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Honours Project

Topic:

*Challenges and needs of primary school
English teachers in inclusive classrooms*

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Abstract

Inclusive education is no longer a new topic nowadays since it has been implemented in the world for more than 20 years. In Hong Kong, Education Bureau started inclusive education from September 1997 in reaction to the Salamanca Statement (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2014). There were 42000 students who were in special education needs (SEN) in public primary and secondary schools in the 2016-17 school year. Although there is some research about the teachers' challenges in inclusive education, there are not many especially in the context of Hong Kong. This research aims at investigating the challenges and needs of primary school English language teachers in inclusive classrooms through interviews. The research context is a local primary school with SEN students and five English teachers are interviewed. The findings of the study show that insufficient manpower, which is a big challenge in inclusive education for participants, leads to large class teaching and intensive timetable for in-service teachers. They hope small class can be created for SEN students so that they can manage students' study and provide appropriate support. Participants did not have many challenges in building relationship with parents and students or handling emotional and behavioural problems of SEN students. However, they wanted more training workshops for themselves and parents for acquiring more professional and practical methods of teaching SEN students.

keywords: inclusive education, primary teachers, challenges, needs

Acronyms

SEN: Special Education Needs

ASD: Autism Spectrum Disorder

LD: Intellectual Disability

SpLD: Specific Learning Difficulties

ADHD: Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorders

PD: Physical Disability

VI: Visual Impairment

HI: Hearing Impairment

SLI: Speech and Language Impairment

MI: Mental Illness

ODD: Oppositional Defiant Disorder

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Introduction

Inclusive education is no longer a new topic nowadays since it has been implemented in the world for more than 20 years. Before 1994, students with special education needs (SEN) such as autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and intellectual disability (LD) learnt in separate schools with special curriculum according to their learning needs and ability. In 1994, the Salamanca Statement called upon all governments and urged them to endorse inclusive education, which is to include all children with individual differences studying together in regular schools (UNESCO, 1994). In inclusive education, individual needs and differences should not be viewed as problems but as opportunities for enhancing learning (UNESCO, 2005).

In Hong Kong, Education Bureau started the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education in reaction to the Salamanca Statement from September 1997 (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2014). Although the Bureau used the term integrated education instead of inclusive education, their aim is the same, which is to provide an equal learning and respectful environments for students regardless their individual differences (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2014). There were forty-two thousand students with special education needs (SEN) in public sector ordinary primary and secondary schools in the 2016-17 school year, which has increased 37% from 2013-14 school year (Audit Commission, 2018). Educators play a vital role on reducing learning barriers among SEN students and creating a harmonious and fair learning environment for all students (Bouwer, 2005). In spite of the fact that Hong Kong Education Bureau has allocated some funding to schools according to the number of SEN students at school, teachers are still facing a number of problems when teaching in an inclusive classroom. For example, not all teachers who try to attempt innovative inclusive pedagogical practices can receive support from schools. Lam and Philipson (2009) pointed that tensions and conflicts were caused between teachers and school

managers when there was a mismatch of school expectation and curriculum aims. A survey conducted by Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers in 2016 revealed that about 90 percent of teachers thought that inclusive education policy became a burden to them, making it more difficult to teach in a class. However, a research done by Lee Ka-yin (2013) found out that teachers appreciated inclusive education for fostering communication and social skills among SEN students. The above results were quite contradictory to each other and there seems no more research about the related topic published after that. Questions about the successfulness of inclusive education implemented in Hong Kong after 21 years still remain. Educators are the staple participants to carry out inclusive education and thus, an in-depth research about how current in-service teachers are doing in inclusive classrooms is needed for answering the questions. In order to get a more thorough analysis, this research aims at investigating the challenges and needs of primary school English language teachers when teaching in inclusive classrooms through interviews. This research investigates how teachers cope with the increasing number of SEN students, how they adopt teaching strategies to cater to students' diversity, and problems they are facing. At the end, some implications of adopting inclusive education in Hong Kong are generated.

Literature Review

According to the announcement of Education Bureau (2014), there were eight types of students with special education needs (SEN) including Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) especially dyslexia, Intellectual Disability (ID), Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD), Physical Disability (PD), Visual Impairment (VI), Hearing Impairment (HI) and Speech and Language Impairment (SLI). After the school year of 2017-18, mental illness (MI) is considered as a special education needs so there are totally nine types

of SEN students (Audit Commission, 2018). Before the Salamanca Statement in 1994, these students were placed in segregated education in which all SEN students studied in special schools and learnt things apart from the mainstream schools. These schools have different school setting such as smaller class, more professionals including speech therapists, physical therapists and nurses, and a special curriculum suitable to students' needs and abilities. After the Statement, SEN students can enroll in mainstream schools and study together with normal students according to the curriculum designed by the Education Bureau (2014). At the same time, they receive additional support from the school during school time or after school. Many scholars including York and Vandercook, and Stainback believed that inclusive education benefited all students specially SEN students in their learning. York and Vandercook (1990) suggested that inclusive education provided a sense of community where students would join the society when they grow up. In this miniature community, students understand the differences of individuals and learn to respect and take care of others (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). At the same time, their communication skills and personal skills such as caring are developed and these cannot be learnt from the textbooks (Stainback & Stainback, 1990). If these students learn together with classmates with similar learning needs in special school, they relatively have less chances to use language to communicate with others. Lee (2013) conducted a case study in Hong Kong local primary school and found that a student with intellectual disability and extremely low social adaptability showed a great improvement after studying in a mainstream school for half a year.

Although inclusive education benefits SEN students, it becomes a challenging issue for teachers as the class is now mixed with learners with diverse needs. In the Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education published by Hong Kong Education Bureau in 2014, it is stated that “teachers can no

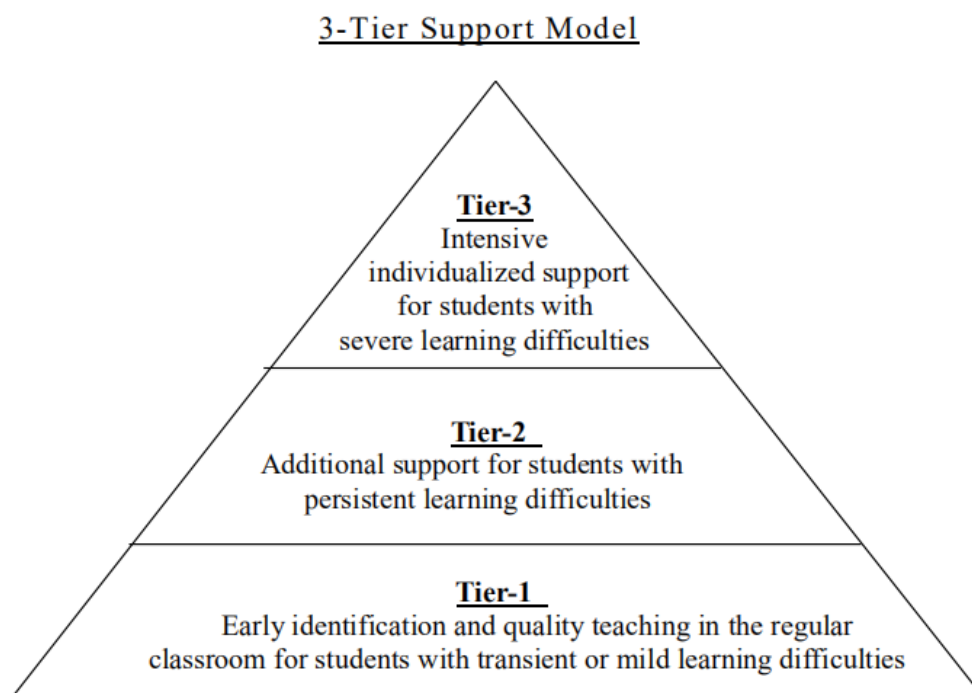
longer adopt one single teaching approach for all students, nor can they expect all students to attain the same academic standard” (Education Bureau, 2014, p1).

Scholars found that different teaching strategies are applied to different kinds of SEN students. Tomlinson (2001) claimed that differentiated instruction, which is a philosophical approach that helps students learn with various learning options based on their readiness levels, interests and learning profiles, is important in inclusive classroom. Applying differentiated instruction, teachers can modify the content, process, product or learning environment according to learners’ needs. For instance, teachers can divide the task into several smaller tasks for SEN students especially for intellectual disability students so that they are able to process their thinking and digest the information with sufficient time. Kolb (1984) believed that having time to think about the learning experience, students could formalise what was learnt and deciding how to incorporate improvements into next experience and as a result, learners could apply what they had learnt in new experiences and solve problems themselves. It is deemed as an ideal learning cycle as students acquire the knowledge and apply it on their own without relying on teachers again. Another effective strategy in inclusive classroom is peer group interactive approach. It is another effective teaching strategy in enhancing students’ academic performance as well as their social participation and learning attitudes (Rix, Hall, Nind and Wearmouth, 2009).

Besides these scholars, Hong Kong Education Bureau has proposed several documents on how to cater for SEN students. One document called Special Arrangements for Internal Examinations for Students with Special Education Needs published in 2015 suggested several assessments accommodation for SEN students such as giving extra time allowance and modifications in presentation format. Another document called Catering for Student Differences – Indicators for Inclusion 3rd edition published in 2008 suggested many teaching strategies such as providing

various ways for students to record their work like using digital camera, drawings, photographs and tapes instead of paper and pen. The Education Bureau (2014) also suggested schools should adopt a 3-tier support model according to the needs of students for enhancing their learning.

Picture taken from the document published by the Education Bureau in 2014.



Although the Education Bureau provides lots of suggestions and guidelines to teachers to teach SEN students, there are other challenges that teachers are facing. Lee (2013) found out that teachers were occupied by busy schedule and some teachers said they have no time to understand the needs of SEN students. As a result, some of them put SEN students sitting at the back of the class and ignored them and then provided remedial class later. Also, teachers found that it was hard to slow down the teaching progress just because of a few SEN students in class. They

said in order to catch up the subject curriculum, they cannot spend too much time explaining to SEN students or managing their behavioural problems. A research done by DeSimone & Parmar (2006) also showed that they were not given enough time for preparing an inclusive class. They could not prepare additional learning materials or tailor-made worksheets for SEN students during school time. Lee (2013) also found that funding from the government was not enough to hire a full-time SEN teacher and the courses about catering SEN students provided by the Education Bureau were not useful and helpful enough as most of the content was repeated. Moreover, teachers complained that the government just gave some financial aid to school and then asked teachers to fix the problems caused by inclusive education without providing further support (Lee, 2013).

DeSimone & Parmar (2006) found that teachers with inadequate professional knowledge of instructional and curricular modifications found that they filled with consternation when they encountered emotional and behavioural problems caused by SEN students. Nevertheless, the scholars did not explain or elaborate this challenge. Another scholar Prinsloo (2001) explains that teachers with knowledge and skills in special education are able to understand and identify the learning needs of learners and thus provide suitable learning materials for them. These two research did not mention clearly about what teachers actually did and how they catered for learners' needs by using their professional knowledge.

Teaching resources is another issue that should be put into consideration in inclusive education. Teachers in Ireland found that providing more teaching resources such as language books and interactive whiteboards can engage students and enhance their learning (Travers, Balfe, Butler, Day, Dupont, McDaid, O'Donnell & Prun, 2014) while teachers in a school with limited resources due to budgetary constraints struggled on their teaching and doubted what other support they could give to them

(Udoba, 2014). Therefore, enough and suitable learning resources is a crucial element in successful inclusive education.

From the above literature, we can understand that a favourable inclusive education is not just putting SEN students studying together with normal students in regular schools without any cooperation from different parties. Inclusive education can cause lots of works especially for teachers. Most of the above literature reviews are found in the context of Europe and the USA while a few of them mentioned Hong Kong. Since each city differs in terms of its cultural and education policy, the problems that teachers are facing and their needs may differ as well. Therefore, this research aims to find out the current situation of teachers in inclusive classroom in the context of Hong Kong after 21 years of implementation and goes into a deeper understand of their challenges and needs nowadays. In Cambridge Online dictionary, which is a renowned and authorised dictionary, challenge means “(the situation of being faced with) something that needs great mental or physical effort in order to be done successfully and therefore tests a person’s ability”. Then, challenges in this paper are categorised to physical challenges, which are something tangible like teaching resources, human resources and class schedule, and psychological challenges, which are something internal like the relationship with students and parents, stress and professional knowledge.

Research Questions

1. What are physical and psychological challenges that Hong Kong primary English language teachers face in inclusive classrooms and the reasons behind?
2. What kind of supports do they think is helpful to them and SEN students?

Research Methodology

1. Design

Interview is an appropriate method for collecting in-depth and comprehensive data for it is a qualitative research. Classroom observation is another way for collecting data as it reflects possible challenges that teacher might have in inclusive classroom. The research topic is about Hong Kong inclusive classrooms and therefore a local primary school with SEN students is chosen. English teachers are the participants of the research. The easiest way to access a local school is the school where I had my Field Experience Block Practice. Teachers are selected by using convenience sampling. All of them were supporting teachers of student teachers in Field Experience. Only English teachers are interviewed because it is easier to compare and contrast the challenges in inclusive classrooms when participants taught in classes with various types of SEN students from different backgrounds under the same subject. The data are more comprehensive if teachers from various backgrounds are interviewed. Therefore, teaching experiences and gender are not restricted. Questions are designed for interview (see Appendix 1).

2. Participant & procedure

Five female English language teachers teaching P1 to P5 were interviewed. Their teaching experienced ranged from 0 to more than 25 years. All of them had acquired knowledge about inclusive education through degree/diploma study or courses offered by the Education Bureau. I followed one participant and observed nearly all her lessons throughout my Field Experience. She usually taught P2, P4 and P5 classes once for a week. I observed her lessons for about 17 weeks. I also observed another three lessons of participants. Each lesson lasted for 35 minutes. The duration of interview ranged from 15 to 40 mins depending on the teachers. They first were

required to provide background information about themselves including seniority, teaching classes, types of SEN students in current classes and if they have acquired knowledge about inclusive education. Then they needed to answer the first part of the questions sharing about their teaching experiences including how they responded to SEN students, strategies and materials they used. Then they needed to answer the second part of the questions sharing about their feeling and their psychological situation when teaching in inclusive classrooms. At the end, they could express their needs in inclusive classrooms and opinions about inclusive education or school policy. Cantonese is used because it is the first language of the participants. It is the preferable language in this research so that participants might feel more comfortable in communication and it is easier for them to illustrate their ideas and feelings. The interviews were transcribed and translated to English to be reported in this paper. During the interview, audio recording was taken for transcription and analysis. Confidential information of the participants or students that they mentioned are not put into this research paper and the name of them are coded to alphabetic letters and Arabic number.

After collecting the data, statements made by the participants were transcribed. Then similar statements were categorized into two main categories, physical challenges and needs, and psychological challenges and needs. For example, a statement spoken by Participant 3, “So far I have built up a good relationship with parents so I am not stressful talking to parents”, is put into psychological category. Statements related to teaching resources, teaching schedule, curriculum and manpower are put into physical category while statements related to relationship and professional knowledge are put into psychological category. After categorisation, the second step is to compare and contrast these statements and to find out the reasons behind supported with scholars finding and its implication if applicable. After drafting

the research paper, it is sent to my participants so that they can check if there is any misinterpretation of their intended meaning. After receiving their comments, finalising the paper is the last step. Then, the research paper can be published.

Results

Table 1. Information of participants.

No. of Participants	Gender	teaching experiences
Participant 1	F	0 (new teacher)
Participant 2	F	4
Participant 3	F	3
Participant 4	F	>20
Participant 5	F	>25

All participants were female with a huge variety in years of teaching experiences. All of them have acquired some knowledge about inclusive education from courses offered by universities or the Education Bureau. On average, there were four SEN students in each class. Participant 3, however, needed to teach about 12 SEN students which was the half of her P3 class. When asking participants if they had taught a class without SEN students, 'No' was the consistent answer for all of them. Participants 4 and 5, who were experienced teachers with more than 20 years of teaching experience, certainly believed that there should have been some SEN students without verified before the implementation of inclusive education.

1) Physical Challenges and needs

1.1 Teaching schedule

All participants had the same opinion about the tight schedule they had in school. Once they entered the school gate, they were busy throughout the day. English

teachers in this school were required to teach six lessons per class which made up to 18 lessons per week in total. At the same time, they were assigned to different groups like SEN support team, student affairs and wealth committee etc plus one or two extra-curricular activities. During my Field Experience, I observed that a number of teachers stayed at school until 6pm for doing work irrelevant to teaching but not preparing for the lesson. I also observed that some participants directly used the learning materials offered by publisher or other teachers in class. Participant 5 with more than 25 years of teaching experiences expressed that she spent much more time on preparing for the lesson comparing to the days before the implementation of integrated education. She said, “In the past, we did not emphasise much about language activities for students with diverse needs as well as assessments. After knowing their learning needs, I now try to provide some activities for them and reduce some contents for some students.”

Participants found that they could hardly provide individual help for SEN students even though they know it might be helpful to them. They could only talk to students individually during recess and before or after school. However, Participant 1 responded that teachers were obligatory to be on duty during these sessions occasionally and the recess lasted for about 15 minutes, which made them sometimes virtually impossible to reach SEN students within a day. Participants 3 and 5 added to this point saying that teachers bore too many roles including knowledge transmitter, social worker, counsellor, mediator and administrator. They wished the school could hire more staff responsible for these so that they could spend more time on preparation and teaching.

1.2 Resources

There were 3 social workers, one part-time SEN supporting teacher and 14 English teachers including three NETs in the school. Despite the number, the participants thought there was still a shortage in English teachers and SEN supporting teachers. Participants 1 and 3 thought teaching a class with more than twenty students with diverse needs made the class quite chaotic and made the teaching more sophisticated and challenging that teachers were required to combine different strategies and materials to meet their needs.

In addition, all participants found that there were some students particularly SEN students usually lagging behind the other students. Participant 1 said, “I seldom highlight SEN students intentionally in class. It’s impossible to only cater for them because most of the students are ready to learn.” Teachers could not slow down the schedule only for them as there was a fixed curriculum and they needed to teach all the content before exams. For this challenge, Participants 1 and 3 believed that small groups with SEN or low capable students teaching could benefit both teachers and students because teachers can adjust the progress and prepare materials suitable to their level while students can have more time to digest and practise the knowledge they have learnt. Splitting the class into smaller groups requires more teachers and rooms; however, they thought it was not possible due to limited budget and space. Participant 2 said that the part-time supporting teacher handling students with serious behavioural problem alleviated her burden as she could have more time on planning and focus on teaching. Participant 5 said, “I don’t think having a teacher assistant in each lesson is necessary or beneficial to students’ learning as I have experienced that students especially the Autistics attached and adhered to them and did not try to work independently”.

None of them mentioned teaching resource was their challenge when

teaching diverse needs students since they affirmed that there were already myriads of teaching resources. They reviewed that they did not have enough time to modify the teaching resources according to individual needs. They often directly used the worksheet or adopted the materials that designed by other teachers previously. Nevertheless, they thought resources for SEN students were not adequate particularly remedial classes or professional learning support. Participant 1 said, “I think dyslexic students need more time on recognising letter and words but the regular classes did not allow them to do so. If they have not yet learnt the vocabulary in that chapter, they cannot learn the next chapter and it is not good for them when they are promoted to senior form.” They believed these classes could build up their language foundation and enhance their learning. Otherwise, they would always lag behind the class. She added that the school could open more small classes for SEN students. The school had established S classes for no more than ten P4 and P5 low English achievers for at least four years. During regular English lesson, these students were withdrawn from class and taught by another English teacher. She found that teacher could prepare learning materials that suited to their needs and provided more individual helps. These students gradually showed an improvement in English. However, hiring an additional teacher was not always affordable and therefore, S classes would disappear in the future if the budget was in constraint.

2) Psychological Challenges and needs

2.1 Relationship with students and parents

Four participants stated that most of the parents were supportive to students’ learning and did not push their children to achieve academically as their vision resembled to the school’s. Participants said that nowadays most parents were educated and showed some understanding about special education needs. Parents and teachers

listened to each other patiently and negotiated a way to enhance students' learning. They also said that they had a positive relation with parents and therefore, they did not feel stressful when dealing with parents. Participant 4 sometimes felt stressful when talking to a particular type of parent who always requested for different kinds of services such as remedial classes and special groups for their children. She suggested the government providing some funding to parents or NGOs to hold some training programmes so that SEN students could receive professional support and parents could learn more about how to help children with their learning at home. She said, "We as a teacher were neither an expertise in training parents nor children due to limited knowledge learnt from the university. Moreover, it was more flexible for parents and children to choose a time for the workshops and services."

Overall, participants had a good relationship with students. They believed a good relationship with students motivated students to learn and help maintain interaction and communication with them. Participant 3 said she would use different ways talking to different types of SEN students and sometimes talked to them during recess and extra-curricular activities, so she found that she gained respect and trust from students. One challenge for them was the time spending on SEN students. They may not able to talk to all SEN students every day but they thought talking to them about non-academic topics was a way building their relation. As mentioned previously in 1.2 section, they needed more free time and space.

2.2 Professional knowledge

Acquiring knowledge about special education needs was an advantage to teaching and helped teachers overcome challenging situations in class. The change of Participant 5 showed the importance acquiring it. In the past, without any knowledge about SEN students, she used to label them as lazy students to now known as dyslexic

students or stubborn students to autistics students. After 10 years of implementation of inclusive education, the government started to provide workshops or training programmes for teachers. After joining it, she understood the reasons behind and changed her approach in teaching these students. She changed the way talking to them and encouraged them to complete homework and task. She found that the relationship with students became better. Participant 3 applied knowledge of inclusive education when arranging seating plans. She considered different behaviours of different types of SENs students. For example, she put ADHD students sitting at the front of the class because they needed reminder from the teacher occasionally.

Half of them responded that what they have learnt about SEN students was superficial and not enough to support them as the background of children in the current time was very complicated. Participant 3 said, “X University taught me using what kind of attitude to face SEN students and possible approach to handle their problem.” She said not all approaches were suitable to the same type of SEN students nor the teacher. She said she learnt how to handle different emotional and behavioural problem of SEN students primarily through experiences. However, Participant 2 believed acquiring professional knowledge of SEN helped teacher identify the needs of the student and provide more appropriate assistance to them. She said courses about inclusive education during her PDGE study was mainly basic knowledge of inclusive education including related policy, 3-Tier model, characteristics of each type of SEN and generally ways handling their behavioural problems. Therefore, advances programmes about catering for SEN students specifically are required. However, participants found difficult to spend extra time on attending these advanced training programmes. They wished they could join the programmes during school time so that they would have time to rest.

Although they have acquired knowledge of inclusive education, they

seldom applied it in class. From my observation, one participant did not use different strategies in class catering for SEN students such as group activity, games and peer work. Instead, they adopted a single teaching strategy and same set of learning material for all students in many lessons. Another participant played songs on Youtube in the middle and at the end of the class so that ADHD students could focus and have longer attention span in class. The way talking to SEN students or explaining the task was the same as other students. Sometimes, SEN students felt confused and were not on the task. Participants often approach to them individually and explained again and allowed them to complete the task partly. They had homework accommodation for SEN students. Participant 5 said, “I don’t force them (to do) homework. I might ask other students to finish 3 questions but one for him. I explained to his parent that he suffered from eczema and it’s very hard for him to write 5 minutes compared to us.” However, they found spending time on learning more about catering for SEN students was difficult because they already did not have enough resting time.

Discussion

Insufficient manpower, which is a big challenge for implementing inclusive education, leads to large class teaching and intensive timetable for in-service teachers. Participants believed that inclusive education was favourable to SEN students especially enhancing communication skills because the school became a miniature society rendering them meeting peers with different abilities and characters rather than peers with different SENs in special schools. Nevertheless, they did not have enough support from the government.

Insufficient English teachers forced participants to teach three classes with an average of 24 students along with SEN students. Participants reviewed that most SEN

students were often off task in lesson and could not fulfill the learning objectives and so lagged behind the class. A few with mild SEN and supportive parents teaching them using tailor-made learning materials were more able to complete the task and showed a better academic result. Although they understood the learning needs of SEN students, they could not pause frequently explaining different terms or give longer waiting time for SEN students' answer. They said it was true that teacher would ignore them sometimes in a hope that they would have time to teach them after the class which in fact seldom occurred. Some scholars (see Konstantopoulos 2008, Light 2004, Pedder 2006) explained it was the large class making the challenges unsolvable and teaching in a smaller class could definitely alleviate the problem. The average number of a class taught by participants was far from the number suggested by Konstantopoulos (2008) and Light (2004). They reported that student achievement in small classes with an average of fifteen students or fewer was obviously better than that in regular class with an average of 22 students. Therefore, participants expressed that they needed small size class teaching in order to provide adequate learning support for SEN students. Pedder (2006) explained that class size affected teacher and students in several way. Teachers tended to have less administrative and procedural burden in smaller classes and thus having more time on addressing individual needs. Longer waiting time for student responses was more available in smaller classes leading to fervent student engagement in learning. It would be beneficial to participants and students if the school adopted more special classes for SEN students but not only two S classes for P.4 and P5 students.

Intensive schedule is another outcome caused by insufficient manpower. As participants said each teacher was responsible for a particular committee and extra-curricular activities as well as administrative work, they did not have much time

providing individual help to students. Participant 3 said when the school requested her to spend more time on administration, she spent less time on planning and teaching. She craved more spare time on planning and reflection. Merritt (2016) illustrated the two importance of free time given to teachers. First, teacher could process the textbook and accessible materials carefully and generate a set of learning materials accommodated to individual needs instead of using them directly in class without any modifications. Second, teachers could review student work and analyse their learning progress, give constructive feedback for students and conduct some individual plans for students. Due to limited time, Participant 5 sometimes had no choice but used the available materials directly. Hiring more staff for administration and extra-curricular activities can probably reduce teacher's burden. There will be a new arrangement announced in 2019 Policy Address in the coming 2019-20 school year. The government is going to adopt "One Executive Officer for Each School" Policy, which is the provision of one executive officer assisting in supervising and coordinating school administrative matters to all public sector schools and schools under the Direct Subsidy Scheme (Education Bureau, 2019). Hopefully, teachers will have more free time on planning and reflection.

Only one participant felt quite stressful when parents kept on requesting of some services for their children but she still could communicate well with other parents. Participants wanted to build a good rapport with parents and students because they thought it was an incentive for better learning. This belief matched with the values of educators. It was evident from the research done by Gurerra and Luciano (2010) that good parent-teacher relationships fostered the wellbeing of education and generated mutual understanding from each other. Parents and teachers were more willing to negotiate a consistent way to teach the kids either at school or home. I

Participant 3 experienced the advantage of good parent-teacher relationship. She experienced that students learn better and easier when she and parents discussed and agree with a certain type of teaching styles and values. McGee, Morrier and Daly (1999) demonstrated this situation in their research that ASD students achieved better when parents and teachers collaborated to meet the same educational goal like to acquire a specific social skill. It was cheerful to see that participants and parents had a good relationship.

Participants also paid attention to student-teacher relationship and tried to build up a trusting relation with students. They knew that students were more willing to listen to teachers and follow teachers' instruction if a good student-teacher relationship was established. Da Luz (2015) had an explanation for this phenomenon. He stated that a good student-teacher relationship created a safe environment for students and they would feel more comfortable and motivated when studying in an environment with someone they liked.

Developing competence in the field of inclusive education is profitable to teachers because it is an essential element in successful implementation of inclusive education (Kamenopoulou, Buli-Holmberg, & Siska, 2015). All participants had attended either courses in universities or workshops offered by the government or NGOs and had basic knowledge about what special education needs is. Therefore, it was not challenging for teachers to teach students or handling emotional and behavioural problem caused by SEN students. With the knowledge of SEN, teachers could identify learning needs of each pupil and provided appropriate adjustments on instruction and assessment (Buli-Holmberg, 2015). Moreover, teachers could set achievable learning goals for them which was helpful in building students' confidence

and motivation in learning (Buli-Holmberg, 2015). For instance, one participant noticed a student might have SpLD from pupil's handwriting and then set different learning goals for him/her even though the pupil was still waiting for diagnosis. The achievable goal motivated that student to learn.

Acquiring knowledge about SEN indirectly fostered a respectful and trustworthy teacher-student relationship. Dapudong (2014) found that acquiring knowledge about inclusive education, teachers were more likely to have a positive attitude towards SEN students. Herbert (1974) further explained that treating special education needs positively created a safe and secure learning environment and increased successful interaction between teacher and student (Jerome & Pianta, 2008). Then frequency of occurring emotional and behavioural situations of SEN students were reduced. Participants did their best to show their care, help and understanding to SEN students and therefore, they seldom encountered big challenges regarding to SEN students emotional and behavioural problems.

All participants certainly believed that there were possibly some SEN students in their class before the implementation of inclusive education. Participant 5 recalled her teaching experience and believed that she mistreated some students who might had SEN. The implementation of inclusive education, in fact, enhances teachers' awareness of individual learning needs of students. This is a positive outcome of the implementation which is not mentioned in another research. Participant 3 encountered a student who always have oppositional behaviour and was aware that he might be a SEN student. Finally, the student was identified with oppositional defiant disorder (ODD). With enhancing awareness, teachers can identify learner's needs earlier and provide support timely.

Limitations

There are two main limitations in this research. The first limitation is the gender of participants because all of them were female. Not a single male English teacher was involved. There might be some differences of challenges and needs between male and female teachers teaching SEN students. Male teachers relatively had more restriction and rules particularly in terms of physical contact when talking to students especially the girls. Therefore, this research can extend to compare and contrast of challenges and needs between male and female teachers in inclusive education.

Another limitation is the narrow sampling scope because only school and five teachers were chosen for investigation. Due to limited time and resources in field experience, I could only do my research in this range. The result might differ from school to school because each school has its own policy and culture regarding to inclusive education. Resources provided by school can also have a huge difference between schools. The data will be more comprehensive and thorough if more schools and teachers from different subjects are investigated.

Implications

This aim of this research is not only to elicit opinion from teachers about inclusive education but also to draw some implications for practical purposes for a better learning environment for all students. Despite the ideal mission of inclusive education, it is not beneficial to all SEN students studying in mainstream schools. Students with intellectual disability or severe disorder studying in special school receive more appropriate individualised learning supports. The biggest advantage for students with mild special education needs learning in regular school is the engagement of social activities which promotes their social and communication skills. However, mainstream schools still need more resources and support from the

government in order to provide adequate learning supports for SEN students. The government can consider cultivating more language teachers for creating small class teaching. There are more language lessons compared to other subjects, so teachers find challenging to teach a large class with some SEN students. The provision of small class to mainly SEN students enhance students' learning as well as decrease teachers' burden. Teachers can stay focus on one theme according to the needs of these students and they can also have more time on planning and designing suitable learning materials for them. However, small class teaching means more rooms are required and it can be difficult for some schools. English teachers need advance training programmes on catering for SEN students. It might be more difficult to teach English subject as it involves reading, writing, speaking and listening skills. English teachers should learn more about different skills and strategies when providing individual help for SEN students.

Conclusion

This year is the 22nd year of implementation of inclusive education in Hong Kong. Teachers from knowing nothing to acquiring knowledge about it still faced challenges in this context. There are two big challenges for teachers, large class teaching rendering them having no time to cater for and too much irrelevant work in teaching making them difficult to provide individual support to SEN students. They need more teachers for smaller class teaching and more staff taking their administrative work so that they can focus on planning, designing and reflecting their lessons. Teachers did not have many challenges in building relationship with parents and students or handling emotional and behavioural problems of SEN students. However, teachers wanted more training workshops for themselves as well as for parent. Acquiring more knowledge about inclusive education helps them cater for

SEN students' needs and assist parents to provide consistent support to students.

Inclusive education is not about putting SEN students into mainstream schools and let the school do everything for them. The government need to provide many resources and supports for successful implementation. At the moment, the government provides enough training for teachers so they do not feel confused when teaching a class with SEN students. However, there are still something the government can do for making inclusive education more ideal.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions

1. How long have you been a teacher? Is this your first school to teach at?
2. How many SEN students are there in your class?
3. What types of SEN are they?
4. Do they lag behind the class?
5. Have you learnt any teaching strategies on teaching SEN students while you are pre-service teachers?
6. What kind of teaching strategies do you use in inclusive classroom?
(when students ask questions, misbehave or lose attention)
7. How effective for each teaching strategy and does it matter for the type of SEN is?
8. Did you change your teaching strategies? Why?
9. Do SEN students usually have emotional or behavioural problems in class? How do you handle them? Does it have any impact on your teaching?
10. How do you accommodate homework and assignment to SEN students?
11. What other problems have you faced?
12. Do you usually communicate with the parents? How do you feel when communicating with parents?
13. What kinds of support do you need at the moment? Why?

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