims and goals of the school curriculum, five essential learning experiences, the curriculum framework of eight Key Learning Areas" and "the Curriculum Framework has three interconnected components: (1) Key Learning Areas, (2) Generic Skills and (3) Values and Attitudes. The framework has been so designed as to allow different pathways to understanding variable breadth and depth

of content, and the flexible use of a range of learning strategies and styles to suit individual needs." (Curriculum Development Council, 2002).

In the SAME project, the central curriculum is defined as a framework used by all schools to ensure that teaching and learning is balanced and consistent by setting out (1) the key learning areas; and (2) the knowledge, skills, and understanding required in each Key Learning Area (KLA), which includes English Language Education, Chinese Language Education, Mathematics Education, Personal, Social & Humanistic Education, Science Education, Technology Education, Arts Education, and Physical Education.

With each KLA curriculum guide, an overview of a student's expectation at the Key Stages (age-related) in each KLA should be provided to the teachers. Nevertheless, many practitioners working with students with intellectual disabilities come across many difficulties in making reference to these central curriculum guides in order to help their student access the central curriculum. With this concern, teachers in the SAME project would be required to study the central curriculum guide in depth and develop curriculum guide supplement for each KLA specific to students with SEN, based on the structure and rationale of the central curriculum.

Attainment Scales

Attainment scales consist of a set of performance descriptors under each strand (knowledge aspect) of the Key Learning Areas. These scales are shared and agreed "standards" indicate the level of attainment of students. It should provide teachers, or even parents, with a common language to communicate on students' learning progress.

In each set of attainment scales, there are twelve Attainment Levels for each of the strands of the eight key learning areas (KLA) including English, Chinese, Mathematics, Personal, Social & Humanistic Education, Science, Technology, Arts, and Physical Education. The levels range from A1 (the lowest level) to A12 and describe the performance required for the specified level in the particular strand. A1 to A3 are the earliest levels of general attainment where the sensory-motor stage of cognitive development perspective (Piaget, 1955) is adopted. The subject matter in each KLA is the content of learning, not the focus; hence, same performance descriptors are used across all KLAs. A4 to A12 are subject-related attainment where subject matter is the focus. A9 to A12 are the bridging levels to the average levels of students at Key Stage 1.

Attainment scales are therefore an extension ~~to~~ and an integral part of the central curriculum to help teachers track student progress and set targets for students at early developmental levels with a common language within and between schools.

SAME Curriculum Assessment for Learning Effectiveness (SCALE)

SAME Curriculum Assessment for *Learning Effectiveness (SCALE)* is an assessment package with an objective assessment device to measure a student's learning progress corresponding to the attainment scales. It is also a method of assessment that sets measurable targets at the appropriate key stages using relevant performance criteria and allows for straightforward conversion into attainment level scores.
Initially, only the four core key learning areas will be covered in the assessment (i.e., Chinese Language, Mathematics, Science, Personal-Social & Humanistic Education). In every key learning area, the assessment activities highlight one of the items of the performance descriptions on the attainment scales.

In general, the SCALE can serve as a summary assessment of learning by evaluating annual progress (not weekly progression). The relative progress of an individual student over a year, in a given key learning area, in comparison with other students in the cohort who are the same age and started at the same level of attainment can be monitored.

A Student Performance Profiling System will then be developed based on the validated attainment scales and assessment. With the attainment scales and the objective assessment, schools will be encouraged to submit student performance data based on the attainment scales in different key learning areas to a central system on performance profiling. A report of the analysis of student attainment and achievement, via figures and charts, will then be provided to schools. In the system, attainment refers to current level of ability of the student expressed as an attainment scales score; while achievement is the way the progress of individual student compare with the progress of other students of the same age with same baseline of attainment.

The Schemes of Work
The Scheme of Work is a practical way of organizing and delivering the requirements of the central curriculum for students with SEN by providing a framework that sets out teaching objectives, resources, vocabulary and activities (Ayres, 2006). The key learning areas covered in the SAME Schemes of Work include Chinese Language, English Language, Mathematics, Science, Personal Social & Humanistic Education,

Technology, Arts Education (Visual Arts and Music), and Physical Education. This teaching framework would help teachers organize and deliver the content of central curriculum with appropriate expectations based on students' key stage (age and social appropriateness) and cognitive ability (attainment levels).

In summary, the SAME project does not create a new or separate curriculum. It is a way for teachers to teach students with SEN under the same curriculum framework with a major focus on cognitive development which is built from the learning of key learning areas. In addition, it attempts to move from a functional skills training basis for teaching to a higher level of cognitive development basis.

Scope of Work

This project was conducted in an action research approach of different qualitative and quantitative methods for data collection and analysis. It comprised a variety of methods by means of professional development training seminars and workshops; steering committee (key leaders or members), project (whole capacity) and team (small group) meetings; hands-on experience (e.g. actual participation in the development work in the project such as writing KLA guidebooks, etc.) in the following different phases of the work:

Phase 1 (Development of Conceptual Framework and Attainment Scales)
During this phase, the conceptual framework for the development of universal curriculum for students with SEN and the attainment scales are the main products. During all of the development phases, the 'consumer based approach' will be used. This initially applies to the identification of student performance with different ability levels for developing the SAME attainment scales; the development is based on professional experiences and judgment (Humphreys, 2006b). The main focus is to use the professional understanding of teachers to identify a way forward. Validation of Attainment Scales will be conducted after the completion of the first draft of the scales done by field tests in participating schools.

Phase 2 (Development of SAME Curriculum Assessment for Learning Effectiveness)
At this phase, the assessment package with objective assessment criteria and procedures will be developed to measure student attainment levels at each strand of each KLA. Validation of the Attainment Scales Assessment will be conducted after the completion of the first draft of the assessment done by field tests in participating schools.

Phase 3 (Development of Schemes of Work)

In this phase, sets of detailed guidance for teaching on each KLA will be developed. Field tests will be conducted by implementing the SAME in the participating schools with a teaching plan design and assessing student performance by using the SAME materials. In the meantime, on-going visits, interviews with teachers and class observations will be used to collect data on the views and process in the implementation of the SAME materials.

Phase 4 (Development and Validation of Student Performance Profiling System)

The mechanism and system framework will be built up at this phase and a pilot study will be conducted by feeding in student performance data and generating reports by a trial run of the system. Many cycles of planning, acting, evaluating and revising will be undergone in the entire development process.

Participants

The project has just completed the second phase at the time this paper was written. Nine special schools for students with intellectual disabilities ranging from mild, moderate to severe grade possibly together with physical and multiple disabilities and visual impairment participated in the project on a volunteer basis. Each school assigned appropriate teachers or subject specialists in developing the documents for Phase 1 and/or other phases. All teachers joining the project are required to participate in all relevant meetings, seminars, workshops and consultancy services. More schools will be recruited to join the project at each phase. CASE, the research centre, plays a role in overseeing, co-ordination, consultancy, editing of materials, organizing related seminars and workshops, and research-oriented work in the project.

Instrumentation

Regarding assessment, an assessment package, portfolio, observation, enquiry with parents and therapists, and authentic assessment will be used and evidence-based data on student performance will be collected by using video-taping, portfolio, photos and class observation. For project evaluation, tools such as questionnaires, interviews and class observation will be used to collect views on the usefulness and effectiveness of the SAME project, advantages and disadvantages of the model, etc.

Highlight of the Accomplishment

Benefits

Throughout the process of professional development in the form of seminars and workshops attendance, hands-on experience in producing the attainments scales, and collaboration of teachers from different schools, the following benefits have been found via informal means such as observation, information conversation, sharing sessions, and meetings.

Most schools reported that the model can definitely serve as a measurement to account for students' learning efficacy, though it may not be valid and reliable enough at the current stage, because there was no comparable model in the past. It can also serve a similar function as the public exams (i.e., special schools can use this as an indicator to show progress or performance of students with ID).

Schools also viewed the positive impact on programs for students with intellectual disabilities by raising expectations for students. Their standard of educational achievement and the school accountability for student achievement gains could be enhanced.

With the design of the Attainment Scales and Schemes of Work, students' learning experiences and opportunities in participation have increased. Some schools reported that, before this model had been introduced, they did not expect students at the lower end of ability level to learn science-focused topics such as energy which could be interpreted in terms of fire and light for students with SEN; but following the framework suggested, the students at a particular key stage, no matter the attainment level, are expected to touch on this kind of topic. Experience showed that they can learn from this by having the exposure to the topic. As the awareness of giving learning opportunities to students with SEN increases, more appropriate expectations will be set for students. In addition, a rise in confidence and self-esteem was observed, as students, especially ones with physical disabilities, had the opportunity to learn the same topics as their mainstream school peers.

The most significant benefit is that teachers can share a common language in discussing student performance and progress within and between schools. They can communicate with other colleagues just by saying, for example, 'his mathematics is at about A4' and they have a mutual understanding of what a student at A4 can achieve. The common language serves as a better means for communication.

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, there were some positive by-products

from the project. They include (a) a better opportunity for communication & collaboration with more discussion and sharing among colleagues; (b) enhancement of staff professional development by establishing a more professional atmosphere for sharing teaching strategies (as teachers were involved in co-planning/co-designing in the development work at phase 1 and sharing sessions and activities); and (c) a better grasp of understanding of the concept of curriculum development.

Lastly, the concept of 'broad and balanced' curriculum can be strongly experienced in all participating schools even at the early phase of the project. The focus of teaching is not skills training oriented; the topic of teaching and learning is widened and the expectation for students is higher, etc.

Challenges and Difficulties

Apart from the benefits, notable challenges and difficulties that have been or will be encountered in the first phase of the project are as listed below:

1. Demanding resources - Much time and manpower were and will be involved for understanding the concept and for developing or revising the contents of the materials.
2. Change in school curriculum – It was a risk for schools to join the project as they may have had to change the development plan and direction for the school curriculum. It would be a huge change to adopt a curriculum framework with broad and balanced focus, as opposed to a skills-training focus.
3. Teachers' and parents' perception, attitude and acceptance – Many teachers and parents are comfortable with the present situation with students only being taught/trained functional skills for their daily life such as toileting, feeding, and dressing; they argue against the needs for students with SEN to learn 'science' or elements from other key learning areas following the mainstream curriculum framework. This echoes the results from Donnelly's study (2005).
4. No precedent on the success of the model - It is not yet clear if data collected can benefit the educational program of the students since few studies have been done to investigate how the universal curriculum affects the learning efficacy of students with SEN in local or international contexts.
5. Limited professional training – Intensive training is important for quality control in the development and design of the project. Nevertheless, due to limited resources in conducting this study, some of the teacher training sessions must be delivered by the project team since it may be difficult for experts from relevant countries such as the UK or the US to travel to Hong Kong for training.
6. Need for collaboration - Since it is at the first stage of the project, there are still

difficulties in communication and collaboration between the centre and schools and the sharing of details in implementation and policies among schools.

Implication for the Field of Special Education in Hong Kong

From early stages (introduction to conceptual model), to later stages (organizing seminars and workshops), to the current status at Phase 1, seventeen months of work have been put into the project. Experiences of the past activities are indeed worth sharing with field practitioners working towards the mission of 'raising the standards of education for all' (Humphreys, 2006). Implications for the field on aspects such as school culture, school partnership, continuum of ability and IEP will be discussed in this section.

School Cultures for the New Paradigm on Special Education

In this project, a paradigm shift has occurred involving teachers' teaching and curriculum concept where the focus is the enhancement of student's cognitive development in a broad and balanced curriculum instead of skills oriented education. Education should involve helping students develop and 'grow' in different aspects including cognitive, psychological and functional. There is the belief that exposure to and participation in different experiences may enhance students' development in education. The building up of a school culture by empowering staff and parents with this new paradigm needs to be explored.

School Partnership and Collaboration

In compromising on a conceptual framework, strong intra- (within the same school) and inter- (across the participating schools) bonding among teachers, schools, tertiary institutions are essential. Forming a bonded community among teachers and schools would also be a means for enhancing the quality of the project.

Continuum of Ability

The concept of 'Continuum of Ability', describing the learning outcomes of the students with ID, was shown in the central document (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2006). In the document, there are sub-levels under Level 1 (equivalent to the level of average students at Key Stage 1); however, in the principle of 'same curriculum framework', the continuum should be taken as a full description of ALL students. That is to say, the first level of the continuum should be describing the

lowest ability of students in our educational system in Hong Kong.

With this awareness of including students with SEN in the curriculum, knowledge relating to key learning areas would be increased by providing meaningful and enjoyable learning opportunities with encouraging responses to the student's level of curiosity. This would imply further professional development activities to be held and a school culture of enhanced teachers' enthusiasm to be built.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

The importance of IEP has always been valued for the education of students with disabilities (Wehmeyer, Lance, and Bashinski, 2002). When considering a student's formal curriculum, it may be that some students can progress on portions of the central curriculum; students with intellectual disabilities would most likely need some accommodations or modifications (Wehmeyer, Lance, and Bashinski, 2002). As suggested by Wehmeyer et. al. (2002), the three levels of curriculum modification involved when considering the IEP are as follows:

1. Curriculum adaptation – Efforts to adapt the curriculum presentation and representation or the student's engagement with the curriculum;
2. Curriculum augmentation – Additional content is added to the curriculum to enable the student to progress;
3. Curriculum alteration – Changes to the general curriculum to add content specific to the student's needs, which might include functional skills or other needed skills not in the general curriculum.
4. For many students with ID, curriculum alteration is the common practice. Nonetheless, Weymeyer et. al. (2002) suggested that curriculum adaptation and augmentation levels should have been considered first for the IEP, for the student's maximal benefit from and progress in the general curriculum. The documents produced from the SAME project are built on the curriculum adaptation and augmentation levels. Schools can use this as a unified basis for planning an individual's IEP.

Conclusions

The SAME project introduces an important paradigm shift in curriculum for students with SEN (from daily living skills focused to broad and balanced focused) which provides challenges and opportunities for special schools. Some major features of the

project can be noted, including (1) a shared common language; (2) the concept of continuum of ability for moving towards inclusion; (3) an enhanced learning experience and opportunity; and (4) a holistic view of student's learning.

Moving through the attainment scales is not the main goal; the real success is in achieving, for each student, a BROAD, BALANCED, and RELEVANT education to result in the highest possible performance of the individual's ability (Ayres, 2006). This paper has considered contemporary ideas relating to improved access to the central curriculum for ALL students, particularly those with SEN. A project has been introduced to provide a process for previewing a number of issues associated with the development of a universal curriculum to improve accessibility. The project also focused on significant issues such as learning opportunities and experiences, and equity issues. The development of the model of universal curriculum is an attempt to assist schools for students with SEN, especially special schools, to consider all aspects of a broad and balanced curriculum in education.

Products of the project would hopefully provide schools and teachers with a more holistic view of students' learning and progress. Schools may need to include some subsidiary outcomes but the "route map" should help staff to identify where the student is and any gaps in development. It is hoped that materials produced after the project will provide a consistent approach and shared language for teachers of students with SEN, particularly with ID and help them to develop a manageable system to record student performance and progress. It is also hoped that related researches will continue to provide momentum to the equity of learning opportunity and raise the standard of educational achievement and further enhance the education of all students including those with identified special education needs. Future developments include working with this holistic framework to provide guidance on how to use the materials to further develop the school-based curriculum (more specific view of curriculum).

The quotation from Napoleon Bonaparte can be utilized to end this paper: *"Ability is of little account without opportunity."*

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