

A Project entitled

**Music Education in Special Education in Hong Kong**

Submitted by

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## Declaration

I, LAW YAN YAN declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. HE Yang, and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

Signed

LAW YAN YAN

11 April 2022

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***Abstract:** Special education has been developing in Hong Kong, and the number of special needs students keeps increasing in tandem. In recent years, special music education has aroused more concern in Hong Kong. However, there are many improvements in special music education in Hong Kong. This study applies the qualitative research method and interviews to collect in-depth insights for the research. The purpose of this study is to explore the present status and difficulties in special music education in special schools in Hong Kong via the opinions of music teachers, including in-service teachers and pre-service teachers. The interview consists of four sections about music curriculum, resources, the teacher professional development of special music teachers, and the pre-service training stage for music training teachers. This study allows special schools, teacher training schools, society, and the government to understand the present circumstance. In addition, this study provides some insights for improving the quality of music education in special schools in Hong Kong.*

## Chapter 1 Introduction

### **1.1. Background**

The main policy goal of special education is to enable students with special education needs can fully develop their potential. Students with special educational needs will be encouraged to receive education in ordinary schools as much as possible or to arrange admission to special schools according to their special needs. There are sixty-two special schools in Hong Kong. Around 70% are schools for children with intellectual disabilities. To address the atypical needs and often unresponsive nature of the students that it serves, special education has traditionally involved providing something “extra” and “different” (Cook & Schirmer, 2003). According to the Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB), the Government applies a dual-track method in supplying special education. The students who are special needs will be assessed by the specialists. The multiple disabilities or severe students will be referred to the special schools by the EDB as well as are offered intensive support services.

Before 2004, special education training for teachers in special or ordinary schools in Hong Kong was conducted through a combination of one-year full-time and one-year part-time study programmes that was the Course for Teachers of Children with Special Educational Needs (TCSEN) (Ho & Arthur-Kelly, 2013). This policy is applied in all subjects, including music teachers' training. However, according to Poon-McBrayer, “commented that the delivery of this model of professional development was expensive, and thus the government would find it difficult to support it in the long term” (2004). Later, the TCSEN was replaced by The part-time Professional Development Programme for Teachers (PDP) which offered two levels of training catering to the different needs of teachers (Hong Kong Institute of Education, 2011). In addition, starting from the 2007/2008 school year, besides The Professional Development Programme for Teachers, the Hong Kong Education Bureau

commissioned the Hong Kong Institute of Education (Present: The Education University of Hong Kong) to execute a five-year scheme of professional development for teachers of students with special educational needs (Forlin & Sin, 2010). Those schools which were funded by the Bureau were encouraged to allow their teachers to attend the one-week basic, three-week advanced, or two-week thematic full-time programmes. In these policy changes, the pre-service music teachers can be provided long term and particular training and knowledge.

## **1.2. Problem Statement**

The number of special educational needs students keeps increasing in Hong Kong. According to the Replies to questions raised by Finance Committee Members in examining the Estimates of Expenditure (2020), the number of students who studied in special schools keeps increasing from 7,388 in 2014 to 7,659 in 2019. With this increase, the issue of the special educational needs students who are part of the community similar to the typically developing students shows up to the fore. Besides, some potential problems occur in the special education field in Hong Kong. For instance, society and the government are not concerned enough about the special educational quality, understaffed problems, teacher training, etc., especially in music education. According to Ho & Arthur-Kelly, “the programme did not provide an opportunity for reflection after applying the newly acquired knowledge” (2013). The "Study on the Learning Opportunities of Students Under the Education System under the Education System" published by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2012 found the results about lacking teacher training for special education that, included music teachers.



Teachers' quality is correlated with education quality. The development of music teacher training has a profound impact on special music education. From the students' perspective, they are the biggest beneficiary. High education quality can develop students' potential musical talent and assist their personal growth. From the education perspective, it assists the development of Hong Kong's special music education in achieving a higher level.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the status of music education in special education in Hong Kong. As the primary stakeholder who includes pre-service and in-service music teachers in special schools, their opinions may reflect the current problem and provide insights to facilitate the development of music education in special schools/education.

### **1.4. Significance and Contributions**

There has been much research examining inclusive music education in mainstream schools; however, there has not been much research examining music education in special schools in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's music education in special education is still in a process, and its quality is worth exploring. This research project allows in- and pre-service music teachers, schools, society, and the government to understand the present circumstance, improve the teaching training, and provide sufficient equipment and recourses. This study hopes to improve the overall quality of music education in special schools.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

1. What is the **status** of music education in special schools in Hong Kong?
2. What **difficulties** are the teachers facing?
3. What **training and support** do the in-service and pre-service music teachers **need**?

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

### **2.1. Music Education**

Music is a crucial component of human life which also improves the quality of individuals with special needs. Even if the aims of music education are primarily in the learning of music, the wider educational goals and benefits of learning through music are widely recognized (Darrow & Adamek, 2017). Music, besides being entertaining, provides educators and/or therapists with many opportunities for using it for the purpose of education and therapy in various aspects (Cook & Schirmer, 2003). Music is an art of sound and rhythm which serves to explain human emotions and thoughts (Uçan, 1996). The function of music in the education area is a therapeutic and complementary aspect for individuals with special needs to reach the full human development.

### **2.2. Music Education Pedagogy**

#### **2.2.1. Orff Approach**

It is a child-centred approach and supports experiential participation (Filianou & Stamatopoulou, 2013). The music teacher is responsible for finding the appropriate procedure in his teaching inspired by his creativity and musicality, but it does not mean that there is a lack of fundamental principles (Goodkin 2002). Many records show that Orff's approach for students with special needs certifies to be effective and successful on many levels. As a result, music teachers' specific interest in this area is continually increasing (Filianou & Stamatopoulou, 2013). This is the most common type of music education tool for special students.

### 2.2.2. Kodály Approach

Kodály's concept of music education is adapted worldwide to different cultures (Tiszai 2015). In order to gain concrete scientific evidence of his observations, Kodály initiated research on how music education can help students improve their overall social and developmental skills (Tiszai, 2016). Under Kodály's concept inspiration, Jakab Frím established the first educational power of music in special settings (Kokas, 2003). Music has become a part of the music special education curriculum in Hong Kong. The Kodály music education approach resonated with special education practitioners in Hong Kong and applied it in the lessons.

## 2.3 Special Education

In response, special education scholars have endeavoured to show that special education, although it cannot and does not produce optimal outcomes for all students with disabilities, generally provides an added value to the educational opportunities and outcomes of the students it serves (Cook & Schirmer, 2003). According to the Information Sheet on Special Education, "the Education Bureau has always been considering the education profession and students' learning needs and continuously evaluating special education's educational development and resources to improve the quality of education in special schools (2021)." The Education Bureau devotes itself to helping special students overcome limitations and difficulties and reaching a learning level. Moreover, schools and teachers promote their ability in the growth stage and gradually become self-independent and adaptable people to overcome life's challenges.

## **2.4 Music Special Education in Hong Kong**

Special students and ordinary students have the intelligence, potential, ability to learn music, and the right to receive music education. Under the "Same Curriculum Framework principle," schools should provide diversified music learning experiences for students' personal growth and development. Special schools should provide students with high-quality music education and assist them in comprehensive and individual development to improve their quality of life. According to the Music Learning Objectives & Music Curriculum (P1- S3) in special school from EDB, the music curriculum needs to fulfil the four targets like the mainstream schools, which includes Developing Creativity and Imagination, Developing Music Skills and Processes, Cultivating Critical Responses in Music, and Understanding Music in Context. The curriculum distinguishes into three levels: high, medium, and low, coordinating with different capacity students.

## **2.5 The States of Hong Kong Special School Music Teachers**

Some educators have emphasized professional development as an activity such as experience sharing or peer learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995), developing new skills (Harlan & Kinder 1997), and the practice of reflective teaching (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). In addition, teaching materials, teaching approaches, and student learning outcomes are mainly outcomes of special music education. "Combining these opinions has become part of a continuous and unified view of professional development, which is termed "life-long learning". As an aspect of "life-long learning," professionalism is no longer considered to be knowledge bound but, instead, involves "active learning" (Fullan, 2001). Regarding the in-service music teacher training, there are many drawbacks. Teachers in special schools have reported a lack of satisfaction with in-situ professional development (Sands et al., 1995) and seek theoretical knowledge about

teaching students with special educational needs alongside broad teaching strategies (Gately & Hammer, 2005). This view highlights some of the intrinsic difficulties and challenges involved in the quality of music teachers and special music education. There is an objective difference between teachers in mainstream schools and special schools. In mainstream schools, teachers apply ‘top-down’ delivered solutions and value the academic results; however, special schools' teachers value evidence-based instructional strategies and collaboration.

## **2.6 The Needs of Hong Kong Special School Music Teachers**

Music teachers in Hong Kong's special schools preferred “training” rather than individualized on-site support (Wong, 2016). They declared that they need pragmatic and specific professional development, such as strategies for teaching students with special educational needs and financial support. The challenge facing special music education – of changing from simply closing the circle between teachers' knowledge and their professional needs (Wong, 2)

## **Chapter 3 Methodology**

### **3.1 Qualitative Research Method**

Qualitative research relates to analysing and collecting nonnumerical data to comprehend the experiences, concepts, or opinions. The objective of qualitative research is to understand the in-depth insights into an issue for the research (Bricki & Green, 2007). The researcher collects the data from first-hand recourses such as interviews, focus groups, etc. Qualitative research is an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context, and the interactions there and the analysis strives for depth of understanding (Patton, 1985). Therefore, the qualitative research method is appropriate for this study. This study focuses on the opinions of in-service and pre-service music teachers in the music special education aspect. To obtain in-depth and better insights, the researcher adopts a qualitative research interview - a semi-structured interview.

### **3.2 Semi-structured Interview**

Semi-structured interview combines structured and unstructured interviews. The researcher makes a list of the questions to be asked in the interview; however, the researcher can ask follow-up questions to obtain the deeper detail or explanation from the respondent on the basis of his response (Madill, 2011). The semi-structured interview is a common data collection method in qualitative research, and the quality of the interview guide fundamentally influences the results of the study (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). The semi-structured interview allows interviewees to freely express their ideas within a certain range so as to obtain rich and direct information (Li, Deng & Zhang, 2019). The flexibility of unstructured interviews and the preparation of structured interviews make this interview type a suitable option for qualitative research purposes. The preparation of

structured interviews, as well as the flexibility of unstructured interviews, can cause this interview type an appropriate choice for qualitative research purposes in this study.

### 3.3 Interview Detail & Process

- I. Participant: 6 Interviewees (In-service and Pre-service Music Teachers)
  - a. In-service Music Teachers: 3 Interviewees
  - b. Pre-service Music Teachers: 3 Interviewees
- II. Duration: 40 Minutes
- III. Procedure of the Interview

#### a. In-service Music Teachers

In the first part, the investigator will ask interviewees the background information which is the music curriculum in school. Additionally, the investigator will ask their opinions of the curriculum of music special education in Hong Kong.

##### 1. Curriculum (10 Minutes)

- 1.1. Learning outcome
- 1.2. Number of classes
- 1.3. Teaching mode
- 1.4. Examination

In the second part, the investigator will ask interviewees' opinions about the sufficiency of school's resources, so as to understand more about the ideal resources and support in music education in a special school.

##### 2. Resources (10 Minutes)

- 2.1. Teacher

- 2.1.1. Teacher-student ratio
- 2.1.2. Teaching assistant
- 2.2. Facilities
  - 2.2.1. Classroom
  - 2.2.2. Equipment (Instrument, electronic devices)
- 2.3. Teaching resources
  - 2.3.1. Books
  - 2.3.2. Multimedia resources (CD, DVD)

In the third part, the investigator will ask interviewees' opinions about the development in their career life, so as to understand more their views and attitudes on music education in a special school.

### 3. Teacher Professional Development (10 Minutes)

- 3.1. Salary and welfare
- 3.2. Teachers' challenges and stress
- 3.3. Teacher satisfaction
- 3.4. In-service training
  - 3.4.1. Opportunity
  - 3.4.2. Financial support

In the fourth part, the investigator will request interviewees to trace back to the pre-service music teacher stage. Then, the investigator will ask interviewees' opinions about the pre-service training stage, so as to understand the sufficiency of training and difficulties in this stage.

### 4. Pre-service Training (10 Minutes)



#### 4.1. Knowledge

##### 4.1.1. Special Education Need

##### 4.1.2. Pedagogy

#### 4.2. Practical skill

##### 4.2.1. Placement

#### 4.3. Pre-service teachers' challenges and stress

### **b. Pre-service Music Teachers**

In the first part, the investigator will ask interviewees' expectation of the curriculum of music special education in Hong Kong.

#### 1. Curriculum (10 Minutes)

##### 1.1. Learning outcome

##### 1.2. Number of classes

##### 1.3. Teaching mode

##### 1.4. Examination

In the second part, the investigator will ask interviewees' expectations about the sufficiency of the school's resources, so as to understand more about the ideal resources and support in music education in a special school.

#### 2. Resources (10 Minutes)

##### 2.1. Teacher

##### 2.1.1. Teacher-student ratio

##### 2.1.2. Teaching assistant

##### 2.2. Facilities

##### 2.2.1. Classroom

#### 2.2.2. Equipment (Instrument, electronic devices)

### 2.3. Teaching resources

#### 2.3.1. Books

#### 2.3.2. Multimedia resources (CD, DVD)

In the third part, the investigator will ask interviewees to imagine as in-service music teachers. Then, the investigator will ask interviewees' opinions about the development in their career life, so as to understand more their views and attitudes on music education in a special school.

### 3. Teacher Professional Development (10 Minutes)

#### 3.1. Salary and welfare

#### 3.2. Teachers' challenges and stress

#### 3.3. Teacher satisfaction

#### 3.4. In-service training

##### 3.4.1. Opportunity

##### 3.4.2. Financial support

In the fourth part, the investigator will ask interviewees' opinions about the pre-service training stage, so as to understand the sufficiency of training and difficulties in this stage.

### 4. Pre-service Training (10 Minutes)

#### 4.1. Knowledge

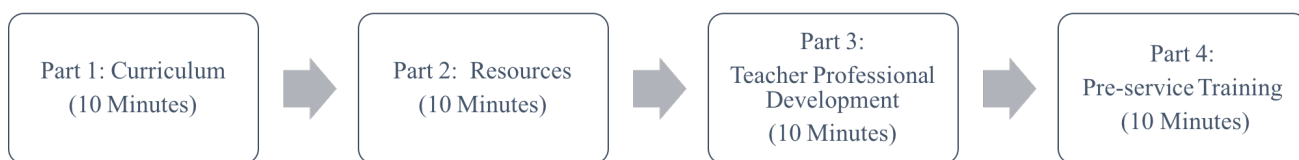
##### 4.1.1. Special Education Need

##### 4.1.2. Pedagogy

#### 4.2. Practical skill

#### 4.2.1. Placement

#### 4.3. Pre-service teachers' challenges and stress



*Figure 1: Interview Process in this research*

### 3.4 Research Participants

This study will invite six participants to complete the interview. The in-service music teachers are from Hong Chi Morninghope School, Tuen Mun, and the pre-service music teachers from the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Creative Arts and Culture and Bachelor of Education (Honours) (Music) (Co terminal Double Degree) in The Education University of Hong Kong. The participants between the ages of 18 and 40 and the pre-service music teachers aim to become music teachers in special schools after graduation. Their opinions may reflect the current problem and provide insights to facilitate the development of music education in special schools/education.

The in-service teacher can notice the current problems of special music education and provide some improvement methods and suggestions to enhance the quality of music special education and teacher training. Besides, the pre-service can reflect the current curriculum of music special teacher pros and cons that can facilitate the curriculum and training's improvement.

### 3.5 Research Process

The study will continue for one year, from May 2021 to April 2022. In the first six months of the year, the focus will be on background research and the integration of research reports from others to formulate an appropriate research direction. In the second half of the year, the focus will be on data collection and data analysis. Finally, these study results are summarized. The study result will be presented in an oral presentation and thesis. The oral presentation will be conducted with the supervisor in March 2022. The thesis will be submitted to the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences in April 2022.

Date	Implementation matter
May 2021	Submission of Project Proposal
Jun - Nov 2021	Meetings with the Supervisor for Discussion
15 Nov 2021	Submission of The Ethical Forms Application
Nov - Dce 2021	- Meetings with supervisor for discussion - Planning the interview structure - Contact with respondents
31 Dce 2021	Submission of The Drafted Chapters of Research Report
Jan 2022	Interview with Interviewees
Feb 2022	Data Analysis
Mar 2022	Presentation of Honours Project
Apr 2022	Submission of Honours Project

*Figure 2: Process of This Research*

### 3.6 Research Limitations

Data collection had to be restricted in this study due to time and human resources constraints. Firstly, only six interviewees were invited to this study. The in-service music teachers cannot represent the wishes of all music teachers in special schools in Hong Kong, although they have a rich experience in teaching. The pre-service music teachers cannot represent the wishes of all music training teachers as well. Additionally, the in-service music teacher and pre-service music teachers are both from the same institution Hong Chi Morninghope School, Tuen Mun, and The Education University of Hong Kong, respectively.

## Chapter 4 Findings

### **4.1 What Is the Status of Music Education in Special Schools in Hong Kong?**

#### **4.1.1. Teaching Goals**

Music lessons' learning goals are mainly enjoying music and following the EDB curriculum, which is creating, listening, and performing. Music teachers also want students to develop skills to experience and express music during the lesson, emphasizing cultivating music imagination and musicality in practice. In addition, understanding the musical concepts and applying them in their performance are also important.

#### **4.1.2 Music Lesson**

According to the in-service music teachers, there are double music lessons per week. Double lessons offer sufficient time for teaching. At the beginning of the lesson, students need time to warm up themselves, such as releasing emotions and activating their bodies.

*“It is a sufficient time to teach the knowledge and assess the students’ capability for applying the music concept.” – Participate A*

In addition, teachers can teach knowledge and evaluate the students’ ability to apply the music concepts. However, All teachers thought one hour is not enough for students to learn music.

#### **4.1.3 Teaching Method**

In-service teachers prefer applying the Integrated Music Activities approach because students can experience music themes through three perspectives: creating, listening, and performing.

*“I had not learnt other teaching method like Orff approach and Dalcroze Approach. Thus, I has applied Integrated Music Activities approach that I learnt from teacher training school in mainstream and special schools.” – In-service Teacher*

Besides, the Orff and Kodály approaches are usually applied in the music lesson. Moreover, the Orff and Kodály approaches can apply to the lesson in tandem. The Orff approach, which is more theoretically, can train students' music concepts starting from superficial level to complex, such as rhythm. Furthermore, the Kodály approach is easy to gain students' interest because students can learn music by dancing.

*“At first, the Kodály approach let students feel the music via body movement which can internalize the abstract music concepts in their minds. Then, teacher brings out the concepts and explain them” – In-service Teacher*

Therefore, students easily engage the lesson with body movement to feel the music while learning the abstract concepts constructively.

#### **4.1.4 Music Subject Assessment**

According to the participants, their service school does not have a music examination. From special students' perspective, the standardized test cannot fully reflect their understanding and ability in the music aspect because they are weak in comprehending written language and wording. Therefore, the standardized test does not an effective method for testing special students' learning ability.

*“Since most of special students are weak in reading ability, thus, the exam cannot reflect their ability completely.” – In-service Teacher*

*“The mark cannot reflect students' ability.” – In-service Teacher*

They use assessment and in-class observation instead of examination because teachers can indicate the strengths and weaknesses in different music parts such as listening, creating, and performing, distinguishing the potential students, and offering more specialized training. Moreover, teachers can provide some follow-up actions to assist students.

#### **4.1.5 Teaching Assistant**

According to the participants, the number of teaching assistants (TA) is between zero and one in the music lesson. The function of the teaching assistant is mainly to assist the special needs students. Due to the ability differences in every student, TAs need to help the special needs students who are lower ability—for instance, by explaining the instructions from the teacher that enhance their understanding and participation in class.

*“In group activity and in the junior form, TA can make the class be smooth and make the instruction be clearer that students can catch up easily.” – In-service Teacher*

Apart from this, special needs students also include emotional problems and uncontrollable students. Therefore, teaching assistants need to take care of these students to guarantee smooth lessons.

#### **4.1.6 Music Classroom**

According to the in-service teachers, their service school provides a music room for a music lesson. However, the music room does not primarily for music subject because there is one music room only.

*“There is one music room only. It does not sufficient for school.” – In-service Teacher*

It seems insufficient for an entire music lesson in school. Therefore, music lessons mostly are taken place in the classroom.

#### **4.1.7 Sufficient Equipment**

All participants agree that their service school provides sufficient equipment (instrument, electronic devices) in a music lesson. In the instrument part, the piano is the crucial instrument for the music lesson because the piano is most of the music teachers' major instrument and can perform a wide range of music genres. Percussive instruments are popular in music lessons

because they are easy to catch up with the skills for special students. In addition, some percussive instruments are removable that can form an ensemble group. In the part to the electronic device, the iPad is also essential for the music lesson because it is a portable device and can install various musical applications that are convenient for teachers and students learning music.

#### **4.1.8 Teaching Resources**

All participants thought that their service school provided insufficient teaching resources (reference books, multimedia resources, e.g., CD, DVD, etc.) for the music lesson. Online learning resources and textbooks are essential teaching resources in music subject. On the other hand, special school music teachers need to tailor the music materials. Mainly, they refer to the music references from mainstream schools like books, etc. However, the secondary mainstream schools' music materials (Reference books) do not appropriate for the secondary special schools' students. Therefore, teachers need to select the primary mainstream schools' music materials for the secondary special schools' students.

*“Less reference books for special music education.” – In-service Teacher*

*“Does not have textbook that I need to select the content from mainstream school music textbook and tailor-made the materials.” – In-service Teacher*

Since Hong Kong does not have a publisher to produce a series of music special teaching resources, thus, the special teachers need to make it by themselves, which is a huge workload for them.

#### **4.1.9 In-service Teacher Training**

According to the in-service teacher, their service school provides in-service training and financial support for special music education. Therefore, they participated in EDB music



training courses and the Montessori approach. However, the EDB music training courses were mainly for mainstream schools. These courses did not, particularly for special music education. Thus, the courses were not appropriate for the music teachers in special schools.

*“EDB music course mainly for mainstream music teachers.” – In-service Teacher*

Besides, the Montessori approach has become popular in music lessons in special schools. According to Isasscs (2018), “Montessori's emphasis on the child's freedom with responsibility remains the key principle of her pedagogy. Opportunities to move freely both inside and outside the classroom guide children towards spontaneous choice, reflecting their interest in the environment and social interaction.” Students have chances to choose and move. Thus, teachers would have more insights to support students' learning and development.

## **4.2 What Difficulties Are the Teachers Facing?**

### **4.2.1 Challenges**

From the in-service teachers' point of view, adapting to the different ability and behaviour problems in students amid mild ID and moderate ID is quite challenging. For example, offensive behaviour happens in school due to the inclusive education and waves of emigration caused. Most parents would like to send their children with mild ID to mainstream schools; a phenomenon appears the mild ID special school needs to accept a lot of moderate ID students. The teacher needs to handle mild ID and moderate ID students in class, which enhances the difficulties and affects the fluency in learning progress.

*“Adjusting to the behaviour problems in students between mild and moderate ID that is the offensive behaviour.” – In-service Teacher*

From the pre-service teachers' point of view, some parents may not understand well about special students' needs and characteristics in Hong Kong. Furthermore, most parents are

working parents, including special students'. Sometimes they maybe are not very familiar with their children at school. As a teacher, one of the responsibilities is to communicate with parents to let them know more about their children because cooperation with parents is significant and facilitates students' development. The challenge is after the communication, parents agree with the teacher's opinions and are willing to collaborate with the teacher, such as keep practicing with their children at home.

*“The challenge is communication with parents and they will collaborate with me.” –  
Pre-service Teacher*

In- & pre-service teacher also pointed out that the greatest challenge is the pandemic of COVID-19. The music lesson is shortened to one lesson per work, from full-day learning changes to half-day. It is not enough for the teaching because the teachers merely finish the learning goals, but students do not have opportunities to practice due to the time restriction.

*“Half day learning is not enough for the from teacher and students in the learning progress.” – In-service Teacher*

Online learning is instead of a face-to-face lesson in special schools. One of the drawbacks of online learning cause activity restrictions, which means the teacher cannot arrange different activities for students, such as ensemble performance, group discussion, group projects, etc. Another restriction is the monitor size which teachers only can see the upper part of students. As a result, it is hard to apply the whole-body movement activity.

*“The monitor size restricts the interaction because teacher only can see the students' upper part.” – Pre-service Teacher*

On the other hand, the teacher only is difficult to assess students' abilities accurately manage the classroom effectively under the online lesson because it is hard for students to concentrate

consistently during the lesson. This problem will be the greatest challenge for the teachers to take care of every student and hinder students' learning progress and development.

#### 4.2.2 Stress

From the in-service teachers' point of view, nowadays, Hong Kong EDB does not provide a systematic music curriculum structure for special music education. Music teachers need to tailor-made the materials and adjust the learning content for each form so that they can let students easy to understand the music concepts. Teachers spend much time designing the learning content and framework. That leads to a high workload for them because some music teachers teach music and other subjects.

*“EDB not only does not provide the clear guideline (content & framework) for special music education but also does not offer the learning materials (EG: Music Books).” – In-service Teacher*

Second, Because of COVID-19, most of the students' concentrations were declined. Schools applied the online teaching mode in the past two years. However, when schools resume face-to-face lessons, a teacher needs to make a great effort to manage students' behaviour and discipline.

*“I took many effort to control students’ behaviour and discipline, especially in primary one.” – In-service Teacher*

From the pre-service teachers' point of view, teaching and communicating with special needs students need more skills since there are various types of special needs students. However, after graduation from the music education program, it is still insufficient knowledge and skills to teach in a special school. In addition, teachers do not have enough practice and knowledge

about music education in special education because the teacher training program's curriculum plans for mainstream school music education.

*“I think that I will not be ready for teaching in special schools after graduation because all of us are trained for teaching in mainstream schools.” – Pre-service Teacher*

In- & pre-service teachers also mentioned that, under the time limitation, the teaching process usually would be behind schedule because the teacher needs to balance the learning content for different students. Thus, a teacher is hard to complete all the teaching goals. Besides, most music teachers are trained for teaching in mainstream schools. When they get into the special school, they need to adopt a new teaching environment, curriculum, and nature of students. Furthermore, they will apply other teaching styles and methods to fit the students' needs. They also need to adjust their expectation between special and mainstream students. When students do not reach the learning goals, the teacher will feel stressed and criticize their teaching performance by themselves.

### **4.3 What Training and Support Do the In-Service and Pre-Service Music Teachers Need?**

#### **4.3.1 Pre-service Training Stage**

Two in-service teachers indicated that they did not receive SEN knowledge in teacher training school. Additionally, they mentioned that teacher training schools did not offer any information about special education. Thus they did not have a chance to connect special music education.

*“There was not any information about music special education during the training stage.” – In-service Teacher*

On the other hand, all pre-service teachers had learned SEN knowledge in teacher training school through SEN courses and SEN talk. In addition, some participants pointed out that

teacher training school provides thirty hours of special education course, which was a fundamental course and understood the classification of special students and their features.

*“I enrolled in some SEN courses which were offered by teacher training school.” – Pre-service Teacher*

All of the in- and pre-service teachers learned the Integrated Music Activities approach teaching approach in teacher training school. Integrated music activities consist of three aspects creating, performing, and listening, and are offered by the EDB music curriculum. Apart from integrated music activities, teacher training schools offered the Dalcroze approach and Orff approach, but they presented in a workshop format, which was not formal university courses. Due to the quota limitation, these workshops did not work for every student who studied music education. Therefore, all of the musical pre-service teachers need to apply by themselves. Moreover, the insufficient promotion and intensive timetable caused few pre-service music teachers to want to apply to the workshops.

According to the participants, both in-service and pre-service teachers wanted to apply their practical skills in special school during the pre-service training stage. The result indicates that special music education has become more valued. However, in the training stage of in-service teachers, they did not be provided with the opportunity of special education services to understand more special education fields. Nowadays, pre-service teachers are provided with more opportunities. They obtained teaching experience, volunteer in a special school, organize projects with special school teachers, etc. However, all of the changes were limited quota and invited by professors. Therefore, it is very hard for pre-service music teachers to find some chances to get into the SEN field.

From the participants' point of view, both in-service and pre-service teachers expected that teacher training schools would offer block practice opportunities and special school visits for pre-service teachers. In-service music teachers pointed out that the mainstream school teaching experiences are insufficient skills and knowledge to support teaching in a special school. Field experience opportunities can let the pre-service music teachers explore more possibilities and undergo the real-life experience. Special School visiting can provide a concrete picture for the pre-service teacher to know more about the operation of special schools in different departments and subjects and how to cooperate.



## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

### **5.1 What Is the Status of Music Education in Special Schools in Hong Kong?**

#### **5.1.1 Music Lesson**

As the in-service teachers mentioned, there was one hour of music lesson per week. According to pre-service teachers, they expected that there would be around two to three lessons per week because special students need more time to establish the knowledge and techniques by practicing the skills when they learn some new concepts. One hour is not enough for the special students to learn music and develop skills. Moreover, music lessons can provide different non-musical benefits for special students. Črnčec, Prior and Wilson pointed out that “music training, through improving musical ability, also improves other cognitive functions (2006).” Music enhances special students’ musical ability and can facilitate their cognitive development.

The special schools can increase the music lesson or crossover with other subjects to feel music such as sport and language subjects. First, increasing the music lesson can let students engage in various activities of music from the lesson and let teachers evaluate the students’ performance in detail. Second, crossover with other subjects can extend the music lesson and not affect the school timetable.

#### **5.1.2 Teaching Assistant**

Teaching assistants (TA) play an important role for music teachers. Pre-service teachers expected they would have two TAs in their music lessons. It reflects that special music education is facing lacking TA. According to the in-service teachers, the school does not have enough funding to employ TAs, particularly for music subject. Most of the time, the music teachers need to share TAs with other subjects, which causes some music teachers are not to

provide a TA for their lessons, like participant C. In addition, most TAs are untrained in the special education aspect. Therefore, they lack communication skills and SEN knowledge that affect class teaching and learning progress.

In order to deal with these problems, first, the government can increase the special school funding in music subject to let special schools employ more TAs and offer more training. Second, special schools in-school training or out-school training which cooperate with NGOs. Both pieces of training offer financial support for them from governmental funding. McVittie, E. pointed out that “Part of the TA's role is to help children become independent learners (2005).” Increasing TAs and providing training can improve the quality of teaching and the music lesson become effective.

### **5.1.3 Music Facility**

Since the insufficient music room problem, all in-service teachers want to add more music rooms in their service schools because many music lessons are held in the classroom only. Morreale, Masu, De Angeli, and Rota said, “The ultimate purpose of the Music Room is to enable everyone to experience musical creativity through social interaction (2013).” The music room is different from the classroom, which lets students easily engage in the lesson. Then, pre-service teachers also want to add a performance stage in special schools. From their point of view, the performance stage is an informal stage for special students. Students can apply their learning outcomes there and provide a music platform for students to develop their musical talent. Additionally, the instrument zone can place various percussive instruments. When the students play the instruments will produce a different sound that can arouse their various sensations and make them feel free to express themselves everywhere in the zone.



#### **5.1.4 Teaching Resources**

According to the in-service teachers, special music teachers need to produce the teaching resources as some publishers. The mainstream music subject is the target for many local publishers. Their teaching materials are perfect and professional, including listening resources, exercises, music sheets, textbooks, etc. Hong Kong does not have this kind of publisher to produce a series of music special teaching resources. Thus, the special teachers need to make it by themselves, which is a considerable workload.

In order to build up complete musical teaching resources, the EDB can design and create music special education resources such as online applications and textbooks for special education with publishers and music teachers in special schools. The publishers are provided with a perfect and systematic system to produce teaching resources. They have a professional crew to create an eye-catching design, audio making, and produce a printed book. The music teachers can provide their professional knowledge and experience about each form's learning level and content to the publisher. The special music teachers can assess freely to download the resources.

Under complete teaching support, music teachers reduce the high workload and enhance the teaching quality to become more systematic.

#### **5.2 What Difficulties Are the Teachers Facing?**

According to the in- and pre-service teachers' opinions, their difficulties come from the curriculum, lacking support, and the pandemic of COVID-19.

In recent years, the university that cooperated with the EDB designed the special education music curriculum. The special music teacher can follow the guidelines from EDB. However,

the special school distinguishes into three levels: children with mild ID, children with moderate ID, or children with severe ID. Hence, the EDB's guideline does not ultimately make it suitable for all levels. The special music teachers still need to adjust and choose the appropriate learning content. All the content is depended on the school. Thus, there are different versions of special music education in different schools. The government can formulate a clear music curriculum structure for special music education for three ID levels. The music curriculum structure will be clear and comprehensive under the professional team's design. Kratus mentioned, “the music curriculum structure can prevent the problems such as ill-defined objectives, time-consuming and poorly structured problems (1990).” In addition, forming a curriculum structure improves the music special education system and music special teachers working quality in tandem.

Next, all participants felt they lacked concrete support for teacher professional development and psychological perspectives.

First, in the teacher professional development perspective, they want to increase the professional exchange opportunity inter-schools in special music education to explore more teaching methods in the music aspect. The government can establish a professional networking and resource platform for special music teachers. They can exchange their opinions and explore various teaching strategies via the professional exchange chances that can inspire special music teachers to attempt different pedagogies and problem-solving skills in their lessons. Furthermore, the special music teachers can express their needs and reflect on the status and difficulties of the community and government through the event.

Although they joined many music training courses from EDB, the courses were mainly for mainstream school music teachers. The EDB can collaborate with NGOs to provide suitable

training for them. From all participants' opinions, they want to join a music therapy course because they can apply additional angles to evaluate students. Some countries adopt music therapy in a music lessons in special schools like Australia. Daveson & Edwards pointed out, "music therapy in special education is the functional use of music to achieve special education goals. The benefits of using music with students receiving special education services are extensive and unique (1998)." Music therapy increases special education objectives and provides an alternative to traditional teaching methods in tandem.

Second, music special teacher psychological need is worthy of concern. Most participants said that when they cannot reach the learning goals, they will criticize their teaching performance and feel very stressed without teammate support. The service school can form a working team that includes different staff such as teachers, teaching assistants, social workers, etc., in music subject. Most participants prefer talking to their colleagues to release their stress because they feel they do not have teammate support. Building up a working team can distribute the work to staff, decreasing the high workload stressor.

Then, the pandemic of COVID-19 affects the learning progress and teaching efficiency. All music teachers only rely on the online software to continue the lesson. There are many restrictions on online learning. One of the challenges is that the teachers cannot assess students' abilities accurately. Therefore, most participants apply other teaching methods, such as the scaffolding approach, which is effective. Kupers, van Dijk, and van Geert mentioned that "in pedagogical theory, scaffolding is a metaphoric term for systematic instructional techniques to learning and development (2017)." Western countries like the USA combine the scaffolding approach and Dalcroze Approach in music learning. Jones (2018) pointed out three levels during the class: fundamental, medium, and challenging levels via hearing, moving, feeling,

and sensing to experience music. It not only guarantees all students can reach the fundamental level but also let teacher understands students' capability.

Apart from this, the service schools need to strengthen their IT support to ensure all the software versions are updated and have enough space to support the extensive running system. In addition, service schools actively promote IT learning to let students catch up with the software and online learning materials used as fast as possible. For instance, the IT and music department provides training lessons for students and parents about using online learning platforms such as Google Classroom.

### **5.3 What Training and Support Do the In-Service and Pre-Service Music Teachers Need?**

#### **5.3.1 Pre-service Training Stage**

Both in- and pre-service teachers thought that teacher training schools need to offer field experience and special school visits for pre-service teachers. Considering the existing field experience policy, it seems no additional time for the pre-service teachers to undergo special education field experience on a school day. Thus, the special education field experience can be shorter than the mainstream school field experience. For example, around three weeks and one supervision only. In order to be fair for every pre-service teacher, two examiners will be provided for the supervision. Cruickshank & Armaline said, "Field experiences have emerged as a critical dimension to the teacher preparation process (1986)." One will supervise live performance, and the other will supervise based on the teaching recording. The special schools visiting can inspire the pre-service teachers. Hendry & Oliver pointed out that "in-class observation of teaching is seen as a supportive and developmental process for improving the quality of teaching in universities (2012)." Both field experience and special school visits let

pre-service teachers undergo a real-life experience and provide more information to understand the music development in special schools.

Besides practical skills, knowledge-based is an essential element as well. Most of the participants indicated that teacher training schools offered few SEN courses, which were fundamental courses. In addition, the SEN course cannot assist them in identifying the classification of special students and their features. It reflects that the teacher training schools supply inadequate courses in knowledge-based training. Teacher training schools can offer more intensive SEN courses for pre-service teachers.

Also, the government can cooperate with universities to adjust the curriculum that ensures there is enough in-school training for the pre-service teachers, such as the knowledge about special students and the special education system and curriculum in Hong Kong. From the special schools' perspective, providing field experience offered to pre-service teachers is taking a risk for them. These involve numerous issues, for instance, a safety problem. The EDB can cooperate with some NGOs that provide services to teach safety knowledge and skills such as Physical Restraint & Breakaway Techniques (For Children & Adolescents) etc. When pre-service teachers encounter a sudden incident, they know how to protect themselves and their students. Furthermore, after the course, the pre-service teachers will be provided a certificate to prove that they are qualified. It can reduce the risk during special school field experience and be trustworthy by the special school.

Finally, because of COVID-19, online teaching and learning have become very popular. In order to equip the pre-service teachers with online teaching techniques, the example from a music teacher in special schools is significant for music pre-service teachers. They can learn

how to hold an online lesson for special students and manage the online classroom. In addition, teaching training schools can invite music teachers in special schools to record videos about their lessons to demonstrate pre-service teachers learning. The videos present music teachers' teaching recordings and include their sharing about the online teaching strategy, problems, and solutions.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusion**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

By and large, special music education has been developing over the decade. This study aims to investigate the status of music education in special education in Hong Kong. As the primary stakeholder who includes pre-service and in-service music teachers in special schools, their opinions may reflect the current problem and provide insights to facilitate the development of music education in special schools/education. After the investigation, there is still much improvement in different perspectives, including curriculum, teaching resources, teacher professional development, and pre-service training stage. This study allows special schools, teacher training schools, society, and the government to understand the present circumstance. In addition, this study provides some insights for improving the quality of music education in special schools in Hong Kong.

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## In-service Teacher Interview Questions

### Part 1 Curriculum

1. What is the learning outcome / goal in the music lesson?
2. How many music lessons are suitable for the special students per week?
  - 2.1. Why?
3. Which teaching mode do you apply in your teaching?
  - 3.1. Why?
4. Does music subject have examination?
  - 4.1. If yes, do you agree music subject have examination?
5. Do you agree the examination can reflect the ability of special students?
  - 5.1. If yes, why and how?
  - 5.2. If not, why?
    - 5.2.1. What method do you prefer to assess special students' abilities?

### Part 2 Resources

6. Do you agree the teacher-student ratio setting from EDB in special school?
  - 6.1. If yes, why?
  - 6.2. If not, why?
    - 6.2.1. What teacher-student ratio do you prefer?
7. How many teaching assistants do you have?
  - 7.1. What is the function of the teaching assistant?
8. Does your service school provide a music classroom for the music subject?
  - 8.1. If yes, what facilities do your service school have?
  - 8.2. If not, why?

9. Does your service school provide sufficient equipment (instrument, electronic devices) for the music lesson?
- 9.1. If yes, why?
- 9.2. If not, what equipment do you want to add?
10. Does your service school provide sufficient teaching resources (reference books, multimedia resources e.g.: CD, DVD etc.) for the music lesson?
- 10.1. If yes, why?
- 10.2. If not, what teaching resources do you want to add?
- 10.2.1. Why

### **Part 3 Teacher Professional Development**

11. As a special education teacher, do you think the salary and welfare should higher than the teacher who work in the mainstream schools?
- 11.1. If yes, why?
- 11.2. If not, why?
12. What challenges are you facing?
- 12.1. How do you cope with the challenges?
13. What stress are you experiencing?
- 13.1. How do you overcome with the stress?
14. Have you ever experienced a sense of satisfaction or achievement when you teach special students?
15. Does your service school provide in-service training for the music special education?
- 15.1. If yes, what is it?
- 15.1.1. What did you learn from this training?
- 15.2. If not, why?

16. Does your service school provide financial support for your non-official or official training for music special education?
- 16.1. If yes, what is it?
- 16.2. If not, why?
17. Besides the financial support, what kind of support do you want to obtain from school or the government?
- 17.1. Why?

#### **Part 4 Pre-service Training**

18. What kind of knowledge about SEN perspectives did you obtain during your pre-service training stage?
- 18.1. How did the knowledge affect your teaching mode / style?
19. What kind of pedagogy did you obtain during your pre-service training stage? (e.g.: Orff...)
- 19.1. How did the skills affect your teaching mode / style?
20. Had you applied your practical skills in your pre-service training stage in special schools?
- 20.1. If yes, why?
- 20.2. If not, why?
- 20.2.1. Would you want to apply your practical skills in your pre-service training stage?
21. When you were in training stage, how did you find the ways to connect the special school services?
- 21.1. What service did you join?
22. When you were in training stage, what kind of support did you want/expect from the EdUHK or Gov. about special education?
23. Do you have any suggestion to school and government about music education in special school?

**Pre-service Teacher Interview Questions**

**Part 1 Curriculum**

1. What is the learning outcome / goal in the music lesson?
2. How many music lessons are suitable for the special students per week?
  - 2.1. Why?
3. Which teaching method do you apply in your teaching?
  - 3.1. Why?
4. Does music subject have examination?
  - 4.1. If yes, do you agree music subject have examination?
5. Do you agree the examination can reflect the ability of special students?
  - 5.1. If yes, why and how?
  - 5.2. If not, why?
    - 5.2.1. What method do you prefer to assess special students' abilities?

**Part 2 Resources**

6. Do you agree the teacher-student ratio setting from EDB in special school?
  - 6.1. If yes, why?
  - 6.2. If not, why?
    - 6.2.1. What teacher-student ratio do you prefer?
7. How many teaching assistants do you prefer?
  - 7.1. What is the function of the teaching assistant?
8. Do you expect that your service school provide a music classroom for the music subject?
  - 8.1. If yes, what facilities do your service school have?
  - 8.2. If not, why?



9. What kind of equipment do you expect in the music classroom (instruments, electronic devices)?
10. What kind of teaching resources do you expect for the music lesson (reference books, multimedia resources e.g.: CD, DVD etc.)?

### **Part 3 Teacher Professional Development**

11. As a special education teacher, do you think the salary and welfare should higher than the teacher who work in the mainstream schools?
  - 11.1. If yes, why?
  - 11.2. If not, why?
12. Imagine you are in-service music teacher in special school, what challenges would you face?
  - 12.1. How would you cope with the challenges?
13. Imagine you are in-service music teacher in special school, what stress would you experience?
  - 13.1. How would you overcome with the stress?
14. What reason or circumstance will make you experience a sense of satisfaction or achievement when you teach special students?
  - 14.1. Why?
15. Do you expect that your service school provide in-service training for the music special education?
  - 15.1. If yes, what kind of training do you want?
  - 15.2. If not, why?
16. Do you expect that your service school provide financial support for your non-official or official training for music special education?
  - 16.1. If yes, why

- 16.2. If not, why?
17. Besides the financial support, what kind of support do you want to obtain from school or the government?
- 17.1. Why?

#### **Part 4 Pre-service Training**

18. What kind of knowledge about SEN perspectives do you obtain during your pre-service training stage?
- 18.1. How does the knowledge inspire your teaching mode / style?
19. What kind of pedagogy about SEN perspectives do you obtain during your pre-service training stage?
- 19.1. How do the skills inspire your teaching mode / style?
20. Do you want to apply your practical skills in your pre-service training stage?
- 20.1. If yes, why?
- 20.2. If not, why?
21. When you were in training stage, how did you find the ways to connect the special school services?
- 21.1. What service did you join?
22. When you were in training stage, what kind of support did you want/expect from the EdUHK or Gov.?
23. Do you have any suggestion to school and government about music education in special school?