**A qualitative study of the experiences of the parents
in supporting their dyslexic children in secondary schools**

by

Patrick K. K. SZE

A Thesis Submitted to

The Education University of Hong Kong

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for

the Degree of Doctor of Education

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Statement of Originality

I, SZE Ka Kei Patrick, hereby declare that I am the sole author of the thesis and the material presented in this thesis is my original work except those indicated in the acknowledgement. I further declare that I have followed the University's policies and regulations on Academic Honesty, Copyright and Plagiarism in writing the thesis and no material in this thesis has been submitted for a degree in this or other universities.

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Patrick SZE

Abstract of thesis entitled

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The phenomenological qualitative study was conducted to present the in-depth and collective individual experiences in this study. The aim of the study was to uncover the essences of lived experiences of the caregivers with rearing their children in secondary school.

Due to the nature of studying a marginalized community, purposeful sampling was adopted to recruit the informants who have the experiences of bringing up a child with diagnosed with dyslexia, and their child had experienced in local secondary schools in Hong Kong. Over the period 2017-19, twelve parents were invited and finally involved in the in-depth interviews. Consent form was conducted before the interview, and the researcher informed all informants the interview processes and the purpose of the study before the interviews through the phone and/or email.

Qualitative data analyses through a software package Nvivo. Seven overarching themes were yielded, 1) Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration; 2) Feeling discriminated about their children's experience; 3) Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking; 4) Feeling relieved and be more reflective; 5) Feeling powerless but critical to the education system and Confucian culture; 6) Feeling stressful in financial support; and 7) Feeling resilient in difficult time. The result revealed that parents of children with dyslexia were quite common to have unpleasant experiences in collaboration with schools, encountered misunderstandings and conflicts. They often felt worried, stressful, helpless, powerless, and discriminated in school, even in society, but resilient at the end. In the process of collaboration, although they have not much positive experience in cooperation with schools, most of them finally become stronger to face various difficulties in their lives.

The current findings should be a signal to the education bureau to review their policy who promote the inclusive education in Hong Kong. In addition, educators, parents, school counsellor, school social worker and educational psychologist should also take the findings of this study to evaluate, modify and enrich their current practices in Hong Kong.

Acknowledgement

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my principal research supervisor, Dr. Diana Kwok, Associate Professor, Department of Special Education and Counselling, The Education University of Hong Kong, for giving me the opportunity to do research and providing invaluable guidance throughout this research. Her dynamism, vision, sincerity and motivation have deeply inspired me. She has taught me the methodology to carry out the research and to present the research works as clearly as possible. Under the guidance of my supervisor, my thesis has been revised many times over the years, and it has become even better. It was a great privilege and honor to study under her guidance. I am extremely grateful for what she has offered me. I would also like to say thanks to my associate supervisor, Dr. Angus Wang for reminding and directing me to shift the focus on the parents in literature review. Without their generous guidance and ongoing support, I could have not completed this thesis.

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I am extremely grateful to my parents for their love, prayers, caring and sacrifices for educating and preparing me for my future. I am very much thankful to my wife for her love, understanding, and continuing support to complete this research work.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a brief introduction of the study. It includes five sections: the researcher's experience, the research background, the present study, definitions of key terms, and the organization of the thesis. First, the research topic of the study will be highlighted, including a description of the researcher's experience relating to the research topic. Second, the background of the study will be explained, specifically the experiences and barriers encountered by parents of students with special education needs, research questions and significance of the study. At the end of this chapter, terms related to dyslexia and family-school collaboration and the outline of the thesis will be presented.

Research Topic

Parents' experiences in supporting their dyslexic children in secondary schools

Some studies claimed that parents of students with SEN (including dyslexia) feel the need to devote much effort to addressing individualized needs of their children than do parents of non-SEN children, e.g. assisting them to memorize some vocabularies, developing some coping skills in reading and writing (Farron-Davis, 2004). However, when I was promoted as a coordinator in schools for students with special educational needs (SENCo), I realized that the pressures experienced by parents of students with dyslexia were frequently underestimated or ignored. The majority of parents were confronting by educational and social barriers of varying magnitudes, and often needed other support and assistance. In addition, in the process of interviewing my informants

and compiling the literature review, I found that most parents of students with dyslexia did not realize their children's rights to receive educational support. They were also unable to provide proper assistance to their children due to their or their child's teachers' misperception of dyslexia, largely due to some cultural belief, policy limitations, and/or lack of knowledge about SEN students. A cluster of studies have found that children with dyslexia not only have linguistic and cognitive deficits, but also face educational and social barriers, e.g. being excluded and stigmatized by the general public and teachers as well as by the school inclusive policy (Blatz, 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2014; Forlin, 2007; Lam, 2015; Taylor, 2017). These kinds of educational and social barriers are also the everyday experiences of these parents, and will be discussed after a brief definition of students with SEN.

Children and youth with special educational needs are those whose needs arise from disabilities or learning difficulties (Bartholomew, 2014; Cruise, Evans, & Pickens, 2011; Fernández-López et al., 2013; Forlin, 2010; UNESCO, 1994). There are eight types of special educational needs recognized in Hong Kong. These are specific learning difficulties (SpLD), intellectual disabilities, autism spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, physical disabilities, visual impairment, hearing impairment and speech and language impairments. The Hong Kong Education Bureau (2017) added mental illness as the ninth type of special education in 2018. SpLD is a term used to describe persistent difficulties in reading, writing or arithmetic operation regardless of intelligence, motivation or socioeconomic or cultural factors (Karande, & Kuril, 2011). Dyslexia is the most common type of SpLD. People with this condition, despite having normal intelligence and formal learning experiences, are unable to read, write, spell and dictate words accurately and fluently (DSM-5, APA,

2013; International Dyslexia Association [EIDA], 2002).

Researcher's Experience

The constructivist research paradigm is employed in this study (Creswell, 2013). The researcher is a tool in conducting qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). The researcher's worldview and personal training background should be reflected, hence I will describe my personal experience and training background which guided me throughout the research process.

Personal experience

In the past few years, the school in which I served received several letters in relation to special education issues from the Hong Kong Education Bureau and Hospital Authority, such as psychological learning reports on students. At that time, special education was totally new, strange and unfamiliar to teachers. All letters had been unsealed and stored in a safe for several years in a vice-principal's room. In 2013, the school was scheduled to undergo an external review by the Education Bureau. The external reviewers were the first to have studied those letters, and they began to discuss with the school staff about handling special education issues, such as forming teams to take charge of catering for these students. It was the first time that inclusive education had been dealt with in the school.

After school review, I was appointed as a coordinator of special education (SENCo). My assigned role as a SENCo is to assess the school's special education needs, to map the human resources, through motivating and involving all teaching staff to implement

interventions, tracking the effectiveness of interventions, advising teaching staff about the interventions that would work in their classes, ,   and making sure all students are able to succeed and progress regardless of their different learning, behavioral and socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, for the past seven years I have led the student support team in planning, implementing, and evaluating a whole school approach (WSA) to inclusive education (IE), and also promoting the cultivation of an inclusive education culture. I have also taught a nurturing group class to help SEN students in the school with anxiety and attachment issues. Throughout my teaching, I have taught students with attention deficit or hyperactivity disorder (AD/HD), Autism (ASD), SpLD and other behavioral, cognitive and neurological issues. These experiences have inspired deeply me to realize and understand the essence of special education further in current education system.

Academic and counselling training background

I am self-identified as Hong Kong Chinese. After graduating from a local secondary school, I spent three years to obtain my first bachelor degree in Chinese Humanity Culture from the Open University of Hong Kong, and a second bachelor degree in media and cultural studies from Middlesex University. In 2008, I started my teaching career as a Chinese and Liberal Studies teacher in a local secondary school. At the same time, I completed my Postgraduate Diploma in Education at The Hong Kong Institute of Education. In order to enrich and equip my teaching knowledge well, I enrolled my first master degree in Chinese Literature at The University of Hong Kong in 2010.

In 2013, I was appointed as a counselling teacher in a local secondary school. I completed a one-year professional diploma programme in guidance and counselling at

The Chinese University of Hong Kong. I came to understand that students and their parents experience daily pressures from their routine school and family duties. Due to my interest and work related to counselling, I obtained my master degree in counselling at The Education University of Hong Kong in 2016. After graduation, I became a counsellor, certified by the The Hong Kong Professional Counselling Association (HKPCA) in 2017. My education and training background as a certified counselor in HKPCA is a key factor in conducting this research as it has equipped me with better knowledge about dealing with special education issues.

Special education training background

In 2014, I was promoted as a coordinator of special education needs (SENCo), which illuminated my career and study of special education. By 2016, I had completed over 250 hours courses of teacher professional development programmes about catering for students with special educational needs. Starting from 2014, I experienced the implementation of a three-tier intervention model into the secondary educational system by the Education Bureau. I obtained a SENCo certificate from a joint-institute programme held by The Special Education Society of Hong Kong (SESHK) and The Education University of Hong Kong in 2018. Along with my classmates in the SENCo programme, I formed a SENCo network as a professional group in 2018. Various updated SEN issues and policies are discussed and shared among us through this network. For example, we have discussed the effectiveness of current supporting grants in regular Hong Kong schools. These training experiences and SENCo network have enabled me to connect with my research target groups, children with dyslexia and their parents. My perception of children diagnosed with dyslexia has been built and shaped by my routine work. Children with dyslexia are often marginalized in our current elite-

oriented 'mainstream' education system (Forlin, 2007). No matter how much effort they put into their studies, the system still fails to provide them with supportive and fair treatment (Forlin, 2007). Through this study, facilitating the parents to voice their concerns and experiences will help to inform my future practice.

Bracketing experience

In a qualitative study, it is important to address personal biases through the bracketing process (Creswell, 2014). My relevant experiences and knowledge as a researcher can enrich my study, but some personal biases should be addressed as they may result in negative consequences, such as the perception of my role of the teacher of ordinary students. It should be noted that Creswell (2014) outlined the term 'backyard research', referring to researchers conducting studies in their own organizations and the consequent need to be aware of the imbalance of power between the researcher and the participants. All participants who were invited to take part in the research were given clear explanations about its nature and every process. Strategies were incorporated to ensure the trustworthiness of the study, and the minimization of bias, including triangulation, and member checking. These will be discussed in detail in the methodology section.

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Research Background

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Parents of SEN students diagnosed with dyslexia

The term 'Dyslexic' is defined as a person with difficulties with word recognition, spelling and decoding abilities (DSM-5, APA, 2013; International Dyslexia Association [EIDA], 2002). Some studies have found that children with dyslexia not only have

linguistic and cognitive deficits, but also face social barriers, e.g. being excluded from and stigmatized by the general public, teachers and also by the school's inclusive policy (Blatz, 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2014; Forlin, 2007; Lam, 2015; Taylor, 2017). Many parents of students with SEN feel that they need to devote much effort to address their children's individual needs than do parents of non-SEN children, e.g. assisting them to memorize vocabulary or develop strategies for reading and writing (Farron-Davis, 2004). The literature has also shown that, at the same time, parents can encounter many school barriers for their children affected by dyslexia, as described in the following section. These barriers may affect parents' mental health, especially when facing children's learning difficulties (McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Multhauf, Buschmann & Soellner, 2016; Taylor, 2017) without support from knowledgeable and trained teachers (McDermott-Fasy, 2010, Taylor, 2017), school collaborative practices (McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Multhauf, Buschmann & Soellner, 2016), and inclusive educational policies (Forlin, 2010).

Hence, family members often need to negotiate or collaborate with schools, to find resources to support them, and to advocate the rights of their children on a daily basis. However, the process of negotiation and collaboration might not be smooth. In order to understand the experience of parents of children with dyslexia further, the main barriers, especially from schools, have been outlined below.

Experiences of parents – School barriers and mental health impacts

<u>School Barriers</u>

Children affected by dyslexia may experience barriers at the school level (McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Multhauf, Buschmann & Soellner, 2016; Taylor, 2017). Their parents thus

need to negotiate with schools to arrange educational and training support (Lam, 2015; Multhauf, Buschmann & Soellner, 2016). At the same time, they also need to advocate for equal opportunities for their children in schools under the inclusive educational policy (Forlin, 2010). In the process of negotiation and advocacy, parents can experience many school barriers, such as negative attitudes of teachers, inadequate knowledge of teachers about dyslexia and limitations of inclusive education (Forlin, 2010; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Lam, 2015; Taylor, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2012).

Teachers' negative attitudes may arise from negative perceptions of children with dyslexia, and they may regard these children as lazy and unmotivated (Lam, 2015; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Van Hove et al., 2009; Yildiz et al., 2012). Lam (2015) found that children with dyslexia were often not welcome to be placed in regular classes. Their parents' opinions are frequently neglected by teachers and other professionals, service providers, counsellors and psychologists (Lam, 2015; Van Hove et al., 2009). Teachers are unwilling to collaborate with parents. Overall, negative attitudes of school teachers are highlighted as the first barrier.

Another problem is teachers' lack of knowledge about children affected by dyslexia. For example, Taylor (2017) stated that teachers might misunderstand dyslexia as a disorder related to behavioral and intelligent problems. This misconception results in a labeling effect. Teachers may label students with dyslexia as less intelligent, lazy and stupid. This kind of perception may contribute to adverse effects in class. Even the children with dyslexia will label themselves. They can begin to believe something is wrong with themselves, resulting in a negative impact on their self-images (Humphrey & Mullins, 2002). Society may conclude wrongly that children with dyslexia have a

lower capacity, and further ignore their potential (Taylor, 2017). Therefore, misconceptions towards dyslexia are emphasized as the second barrier.

Third, with regard to the limitation of inclusive education, parents often facing difficulties associated with protecting their children with learning disabilities in Hong Kong. Forlin (2010) claimed that, although inclusive education had then been promoted by the Education Bureau for more than ten years, there was still a lot of room for improvement to establish an even more inclusive education system. The examination-oriented curricula in Hong Kong do not cater for students with a slower pace than their peers' (Forlin, 2010). Mainstream schools are still failing children with special education needs. Parents of children with dyslexia are helpless and struggle with the currently immature practice of inclusive education (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). Hence, limitations of inclusive education are identified as the third barrier.

Impact of school barriers on the mental health of parents

Due to the abovementioned school barriers, negative attitudes of teachers, teachers' lack of knowledge about dyslexia and limitations of inclusive education, parents of children with dyslexia may have mental health concerns, such as higher stress levels (Multhauf, Buschmann, & Soellner, 2016; Padeliadou & Chideridou, 2013; Scorgie, 2015). Multhauf et al. (2016) pinpointed that the more academic problems the student has, such as conflicts about homework issues and supervision of children learning students, the more stressed the parents will be. Some parents have also said that they can be emotional, overinvolved and have negative perceptions of their children's literacy impairments. (Multhauf et al., 2016). Padeliadou & Chideridou (2013) reported that some parents of children with learning disabilities complained that they were not well-

informed about dyslexia. They sometimes even felt guilty about putting pressure on their children. Scorgie (2015) stressed that advocating for their children can be time-consuming and stressful for parents. Parents of dyslexic children are thus, persistently, under huge amounts of stress and their mental health can be at risk.

Although the mental health of parents of children with dyslexia is adversely affected by school barriers, some studies have indicated that school support and school-parent collaboration can help to reduce these stress-related and mental health issues (Cook, 2017; McDermott-Fasy, 2010). There are indications that, in the field of special education, parent-school collaboration, such as involving parents in their children's decision-making processes in schools, could have positive influences on both parents and students (McDermott-Fasy, 2010). For example, parents should have the right to decide if their children study in group-based or small classes for better special education services (McDermott-Fasy, 2010). In order to eliminate these barriers and alleviate the mental health burdens of parents of children affected by dyslexia, some scholars have suggested that parents and schools should collaborate to support students affected by dyslexia (Cook, 2017; McDermott-Fasy, 2010).

Long-standing international concerns over parent-school collaboration

Parent-school collaboration

Parent-school collaboration is defined as the family and school working together towards a common goal (Esptein, 1992). It has been suggested that parents are the fundamental stakeholders in fostering students' learning processes, especially for those with special educational needs such as dyslexia (Blatz, 2014; Lo, 2008; 2010; Osher & Osher, 2002; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001;).

In comparative studies, it has been suggested that collaboration between families and schools could improve educational outcomes for students with dyslexia in comparison with the parents or school acting alone (Roll-Pettersson, 2007). Once the parents and school collaborate, they have a shared responsibility for socializing and educating the child (Epstein, 1992; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001), and to bring about positive effects on academic performance (Esptein, 1992; Osher & Osher, 2002; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001;) and alleviate parents' stress (Cook, 2017; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Roll-Pettersson, 2007).

Parental involvement can be beneficial to the development of children with dyslexia, for example their self-esteem (Cook, 2017; Roll-Pettersson, 2007; Reynolds & Clements, 2005). Nowadays, parents have an essential role in educating their children (Epstein, 1992; Osher & Osher, 2002). School and families work together as collaborators to address children's mental health (Cook, 2017; Roll-Pettersson, 2007). As equal partners, they can each contribute their own opinions to aid their students' development. Although parent-school collaboration appears to be helpful for parents of children affected by dyslexia (Cook, 2017; Roll-Pettersson, 2007), the existing barriers in collaboration cannot be neglected.

Barriers in parent-school collaboration

Despite all the advantages, parents may also encounter some barriers in collaborative partnerships due to power imbalances between families and schools (Ditrano & Silverstein, 2006; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Osher & Osher, 2002; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001). Parents often feel they are not in an equal position to bargain with teachers and

professionals, e.g. school counselors ors educational psychologists. (Bagley & Woods, 2010; Defur, Todd-Allen & Getzel, 2001; Strnadová, 2006;). McDermott-Fasy (2010) reported that parents felt their inputs were not welcomed by professionals (for example, Dabkowski, 2004). Teachers have been reported as not sufficiently open to the idea of parents' involvement in their children's learning (Duquette et al., 2011; Lam 2015; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Van Hove et al., 2009; Yildiz et al., 2012). Even though parents are invited to attend school meetings, their opinions were often ignored, especially on topics related to inclusive education (McDermott-Fasy, 2010). Professionals, including teachers and educators in special education, may have biases (Duquette et al., 2011; McDermott-Fasy, 2010). The parents' roles in collaboration are under-recognized. These barriers hinder the effectiveness of family and school collaboration.

I have highlighted briefly above some issues related to the experiences of parents of children affected by dyslexia, especially their experiences in parent-school collaboration. The situation of Hong Kong parents of children with dyslexia have not yet been explored. The following section discusses further discoveries from the literature review concerning the experiences of Hong Kong Chinese parents and their parent-school collaboration in supporting their children with dyslexia.

The present study

Research Gap

In spite of the abovementioned international concerns and significant roles played by parents in parent-school collaboration, such studies related to parents of children with dyslexia are scarce and difficult to find in the current literature. It is especially difficult to find such studies in Chinese contexts, such as of Hong Kong. Within the ProQuest

database dated July 2000 to April 2020, in the education, special education or social psychology areas, there were 88,363 publications identified regarding the 'experiences of parents of children with special education needs'. Among these publications, 50,718 from different countries focused on 'autism' and 'attention deficits', (e.g. Brannan & Heflinger from Nashville, US, 2001; Benson & Karlof from Massachusetts, US, 2009; Vogan, Lake, Weiss, Robinson, Tint, & Lunsky from Canada, 2014), and 7,697 publications address the area of 'dyslexia' (e.g. Burden & Burdett, 2005; Gibson & Kendall, 2010).

Only a few of these publications have targeted parental issues (e.g. Dyson, 1996, 2003; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013; Chan, Chan, Cheng, Chow, Tsang, Lee & Lin, 2017). These publications indicate several findings.

Parents of SEN children experience greater stress and adjustment difficulties than their non-SEN counterparts (Dyson, 1996, 2003; Multhauf, Buschmann, & Soellner, 2016). Parents of children with dyslexia are often dissatisfied with school support for their SEN children, even under the inclusive policy in Hong Kong. For example, they are frustrated with improper school decisions about grade retention or expulsion. Other examples are limited instructional support, parent-school communication and exclusion of parental involvement in the special education process in Hong Kong (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013).

Parents of children with dyslexia may receive limited parenting education to understand the disability and educational needs of their children. They often misunderstand or negatively perceive children with dyslexia as having a lower quality of life and

academic expectation (Chan et al., 2017). Some authors have thus suggested to provide support and to involve parents as collaborators in schools. For example, Dyson (1996) suggested that more familial support and intervention would be helpful, while Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer (2013) recommended the enhancement of parent-school collaboration. Chan et al. (2017) proposed that the involvement of both children and parents in teaching and learning might provide better support to the family (Chan et al., 2017).

Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013) and Chan et al. (2017) highlighted the experiences of Hong Kong Chinese parents and claimed that they encountered various difficulties. They recommended further studies of parents' involvement in education, and the parent-school collaboration in supporting children with dyslexia. In fact, if parents are fundamental to the educational success of students with disabilities, then their experiential knowledge in relation to their children and in relation to their encounters with the special education system in schools warrants extensive study. However, up to now, literature specific to the experiences of Hong Kong Chinese parents is rather scarce. The research by Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013) showed neglect of the parental role in inclusive education. Chan et al. (2017) pointed out the importance of parental intervention in future research related to dyslexia, yet there is none on parental roles in the parent-school collaboration in supporting children with dyslexia. The present study addressed this research gap.

By learning more about how the experiences of parents of children with dyslexia are responding to this call for more active participation in their children's schooling, it will be possible to help teachers and researchers to tailor practices and policies to fit the

needs of these key stakeholders. In the following section, the purposes of the study will be highlighted.

Research Objectives:

In line with the background of the study, the objectives were:

1) To examine the unique experience (e.g. emotions) of parents of students with dyslexia in parent-school collaboration process;

2) To examine possible barriers these parents encounter in the parent-school collaboration process;

3) To inform the stakeholders e.g. policy makers, school counselors and educators, about the parents' perspective of parent-school partnerships.

Research Questions:

1) What are the emotional experiences of parents in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

2) What are the barriers these parents experience in parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

Significance of Research

This study will inform

1) parents, teaching staff and professionals about knowledge relating to the experiences of parents caring for children with dyslexia, particularly in collaboration with schools.

2) school professionals (educators, school social worker, school counselors, etc.) about their training for collaboration with parents, and parental education as

well.

3) school professionals about their daily practices of taking care of students with dyslexia, and about the emotional needs of the children's parents.

4) policy makers about the possibilities for modifying educational policy for both parents and their children with special educational needs.

In the following, some terms and language related to special education will be briefly defined.

Terms and language

Some important terms will be used in this study; their definitions, in the context of this study, are below:

Special educational needs

The term 'special educational needs' (SEN) refers to students who are required to have special educational support (EDB, 2013). In Hong Kong, the major SEN types are hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disabilities, intellectual disabilities, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorders, autism spectrum disorders, speech and language impairment, as well as specific learning difficulties (EDB, 2013). The Education Bureau (2017) added mental illness as the ninth type of special education in 2018. 'Children with severe or multiple disabilities attend special schools where they are provided with intensive support services. Other students with SEN are placed in ordinary schools where they can learn with their peers for the full benefits of education' (EDB, 2013). These students can be given support for their special educational needs in their schooling in the context of inclusive education (EDB, 2013).

Specific learning disabilities (SpLD) / Learning disability

'Specific learning disability' (SpLD) is a term to describe persistent difficulties in reading, writing or arithmetic operation, irrespective of intelligence, motivation or socioeconomic or cultural factors (Karande, & Kuril, 2011). 'Specific learning disability' or 'learning disability' is an umbrella term that covers a wide variety of specific learning difficulties. Children with specific learning disabilities normally have academic difficulties in the areas of reading, writing, and/or arithmetic, and fail to achieve school requirements which are suitable for their levels (The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition [DSM-IV], American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

Dyslexia

Dyslexia is a specific learning disability that is neurobiological in origin. It is characterized by difficulties with accurate and/or fluent word recognition and by poor spelling and decoding abilities (DSM-5, APA, 2013; International Dyslexia Association [EIDA], 2002; Lyon et al., 2003; Shaywitz, 2008). Operationally, in this study, students diagnosed with dyslexia are defined as those encountering difficulties with word recognition, spelling and decoding abilities, and normally having deficits regarding linguistic and cognitive abilities without intellectual disability. The numbers of students with dyslexia in public sector ordinary secondary schools in the 2012/13 school year are 9,050 (The Legislative Council Commission, 2014).

Parent-school collaboration

Parent-school collaboration is a partnership relationship involving a number of

stakeholders, including school staff, teachers, parents and other family members. Effective collaboration is built upon mutual trust and respect and shared responsibilities for the education of the children (Epstein, 1992; Minke & Anderson, 2005). Parent-school collaboration is defined operationally as the quality of parents' collaboration with teachers in supporting their children, which might consider how closely and through what channels parents are communicating with teachers.

Organization of the Thesis

The thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter One, Introduction, introduces the researcher's experience, research background, definition of key terms, and organization of the thesis. Chapter Two, Theoretical Framework, discusses the theoretical lens of this study. Chapter Three, Literature Review, addresses the historical and empirical studies about parents of students with SEN generally and dyslexia specifically. Chapter Four, Methodology, discusses the research method used in this study. Chapter Five, Results, presents the findings of the research. Chapter Six, Discussion and Limitations, studies the findings and limitation of the research, while Chapter Seven, Conclusion, winds up the research study with recommendations for policy, training, practice, and research.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the context of the research, including the researcher's background and study focus. The purpose and significance of the research were summarized briefly, and the research gap and research questions highlighted. At the end of the chapter, the terms and specific vocabulary used throughout this thesis, as well as organization structure of the thesis, were presented.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Framework

In this section, the theoretical framework of the study will be developed. The reasons for selecting the following concepts/models: Kübler-Ross and Kessler's (2014) Five Stages of Grief Cycle, Reindal's (2008) Social Relational Model, and the parent-school collaboration concept will be introduced.

Locating the theoretical lens

A qualitative approach was adopted for this study. According to Creswell (2013), some qualitative researchers preferred studies without any theoretical lens, yet more and more researchers use a theoretical lens or framework to inform qualitative research, especially for studies of marginalized groups. The theoretical lens provides an overall perspective to orientate the study of marginalized groups which plays as a "backcloth and rationale for the research that is being conducted" (Bryman, 2012, p.20). A theoretical lens assists the researcher to shape inquiries, and guide and inform the whole research process. This lens forms the types of questions and the focus of the literature review, explains the collection and analysis of the research data, and provides directions for recommendations for practice and for change.

Maxwell (2013) advised qualitative researchers to adopt the implementation of concept maps. A concept map is an important tool for a visual display of the theory underpinning a study. My conceptual framework has been inspired deeply by three lines of knowledge, including concepts and models, namely: 1) the Kübler-Ross and Kessler's (2014) Grief Cycle Model (five stages of grief cycle); 2) Reindal (2008)'s Social Relational Model, and 3) concepts related to parent-school collaboration. These lines of literature and

concepts/models helped me to understand the experiences of informants who go through emotional experiences (the grief cycles) in the process of bringing up a child with a learning disability (dyslexia). Furthermore, the interplay of a variety of factors, ranging from the social, educational and medical aspects to the collaboration between school and parents, is also manifested.

<u>Reasons for selecting Kübler-Ross & Kessler's (2014) five stages of grief cycle:</u>

I chose this model because the grief cycle can provide a systematic interpretation of the emotional responses experienced by parents of children with dyslexia. The model has spelt out two concepts to understand parents' emotional responses to having a child with a disability: loss and grief.

First of all, losses can be classified as primary or secondary (Harrington-LaMorie, 2013). Primary loss refers to the person or things we have lost for the first time, while secondary loss refers to other losses due to the primary loss (Harrington-LaMorie, 2013), for example, a wife facing the loss of her economic resources after her husband has died in a car accident, or an old man who has lost his health also losing hope for his later life.

Second, grief is an emotional response to those losses (Neimeyer & Currier, 2009; Wilson, 2012). People have a variety of emotions, like shock, anger and depression (Neimeyer & Currier, 2009; Wilson, 2012). Elisabeth Kübler-Ross was a Swiss doctor who spent a lot of time studying dying people. In 1969, she wrote a book, *On Death and Dying* which addressed a series of emotional states in response to losses, often

called the grief cycle. In 2014, Kübler-Ross, co-authoring with David Kessler (2014), expanded the grief cycle from a focus on death of a person to any form of personal loss, such as losing financial income or a job.

Understanding the emotional response of parents

Oekerman (2001) first suggested the use of the grief cycle model to understand the emotional responses of parents whose children have disabilities (Oekerman, 2001). Parents who experience the birth of a child with a disability (e.g. learning disability or dyslexia) will go through a grief process. Delany (2017, p.97) specifically addressed parents experiencing the process of "grieving the loss of normal" in the diagnosis of dyslexia. Levi (2017) claimed it is unavoidable for parents to experience an emotional cycle, e.g. strong and painful emotions, with distress also not far from the surface. This can continue throughout life, from the emergence of symptoms of dyslexia to diagnosis and the process of coping in school. As Oekerman (2001, p.10) stated, "When the child is born and parents learn their baby has a disability, these expectations undergo a radical change. It could even be said that something dies." Parents react with emotional responses, such as shock, anger, depression, like confronting the fact that someone beloved dies, that is grief (Oekerman, 2001). From acknowledging to acceptance of a child with dyslexia, parents normally encounter a process of the emotional cycle, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, which can be explained by the grief cycle.

The Kübler-Ross grief cycle consists of five stages, denial, anger, bargaining,

depression and acceptance. Loss is defined as losing someone or something important e.g. the death of a loved one, at some point in our lives; grief is an emotional reaction to that loss (Harrington-LaMorie, 2013; Kübler-Ross, 1973; Kübler-Ross & Kessler, 2014; Neimeyer & Currier, 2009; Wilson, 2012). Researchers often apply this model to study disability issues (Allred, 2015; Keller & Honig, 2004). For example, Allred (2015) cited Kübler-Ross's grief cycle (2014) and recognized the importance of understanding the disability in early phase.

Keller and Honig (2004) shared the view that parental responses to having children with disabilities seem to precipitate a sequence of grieving stages, including denial of the severity, bargaining with God, anger, despair, and reconciliation. Parents of children with dyslexia confront similar experiences of loss (Delany, 2017; Haley et al., 2013). For example, the participants in Delany's (2017) first viewed dyslexia as a disability, experienced feelings of grief and guilt during their children's school years, and frustration and hopelessness during the diagnosis and intervention. Haley et al. (2013) adopted a lens of grief model to examine parents' perceptions of disability and paternal stress in families.

Five stages of grief cycle to understand parents' emotional process of acceptance of a child with a disability

The five stages of the Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) grief cycle, can be related to parents of children with dyslexia. In the first stage, denial and shock are the main emotions (Allred, 2015; Delany, 2017; Haley et al., 2013; Keller & Honig, 2004; Oekerman, 2001). People often deny the diagnosis of dyslexia (Delany, 2017; Haley et

al., 2013). At the stage of denial or shock, parents' resistance to accepting the diagnosis is similar to refusing to believe a beloved one has passed away. A common reaction can be denial of the truth (or the diagnosis) and an obsessively compulsive wish that the child had never been diagnosed with dyslexia (Delany, 2017; Haley et al., 2013). Anger is the second stage of the cycle. People are angry to receive the diagnosis of dyslexia (Haley et al., 2013; Oekerman, 2001). Such anger might extend to higher level in which the criticize themselves for having such a child, and may ask questions about the reason of giving birth to a child with dyslexia (Delany, 2017; Haley et al., 2013). Bargaining is the third stage. People will negotiate and try to figure out ways to ease the pain and hurt. They will try to do anything to get rid of feeling the pain of the loss (Haley et al., 2013), for example, they may think that if they were to devote more time to teach their child, the child might catch up with peers, or wonder if the child could grow up to be a sportsman or craftsman rather than focusing on academics. In the stage of bargaining, parents might think about 'what if'; some may even think that if they had not taken their child to be diagnosed, the child might not have dyslexia (Haley et al., 2013). The feeling goes beyond the stage of denial, they feel guilt and try to negotiate the situation. Depression is the fourth, and a necessary, stage in the grief cycle. People feel depressed after the loss. Parents at this stage will encounter sadness and helplessness, hopelessness about dealing with the dyslexia (Haley et al., 2013). They believe their children with dyslexia are suffering in the darkest days of life. This stage is a necessary process of the entire grief cycle. After going through a long period of depression, the acceptance process emerges. This final stage is about accepting the diagnosis of dyslexia, and recognizing it is a permanent situation. After depression, parents finally need to confront the truth and deal with the child. Parents often ruminate the possibility of coping with dyslexia in the daily lives of their children, especially academic issues

(Haley et al., 2013). Finally, they accept the diagnosis emotionally and successfully learn to cope with barriers. They begin to live again, work out their coping strategies.

Strengths and limitations of the model

The grief cycle model has a number of strengths, such as providing a picture of parents from denial to acceptance of children with dyslexia, which helps in the following ways: First, people can know their current stage of grief and understand their emotional reactions. Second, they can look for ways to face grief in response to their own stages. However, the model has limitations as well.

Although this model describes the emotional experiences of parents of children with dyslexia, it is inadequate to explain the parental responses to disabilities accurately, including those affected by dyslexia (Roll-Pettersson, 2001). Besides depression or anxious feelings, parents may find meanings out of the loss experiences. For example, David Kessler (2019), one of the co-authors with Kübler-Ross, contributed to the traditional five stage of grief by developing a sixth stage, meaning. He described finding meaning a necessary addition to grief and healing from tremendous loss. After experiencing trauma and loss, people generally have new insights and meanings from the trauma, affecting the rest of their lives. For example, a person who is over-enthusiastic for work may re-experience that life is more than just a job because of the loss of ability to work.

Other limitations have been observed. First, the grief cycle focuses mainly on emotional processes, but it does not mention the environmental factors with which the person

suffering interacts. Parents of children with dyslexia cannot escape the biases and prejudices in their social context, including family and the education system (Hurford et al., 2016). Second, the grief cycle model relates to a person confronting loss, however dyslexia is not just an issue related to a loss, but also related to the social and cultural context (Hurford et al., 2016; Reindal, 2008; Van Hove, 2009). Van Hove (2009) the grief model's focus on a medical model which ignores the possibilities of social and cultural factors. Rothaupt and Becker (2007) traced back to the development of grief models, and concluded that even though the changing multicultural factors were immersed in the updated grief model, it remained focusing on acceptance that the loved one had died.

Therefore, for the purpose of this study, the social relational model was chosen to compensate for these limitations.

Reasons for selecting Reindal's (2008) Social Relational Model:

The social relational model is an integrated model which retains the core concept of social models and, to a certain extent, elements of medical models of disability (Farrell, 2012; Reindal, 2008; Wang, 2019). Reindal (2008, p.143) explained that in the social relational model "the main issue in the social model is retained: the contingency and interplay between the effects of impairment and the phenomenon of disability."

The limitations of using either a medical model or social model of disability

According to Reindal (2008, p.139), medical models of disability see 'disability' as "a

personal tragedy due to reduced function". Reindal (2008) defined disability as biological difficulties and medical issues. People with disabilities deviate from the norm in this model. The medical model views the disability as a biological and medical problem, hence the disabilities are only treated as a physical problem. For example, this model, seeing a person who is immobile, only understands that they have problems with walking, playing football, etc. because they have no legs. On the other hand, the social model of disability proposes that "the relation between reduced function and the experience of disability is contingent on environmental, social and cultural factors"; the social model is not just about individual functional impairment based on the disability. Followers of this model believe that people with disabilities are facing persistent social, environmental, and cultural prejudices and discrimination, not just their own disabilities (Oliver, 1996, 2004; Shakespeare, 2006, 2008). For example, the social model regards a person who is immobile and believes that the discrimination and prejudices they suffer in life, such as not being able to participate in various ball sports, is the main problem.

Reindal (2008) claimed that the medical model can only serve as a necessary condition to illustrate the occurrence of personal disability, but not to explain the disability issues in the social context. For example, people with physical disabilities cannot walk like other people. This not only affects their daily lives, but also implicates various prejudices. For example, employers may refuse to hire them because they cannot walk, to regard them as inefficient at work. There are social barriers imposed on them. Likewise, Oliver (1996, p.38, as cited in Reindal, 2008) argued that "the social model is not an attempt to deal with the personal restrictions of impairment but the social barriers of disability.". Shakespeare (1994, p.296) claimed, "the social model needs to be re-conceptualized: people with impairments are disabled, not just by material

discrimination, but also by prejudice. This prejudice is not just interpersonal; it is also implicit in cultural representation, in language and in socialization." For example, some people in the community will use words like "mental" and "idiots" to describe people with dyslexia, even criticizing their parents for having such children. Some teachers even ask these students to stay away from them. The social model can contribute towards understanding the social inequalities and institutional barriers imposed on people with disabilities. However, it seems to overemphasize the barriers faced by the person with disabilities from social institutions and to overlook the biological impairments that are the focus of medical systems (Reindal, 2008, 2009).   For example, if a person is immobile and cannot walk, the social model only concentrates on understanding the social problems associated with this. According to this viewpoint, all of the problems come from the prejudice and discrimination of others.

Integrated model: social relational model

Reindal (2008, 2009) defined the social barrier as "barriers" or "restrictions" created by any kind of social constructions to disabilities, from denying their opportunity to access resources or preventing them from achieving or accomplishing their goals. These oppressions are values and norms constructed by non-disabled people for the people with disabilities, to regulate and suppress the lives of people with disabilities. Reindal (2008, p.144) stated that social restrictions "restrict and hinder the individual in realizing vital goals and achievements in life." This means that social barriers are imposed on the top of impairments. For example, suppose a person with limited mobility goes visit friends. While it is easy for his friends to visit each other, he needs to rely on a wheelchair that has to be maneuvered on stairs and stone roads, etc. (Reindal, 2008). In

this example, stairs and stone roads are the barriers of a person with limited mobility in our society. Reindal (2008) claimed that the social model attempts to address the social barrier and constrictions rather than considering impairments of reduced function, e.g. cannot walk without legs. The social relational model integrates social and medical models, and addresses both social barriers and impaired functioning. For the social relational model, "disability is viewed as 'a form of social oppression involving the social imposition of restrictions of activity on people with impairments and the socially engendered undermining of their psycho-emotional well-being'" (Thomas, 1999, p.60, as cited in Owens, 2015). For example, it will take into account the disability, such as inability to walk, and also considers the social barriers imposed in our society, such as prejudice and discrimination by others, and even stone roads and stairs established by non-disabled people.

In this study, is the social relational model was applied to illustrate my perception of disability issues. Although the social relational model provides us with more focused perspectives on social and medical aspects of disability issues, this model also has its limitations (Reindal, 2008, 2009).

1) Strengths of the social relational model

The social relational model integrates the strengths of both the medical and social models. Recognizing the advantages of the social model, the social relational model recognizes that social injustice and institutional barriers are serious difficulties for people with disabilities. This model recognizes that the main factors limiting the lives of people with disabilities come from society, policy and culture. For example, a person

with limited mobility has to face the stairs constructed by society; in constructing the stairs, there was a failure to fully consider the needs of all people and provide barrier-free facilities. Reindal (2008) considered that social barriers are sufficient conditions to clarify the interplay between the reduced function and the phenomenon of disability within a social relational model.

Drawing on the advantages of the medical model, the social relational model recognizes that the difficulties of people with disabilities include defects in their physical functions (Reindal, 2008, 2009). Defects in one's own body function constitute a basic difficulty. For example, a person with a visual impairment is unable to see text. Even if he has the ability to understand words, he lacks the visual ability to see them, so he has no premise to understand them. Therefore, physical defects are the basic conditions for the obstacles.

To date, many studies have embraced the social relational model to explain the lived experiences of people with disabilities (for example, Gougeon, 2010; Snoddon, & Underwood, 2013). Gougeon (2010) applied the social relational model to study people with autism and their sexuality; Snoddon & Underwood (2013) utilized it to portray the lived experiences of deaf people. The social relational model regards the necessary condition of the obstacles of the people with disabilities as their own reduced function, and regards the barriers imposed by the social and cultural construction on them as the effects of reduced function and sufficient condition (Reindal, 2008, 2009).

2) Limitations of the social relational model

The social relational model is a rather comprehensive one. It can explain the

experiences and difficulties of people with disabilities, but the critics believe that it is insufficient.

Limitations of using the dualistic perspectives of the medical and social model

The development of the social relational model comes from an integration of the medical model and the social model. But this model over-emphasizes the dual understanding of these two models and ignores the other possibilities of understanding people with disabilities (Hoshika, 2015). Hoshika (2015, p.116) outlined that "any attempt to change social attitudes and values must be rooted in practicality". In order to study the situations of people with disabilities, it is necessary to have an in-depth understanding of their daily lives, and the practical context of their society and culture, such as school and educational contexts, where this research was situated. To investigate the school lives of students with disabilities and their parents, a model related to education settings should be involved.   To address the shortfalls of the social relational model, and to address this need to relate to educational settings, a parent-school collaboration model was introduced.

Reasons for selecting parent-school collaboration concept

Importance of parent-school collaboration

There are several points highlighting the importance of parent-school collaboration. First, parents often take a critical role in the growth of their children through their school lives (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Grothaus, & Jonas, 2010; Simpkins, Davis-Kean

& Eccles, 2005). Understanding parents and their collaboration with school can depict the actual experience of a supporting situation (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Grothaus, & Jonas, 2010; Simpkins, Davis-Kean & Eccles, 2005). Second, family is a powerful factor affecting a child's academic performance. Parents' attitudes towards school and children can definitely influence their child's development, for example of their self-esteem and self-confidence (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001; Grothaus, & Jonas, 2010; Simpkins, Davis-Kean & Eccles, 2005). Third, some studies specific to special education (e.g. Alison et al., 2019; Farron-Davis, 2004; Nordin, 2016) have identified the role of parents as a key factor in supporting their children with special education needs.

Parent-school collaboration is a concept by which parents become partners to cooperate and collaborate with teaching staff with regard to school issues (Cheng, 2005; Epstein, 1992; Shriberg, 2013). It refers to "the interest parents show in their children's schooling by encouraging them to do well in school, helping them with the school work, appreciating when a child does well in school, talking with the teachers about the child's progress among others" (Heckman, 2006, as cited in Mwaura, 2013, p.3). This concept originally started from the 1970s, and Epstein (1992) developed his Overlapping Spheres of Influence Model based on previous research studies. The argument underpinning this model is when that parents, educators and others in the community work together to support their students, better outcomes will result (Epstein, 1992; Shriberg, 2013). A partnership relationship involves a number of stakeholders, including school staff, teachers, parents and other family members. Effective collaboration builds upon mutual trust and respect and shared responsibilities for the education of the child (Epstein, 1992; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Osher & Osher, 2002).

Supplementary to the previous two models, the parent-school collaboration concept definitely broadened my theoretical lens to incorporate the experience of parents' involvement in school issues, which is related to the school life of their children with dyslexia.

Epstein (1992) was proposed the concept of parent-school collaboration. She claimed that the role of parents should go beyond school and home, thus resulting in positive effects on both parents and teachers. Parents should be invited into a partnership among homes, schools and communities (Epstein, 1992). Epstein (1992) outlined that students are situated in a caring environment when the family and school work as a partnership to share responsibilities, and to utilize the resources and time to care and help the child. Parent-school collaboration promotes the cultivation of productive connections that can help students in all aspects, including self-esteem, attitudes and academic achievement (Epstein, 1992; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Osher & Osher, 2002). Therefore, it is not surprising that, for special education, parent-school collaboration becomes more important as a way to support children with special educational needs in their school lives. The establishment of positive collaboration between parents and schools has been found empirically to be a critical element in supporting students with special education needs (Hornby, & Lafaele, 2011). Epstein (1992, 1993) proposed six types of involvement opportunities for families and schools: 1) parenting is the basic principle of helping children; 2) effective channels should be designed for school-to-home communication; 3) parents should be recruited and organized to help with schoolwork; 4) learning at home provides more information to parents about how to educate children; 5) school-based decision making should include parents, and 6) there is a need for collaboration with the community, working with resources from society and the

community to strengthen students' development. Nordin (2016) applied this model to investigate the levels of parental involvement of children with individual education plans. Farron-Davis (2004) used it to analyze the ways in which parents of students with disabilities addressed their individualized needs.

Parent-school collaboration provides a broad concept of the relationship between family and school, particularly the roles of parents and teachers in a partnership. However, this concept alone was not enough to elaborate upon the essence of parents' experiences for this study, as it overlooks the influence of social and environmental factors which are highlighted by the social relational model, and the emotional considerations which are illustrated by grief cycle.   Hence, all three of these models were combined to form a theoretical framework for the study that addressed a combination of social and environmental, emotional and parent-school partnership factors.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the theoretical lens that framed my present study. I have explained the selection of the grief cycle, social relation model, and parent-school collaboration, which together framed the major concepts to inform my research study. In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of parents' experiences caring for their children with dyslexia, the grief cycle provided a closer picture of the different stages of the emotional cycle parents experience, the social relational model enabled me to comprehend the complexity of social and medical perspectives on disability issues facing parents of children with dyslexia, and finally the parent-school collaboration was

used to illustrate the tension among some key stakeholders, especially in dealing with the relationship between parents and teaching staff. This theoretical framework, and the following chapter literature review, provided me with the foundation of the study that guided my data collection and analysis.

Chapter 3 Literature Review

This chapter begins by considering three themes relating to the overall topic: 1) parents of children with dyslexia; 2) emotional concerns of parents of children with dyslexia and 3) studies of parental involvement. The social cultural context of Hong Kong will also be presented.

1) Parents of children with dyslexia

There is plenty of evidence to support that the role of parents is important in the growth of their children (Al Lamki, 2012; Bonifacci et al., 2014; Dyson, 1996, 2003; Multhauf et al. 2016; Padeliadou & Chideridou, 2013; Rimkute et al., 2014). Parents can do a lot to help their children with dyslexia, for example by offering guidance and support during difficult times; educating them and inspiring them by giving some example of famous role models affected by dyslexia, e.g. Albert Einstein, Mozart, etc. (Al Lamki, 2012). In order to illustrate the important roles of parents, , seven subsections will be addressed below: 1) parents' perceptions of dyslexia and children's self-esteem; 2) parents' stress from having a dyslexic child; 3) support programs for parents to relieve emotional burdens; 4) parental expectation of children with dyslexia; 5) parents of children with dyslexia in Hong Kong; 6) parents of children having other learning disabilities in Asian countries, and 7) cultural forces affecting parental perceptions and expectations.

1.1)   Parents' perceptions of dyslexia and children's self-esteem

A parent's perception of dyslexia has an important influence on the self-esteem of

children with this disability (Al Lamki, 2012; Singer, 2008). Al Lamki (2012) pointed out that children with dyslexia might be misperceived as having poor memories and thus the inability to read and recall words. He also believed that this could result in poor self-esteem. Due to a lack of understanding, accommodating teaching and learning opportunities, children with dyslexia might have unsatisfactory academic performances and hence less opportunities to feel satisfied and a sense of achievement or success (Al Lamki, 2012). If parents perceive them as being 'poor performers' or 'inferior', children's self-esteem might be affected. Singer's (2008) study with 60 Dutch students found that these students relied most strongly on the support from their parents. If their parents were unable to support them well, their self-esteem was threatened. Glazzard (2010), drawing on a study of nine students with dyslexia, added that if parents can be supportive to their children, their self-esteem will be higher.

1.2)   Parental stress of having a dyslexic child

Bonifacci et al. (2014, 2019) associated parental stress with parents' perceptions of having dyslexic children; if they regard the child as "difficult", they might feel highly stressed. For example, if they perceive dyslexia as a major learning problem, and believe that it will affect learning performance, then they would be more likely to feel pressured. In addition, Dyson (1996, 2003) pointed out that parents of children with dyslexia suffer from greater stress than parents of children who do not have it. Bonifacci et al. (2014) found, from a study of 80 parents, that parental pressure mainly came from how the parents interpreted their children's disabilities. For example, if they thought that dyslexia could not be cured, and believed that it was hard to study smoothly with this difficulty, then they would be bothered and stressed about their children's academic

development. Dyson (1996) investigated 19 participants, and found that parents of children with learning disabilities experienced greater stress than others. For example, they felt frustrated in seeking appropriate placements for their children, receiving negative report cards, negotiating with school personnel, spending a lot of time on assessment and accepting their child's disability. Dyson (2003) again examined another 19 children with learning disabilities, and revealed that their growth was related to their parents' stress. The more stress a parent feels, the more difficulties the child will experience.

Special or even excessive attention on children with dyslexia is a common source of parental stress, for example taking care of their homework or negotiating with teachers. (Brock & Shute, 2001; Earey, 2013; Karande et al., 2009; Multhauf et al., 2016; Padeliadou & Chideridou, 2013;) Parents may feel anxious and frustrated to deal with their children with dyslexia (Al Lamki, 2012; Bonifacci et al., 2014, 2019). Multhauf et al. (2016), in a study of 39 dyslexic children and their mothers, found that parents' most common source of conflict was in dealing with their children's homework. Similarly, Padeliadou & Chideridou (2013) conducted a study with 15 parents, and revealed that they experienced emotional strain, stress and pain due to high time-related demands involved in taking care of their children with dyslexia.

1.3)   Support programs for parents to relieve emotional burdens

As a support initiative for parents facing emotional difficulties, such as strain, stress, pain, or depression., group-based programme can help to relieve their emotional burdens (Brock & Shute, 2001; Multhauf et al., 2016.). For example, Multhauf et al.

(2016, p.1209-1210) described a group programme that included "knowledge about prevalence, causes, diagnosis, comorbidity and progress of dyslexia", and "identification of self-blame and excessive expectations on the academic progress of the child, as well as raising the parent's empathy for the child's difficulties in reading and writing". Likewise, after studying 57 mothers of children with learning disabilities, Brock & Shute (2001) claimed that parents' stress and frustration came mainly from helping their children with their homework. They concluded that intervention grouping for parents can significantly relieve parents' stress. The content of their intervention included information about learning disabilities and coping strategies for children. Kuravackel et al. (2018) offered an 8-week parent intervention programme to 33 families, and found that the parents who received the intervention reported a reduction in parenting stress and an increase in competence.

1.4)   Parents' expectations of dyslexic children

Rimkute et al. (2014) identified gender differences in parents' expectations of parents for their children with dyslexia. Since the mothers often act as the main caregivers and participate in facilitating and motivating the child on a daily basis, Rimkute found that the mothers had higher expectations than the father regarding their offspring's future education (Multhauf et al., 2016; Rimkute et al., 2014.) Mothers may expect that children with disabilities will overcome obstacles, and catch up with their peers in academic achievement. Multhauf et al., (2016) pointed out that mothers were rated as being at high risk of a low quality of life due to overinvolvement in their children's academic affairs. In a questionnaire study conducted by Rimkute et al., (2014) with 265 parents of children in the seventh grade and again when they were in the ninth grade, it

was found that both fathers' and mothers' expectations of dyslexic boys were lower than of dyslexic girls.

All of the above western studies addressed the parents of children with dyslexia regarding: 1the effects of parents' perceptions on the children's self-esteem, 2) parental stress associated with having a dyslexic child, 3) support programs for parents to relieve their emotional burdens and 4) parents' expectations of children with dyslexia. However, it is not known whether these patterns are the same in Asian contexts, since similar studies related to parents of children with dyslexia in Asian countries, especially in Hong Kong, are rather scarce.

1.5)   Parents of children with dyslexia in Hong Kong

There are only a few Asian studies related to parents of children with dyslexia, especially in Hong Kong (e.g. Chan et al., 2017; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014;). These studies had the following themes: 1) parents went through emotional difficulties in supporting their children with learning disabilities; and 2) there is limited parent education provided for parents. I will elaborate these themes one by one.

First of all, parents have been found to experience emotional difficulties in supporting their children with learning disabilities (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014). The emotions they have been found to encounter include discouragement, disappointment and frustration. For example, Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer (2013) found that in a sample of nine mothers, around half had issues with children not completing their homework and being extremely disorganized. All of the mothers had encountered

significant difficulties in handling their children's academic affairs. Parents often feel discouraged and frustrated in dealing with their children's academic issues. For example, they may spend a lot of time with their children to review dictations, but the children still cannot fulfill the school expectations due to their special educational needs. In addition, this study also revealed several themes which these parents' children had experienced: increased risk of school expulsion, adverse effects of grade retention, effects of a chain of factors on school support and poor home–school relationships (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013). Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer (2013) also pointed out that the parents in their study were disappointed because the parental role was not respected in the home-school relationship, and also their children did not receive proper provision at school. For example, their schools did not have individual education plan for dyslexic children, or did not consider their difficulties carefully when making decisions about grade retention. The same researcher conducted a similar qualitative study in 2014, with 25 Chinese parents of children with dyslexia. The results indicated a three-stage journey of parental advocacy: (1) parents' emotional adjustment; (2) parents moving on to advocacy; and (3) parents advancing from advocacy to activism (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). The parents experienced emotional ups and downs throughout this three-stage journey of parental advocacy, from resistance to acceptance of having a child with dyslexia, and resulting in embracing their unique parenting role. These authors also referred to the high value placed on academic performance in Chinese cultures due to an elite-oriented education system and Confucian culture (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014).

Second, there are limited parent education programs. In a study conducted by Chan et al. (2017), 49 of 81 parents, 49 had children with specific learning difficulties and 32

had typically developing children. It was recommended that the former group should be provided with education about their children's disabilities and educational needs since it was found that these parents often misunderstood their children or perceived them negatively as having a lower quality of life and academic expectations. Chan et al. (2017) suggested that parents should be involved in treatments and school affairs, which might provide better communication and support within the family.

Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013) and Chan et al. (2017) also pinpointed the need for further studies of parents' involvement in education. Parental involvement refers to the involvement of parents as a part of stakeholders in the school (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992, 1995, 1997, 2005). Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013) recommended that parental roles must be valued, and that positive partnerships between parents and school should be established. In fact, if parents are fundamental to the educational success of students with disabilities, then there is a need to find out more about their experiential knowledge and emotional responses in relation to their children.

Above all, there are so few studies of dyslexia in Asia, so in the next section, I need to look to the studies of other disabilities.

1.6)   Parents of children having other learning disabilities in Asian countries

The previous section has described the few Asian studies regarding parents of children with dyslexia (e.g. Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014; Chan et al., 2017), but, in order to shed further light on the situation in the Asian context, it is also worthwhile to consider studies of parents whose children have other learning disabilities (Tait et al.,

2016; Chen, 2016; Chang, Chiu, Wu, & Gau, 2013). The themes addressed by these studies are: 1) diagnostic service arrangements and impacts (Tait et al., 2016) 2) parental caregiver pressure (Chen, 2016) and 3) parenting impact (Chang, Chiu, Wu, & Gau, 2013).

On the theme of diagnostic service arrangements and impacts, in Hong Kong, Tait et al. (2016) interviewed 45 parents whose children had autism spectrum disorders (ASD), specifically to investigates these parents' experiences in supporting ASD children. They found that parents' perceptions of their children's disabilities were subject to the cultural background and diagnostic services, and that lengthy waiting times for diagnosis affected the parents' emotional well-being negatively. As well, Chinese parents tend to hide the fact that they have a SEN child, because they feel ashamed and are afraid to lose face. In fact, Forlin et al. (2008) explained that this viewpoint is so heavily entrenched in Chinese culture that it is unacceptable to expose a child's disability to non-family members.

On the theme of parental caregiver pressure, Chen (2016) interviewed 16 parents of child with ASD or Down's syndrome in Beijing and Chengdu, China. The study found that parents often experienced stress in multiple ways regarding their children, including worrying about their being bullied in school, or their futures due to poor academic performance.

On the theme of parenting impact, in Taiwan, Chang, Chiu, Wu, and Gau (2013) compared fathering and father-child relationships of 296 children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) and 229 children without AD/HD. They found that

the fathers of the children with AD/HD tended to be less caring and more over-protective to their children, and were more depressed due to more behavior problems at home and less family support.

1.7)   Cultural forces affecting parental perceptions and expectations

1.7.1) The parent role affected by unique cultural factors

According to studies in Hong Kong and other Asian Pacific areas (e.g. Forlin, 2010; McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014), the Confucian culture is unique and influential in Asian countries. Some features of Confucian culture greatly affect parents' perceptions and expectations about a child's learning disabilities. For example, respecting authority, maintaining harmony and emphasizing academic performance are all associated with family glory. (Forlin, 2010; McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). McBrayer and McBrayer (2014) claimed that such cultural values also affect parents' attitudes to working with school personnel and other professionals (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). For example, parents tend to accept and position themselves in a subordinate role in collaboration with professionals. In addition, Confucian culture also promotes the differentiation of parental roles, with the mother taking the key role in educating the child while the father is the main financial supporter in the family (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014; Wang et al., 2016).

1.7.2) Parental experience and elite-oriented education system

With its emphasis on Confucian culture, the Hong Kong education system is an elite-

oriented system which highlights academic performance (Forlin, 2007). Children with learning disabilities are often marginalized from mainstream education due to poor academic performance. Hence, it is not surprising that Asian studies have revealed Chinese parents tending to feel frustrated and depressed about the academic performance and future development of their children with learning difficulties.

The main differences between western and Chinese studies described above are 1) that the role of parents is affected by unique cultural factors and 2) that parents' experiences are associated with an elite-oriented education system. These distinctions were considered to be important for the data analysis and discussion of the current study.

2) <u>Emotional concerns of parents of dyslexic children</u>

After giving a broad view of the emotional concerns experienced by parents of dyslexic children, this section will focus on more specific details of these emotional concerns, in both western and Asian contexts. There have been several studies in the literature regarding the emotional concerns of parents of children with dyslexia (e.g. Bonifacci et al., 2014; Chien & Lee, 2013; Earey, 2013; Elliott & Nicolson, 2016; Karande et al.,2009; Keller & Honig, 2004; Multhauf, Buschmann, & Soellner, 2016; Padeliadou & Chideridou, 2013; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014; Scorgie, 2015; Strnadová, 2006, Taylor, 2017), but only Chien & Lee, (2013) and Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer, (2014) targeted the Hong Kong context. Western studies have focused mostly on the parents' particular emotions, such as shock or denial, associated with supporting their offspring with dyslexia, while Hong Kong studies limited to parents' transitional support, such as from sorrow to acceptance. This will be explained in detail

in the following three subsections: 1) reluctance to accept the diagnosis of dyslexia; 2) high-level stress of parents when supporting their children and 3) frustration about negotiating with school personnel.

2.1) Parental acceptance of the diagnosis of dyslexia

Some studies have indicated that it is not easy to accept a child who has been diagnosed with dyslexia, and that parents experience different kinds of emotions, like those indicated in the grief model (Al Lamki, 2012; Delany, 2017), such as 1) denial and shock; 2) anger; 3) bargaining; 4) depression; and 5) acceptance of the process (Al Lamki, 2012; Delany, 2017; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014; Strnadová, 2006). Emotions can be presented in several ways.

First, parents choose to refuse and defend the diagnosis. Once the diagnosis is confirmed, they will not accept it. In the early stage, they tend to defend and find an excuse. Based on the grief cycle model, parents are thus experiencing the denial stage. Al Lamki (2012) stated that caregivers might not easily accept the child has a learning disorder, they tend simply to define the problem as laziness. "Such a scenario is likely to trigger frustration not only for the affected individual but also for the caregiver." (Al Lamki, 2012, p.270). Strnadová (2006, p.38) described an experience of "reaction to the diagnosed disablement"; parents of children with dyslexia refused to accept the diagnosis of dyslexia. They rationalized that their children were suffering learning disabilities, however the instant of the diagnosis, it is really hard for parents to accept.

Second, parents feel shock and hopelessness for their children. Parents have great

expectations for their children, but the diagnosis largely destroys this hope. Delany (2017) stated that parents facing the results of their children's diagnosis can be shocked and traumatised. Parents think that their children are no longer perfect. The diagnosis destroys their hopes for their children's futures. They probably encounter sudden emotional shock and pain.

Third, many parents of children with dyslexia experience sorrow and self-blame. Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2014, p.100) proposed a concept of emotional adjustment which included "the process from feeling sorrow and self-blame to the beginning of reaching out for help." They interviewed 25 parents of children with specific learning difficulties (SpLD) and found that these parents normally experienced journeys of emotional adjustment. In the initial stage, parents will experience self-blame and sorrow once they are informed about the diagnosis. However, they will face it, and ask for help eventually.

Overall, the previous research has indicated that it is not easy for parents to accept a child's diagnosis of dyslexia. They can experience different kinds of emotions in the accepting process, such as shock, anger, sorrow of depression (Al Lamki, 2012; Delany, 2017; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014; Strnadová, 2006).

2.2) High-levels of stress for parents supporting their children

Supporting children with learning disabilities requires a lot of time and effort. Many parents are under great pressure (Bonifacci et al., 2014, 2019; Chien & Lee, 2013; Earey, 2013; Karande et al.,2009; Keller & Honig, 2004; Padeliadou & Chideridou, 2013;

Scorgie, 2015). The consensus from these studies is that stress and other emotions (e.g. anxiety, depression) can arise from their perceptions of dyslexia and their involvement in academic issues.

First, let us look more closely at the issues of stress and emotions derived from parents' perceptions of dyslexia. Bonifacci et al. (2014) compared 40 parents of children with dyslexia and 40 parents of children with typically developing children and reported that the former's stress levels were affected significantly, particularly because of the belief that the dyslexia would have negative impacts on their children's academic performances. Bonifacci et al. (2019) continued her study with 38 parents of dyslexic children and 27 parents of children with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. She concluded that it is necessary to be concerned about the stress levels of parents of dyslexic children.

Chien and Lee (2013) investigated 25 Hong Kong couples whose children had dyslexia. They found that these parents were emotionally and physically drained due to dealing with their children's academic issues. To facilitate effective parenting and relieve parents' stress, Chien and Lee (2013, p.16) suggested that "holistic and individualized needs assessment and education should be provided to address each parent's biopsychosocial and cultural needs in relation to caregiving". Apart from concerns about academic achievement, negative perceptions of dyslexia include the view that caring for the dyslexic child will place overwhelming demands on the family relationship and the parents' careers, thus leading to increased parental stresses such as, anxiety or depression (Chien & Lee, 2013).

Second, stress also comes from the everyday experiences of addressing their children's academic issues. Chien & Lee (2013) pointed out that parents felt stressed if they had frustrating experiences with their children's education. In a comparative study, Keller and Honig (2004) found that parents of children with learning disabilities had more stress than parents of children without learning disabilities, and that mothers showed higher levels of stress and depression than fathers. This is probably because mothers are the main caregivers for children with dyslexia. Bonifacci et al. (2014) stated that mothers became emotionally and physically drained because of highly involvement of their children remedial education. Padeliadou & Chideridou (2013) conducted a focus-group interviewed with 15 parents of children with specific learning disabilities and found that parents often felt worried and guilty, which led to them exerting pressure and providing inadequate leisure time activities because they were too much involved in intensive supervision of their children's homework and learning. Similarly, Scorgie, (2015) studied 28 parents of children with a range of disabilities and found that they required relatively more time and energy to parent children with dyslexia. Karande et al. (2009) investigated 150 parents of children with SpLD and found that the time they could spare to talk with and counsel their children could affect parental stress, and most of them were worried about their children's futures. Earey (2013) had a similar result in an English study, with parents being stressed from devoting a great deal of time to providing academic support for their dyslexic children.

In summary, the existing literature has revealed that the pressure involved in spending a lot of time and effort supporting children with learning disabilities is great for many parents (Bonifacci et al., 2014, 2019; Chien & Lee, 2013; Earey, 2013; Karande et al., 2009; Keller & Honig, 2004; Padeliadou & Chideridou, 2013; Scorgie, 2015). This

stress comes mainly from the parents' perceptions of dyslexia and their interventions in their children's academic affairs.

2.3) Frustration in negotiating with school personnel

There have been some indications from previous studies that parents are often frustrated in their attempts to negotiate with teachers about their children's educational needs (Alison et al., 2019; Chien & Lee, 2013; Defur et al., 2001; Elliott & Nicolson, 2016; Lam, 2015; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014; Roll-Pettersson & Mattson, 2007; Scorgie, 2015; Taylor, 2017). These frustrations arise particularly from interactions with school personnel, especially negotiating for appropriate special education support for accommodation in daily academic affairs.

First, parents of children with dyslexia often negotiate with school personnel for appropriate special educational support. One barrier is the negative attitude of school personnel (Chien & Lee, 2013; Lam, 2015; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013). Parents are stressed not only about dealing with academic issues, but also with devoting time and effort to deal with negative attitudes of school personnel (Chien & Lee, 2013). Negative attitudes of school personnel include those teachers and ancillary staff who are uncooperative and misunderstand the child's learning disability. In a study with dyslexic adults, Lam (2015) identified several relevant themes exemplified by comments such as: 'Being stigmatized and judged by teachers, and "I never had a teacher who didn't think I was lazy and unmotivated. They made judgments about me that were not true" (Lam, 2015, p.61). According to Lam, these dyslexic adults felt that, as children, they were not welcome in regular classes.

In addition, Poor-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013) conducted a qualitative study with 9 parents of children with dyslexia to measure the status of support services in Hong Kong. They found that: 1) There was limited instructional support of parents, limited for example to extra examination time provided to their children; 2) There was a lack of progress monitoring, with the majority of parents never having been invited to take part in school affairs; 3) Large classes meant that teachers were only able to do the minimum for children with special needs (Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, p. 67); 4) Schools wanted to retain children for an extra year in a grade level, although one case was reported where the school backed off about this when the parent persisted; and 5) Schools are too passive about locating resources for students with special educational needs.

Roll-Pettersson and Mattson (2007) examined the perspectives of mothers of children with dyslexia in a Swedish school system. They found that these mothers were required to negotiate with teachers because the schools often failed to identify the children's difficulties and provide appropriate support. Defur et al. (2001) studied 28 parents of children with disabilities who experienced participation in the school affairs. These parents' opinions were devaluated and ignored: "Many teachers just don't care about their adolescent children or how they do in school / they are not talking about my 15-year-old child's future, just [persuaded] she moves to the next school" (Defur et al., 2001).

Second, parents often negotiate with school personnel about routine academic affairs. Because of   all that is involved in supporting children's academic and learning issues,

parents of children with disabilities often take up several roles, including information gatherers, advocates and teachers, and thus need to deal with multiple tasks relating to their child (Scorgie, 2015). Lengthy meetings with teachers, answering calls from school, helping children with assignments, dealing with missing assignments, etc. are time-consuming and frustrating (Scorgie, 2015). Elliott & Nicolson (2016, p.91) described that "parents of children with reading disability often worry that teachers will attribute their child's difficulties to stupidity or laziness and thus fail to offer the sympathetic challenge that is necessary." Parents need to negotiate with teachers about daily academic issues relating to their child's learning difficulty, for example, careless mistakes on assignments, or time extensions allowed or quizzes or exams. Taylor (2017) found that parents of dyslexic children needed to devote much time and effort to explaining the nature of dyslexia, due to teachers' misunderstanding dyslexia as a disorder related to behavioral and intelligence problems (Taylor, 2017). Parents are also required to negotiate with schools about children with dyslexia in daily and routine education needs. Alison et al. (2019) studied 18 parents and guardians of children with special education needs and found that they often needed to negotiate with school personnel about the support services available to their children, such as teaching assistants. Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer, (2014) added that, due to learning difficulties, many mothers chose to quit their jobs in order to take care of their children and have time to negotiate with schools. The situation can cause frustration for parents as they attempt to negotiate for appropriate special education supports and about routine academic matters (Alison et al., 2019; Chien & Lee, 2013; Defur et al., 2001; Elliott & Nicolson, 2016; Lam, 2015; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014; Roll-Pettersson & Mattson, 2007; Scorgie, 2015; Taylor, 2017).

In the above section, the emotional concerns of parents of children with dyslexia have been addressed in terms of their initial reluctance to accept the diagnosis of dyslexia, the high levels of stress they experience in supporting their children, frustration caused by attempts to negotiate with school personnel. Due to the barriers imposed by school personnel, parents are required to negotiate with them for appropriate special education support and arrangements for routine academic affairs. Overall, the emotional concerns related to parents of children with dyslexia have been highlighted in this section.

3) Studies of parental involvement

As mentioned in the conceptual framework for this study, parental involvement is increasingly common and important. Fan and Chen (2001) reviewed the development of parental involvement over the past three decades, starting with the Epstein (1987, 1992, 1994), and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995)'s parental involvement models. They concluded that the definition of parental involvement has not been not clear or consistent. Fan and Chen (2001) commented that Epstein's model widely recognized different levels of parental involvement while Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) focused on why and how parents' participated in and influenced thier children's education outcomes. Parental involvement can be defined in many ways (Fan and Chen, 2001). However, the common feature of the Epstein and Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) models are parental involvement in the school setting to support their children's educational progress (El Nokali et al., 2010).

There are clear indications in the literature that parents should be empowered and more involved in their children's education in order to improve the children's outcomes

(Alison et al., 2019; Defur et al., 2001; McDermott-Fasy, 2010). Some studies reported that parental involvement could benefit students with disabilities, as well as the parents and the school (Defur et al., 2001; Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992, 1995, 1997, 2005; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Scorgie, 2015; Ng, 2002). Three connected themes have been identified in relation to this: awareness of parental roles (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992, 1995, 1997, 2005; Ng, 2002; Scorgie, 2015; Ng, 2002); establishment of parent-school collaboration (Alison et al., 2019; Bagley & Woods, 2010; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Osher & Osher, 2002; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Strnadová, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Wallace & Walbarg, 1991); and mutual benefits of the parent and school (Cheng, 2005; Christenson et al., 2005; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; McDermott-Fasy, 2010). Each of these three themes will be discussed in the following sections.

3.1) Awareness of parental roles

The theme of awareness of parental roles means that parents realize their roles in their child's school setting. Parental involvement is an essential ingredient in today's education systems all over the world (Cheng, 2005; Ng, 2002; Scorgie 2015;). Cheng (2005) reviewed the development of parental involvement in Hong Kong and claimed that the parental role has become one of the key factors affecting the school performance. He stressed that parents were starting to pay increasing attention to their roles in working with schools (Cheng, 2005). Scorgie (2015) interviewed 28 parents of children with disabilities, and found they were concerned about their children being placed in special classes rather than normal ones. These parents realized that they had the ability and responsibility to change the school arrangements. Scorgie (2015, p.42)

quoted parents' statements: "There's a serious barrier when you go to the school. They always put the special education [classrooms] in the back… so teachers and students think, you're at the back of the school. You're automatically special ed." These parents were also aware of social labelling from peers and teachers in the social aspects of school activities, such as involvement in clubs or musical activities. They had an important role to play for their children and that they had to fight for the children's special education needs to be met (Scorgie, 2015). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (1992, 1995, 1997, 2005) also stated that the role of parents was increasing in importance, for example their participation in school issues such as detention meetings or lesson observations (Ng. 2002).   Parents are increasingly invited to join in school meetings (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1992, 1995, 1997, 2005; Ng, 2002). Parent-teacher associations offer a way for parents to be involved in daily school practices (Ng, 2002). Overall, there is support in the literature that parents are increasingly aware of their educational role.

3.2) Establishment of parent-school collaboration

The theme of establishment of parent-school collaboration refers to building a strong partnership between parents and schools (Alison et al., 2019; Bagley & Woods, 2010; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Osher & Osher, 2002; Patrikakou et al., 2005; Strnadová, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Wallace & Walbarg, 1991). Most of these authors have argued from social and educational perspectives that school guidance offices, professionals, and special education coordinators should cooperate well with parents to support children with special needs (Defur, Todd-Allen & Getzel, 2001; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Patrikakou et al., 2005;

Strnadová, 2006; Turnbull & Turnbull, 2001; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Wallace & Walbarg, 1991). McDermott-Fasy (2010) employed a qualitative study with 14 parents of children with special education needs, aimed at investigating the family-school partnerships in special education. While other studies have focused on partnerships as channels for parents to change schools' policies, arrangements and decisions, in McDermott-Fasy's (2010) study, parents of children receiving special education were concerned about teacher effectiveness, honesty and trust which affected the quality of the partnership with the school. Patrikakou et al. (2005) recognized that parent-school collaboration could enhance the child's academic performance, social relationships and also emotional control. With effective collaboration, parents become more influential, on an equal platform with teachers to deal with their children's educational issues (Patrikakou et al., 2005). Bagley & Woods (2010) and Strnadová (2006) both described parent-school collaboration as necessary for making critical decisions about student admission affairs and teaching arrangements. Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey (2010) emphasized the importance of parents' involvement in processes including intervention and accommodation adjustments. Once parent-school collaboration is well established, it is likely that school personnel will become more co-operative, thus saving parents time and effort (Cheng, 2005; Walker, Shenker & Hoover-Dempsey, 2010; Wallace & Walbarg, 1991). In summary, the studies reviewed in this section have emphasized the need for parent-school collaboration to be established for parents of children with disabilities.

3.3) Mutual benefit of parent and school

The theme of mutual benefit of the parent and school means that parent-school

collaboration has positive influences on both the parents and the school (Cheng, 2005; McDermott-Fasy, 2010). Numerous positive effects of parent-school collaborations for both parents and teachers have been reported (Cheng, 2005; Christenson et al., 2005; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; McDermott-Fasy, 2010).

3.3.1) Benefits for parents: One benefit of the parent-school partnership for parents is that they can be more effective in parenting their children (Cheng, 2005; Henderson, 1988; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Nowell & Salem, 2007, Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Stone, 2016). The following section describes four benefits, namely strengthened communication of information, better understanding of the school's approach to education, access to parenting education, and opportunities for the parents to contribute to the school.

First, when there is effective parent-school collaboration parents can gain more information and react promptly to matters regarding their child's education (McDermott-Fasy, 2010). Without collaboration, they often take a passive role in communicating with schools rather than being active in decision making, for example being the last party to be informed about special arrangements for their children to take examinations. With more access to information, parents can reply promptly and take part in discussions with schools and thus can become more confident, skillful, sensitive and responsive to their child's developmental needs (Cheng, 2005; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Nowell & Salem, 2007).

Second, parents can understand better the school's educational approaches for their children. In a collaborative model, they can become familiar with school routines and

know more about the education their children receive. Stone (2016) studied parental intervention on the effectiveness of reading comprehension and found that students' performance was increased after intensive parental intervention in their schooling. Because of this better understanding, parents are also equipped better to nurture their children at home in ways that are relevant to their school performance (Henderson, 1998).

Third, parents can be trained through parent-school collaboration. Olsen and Fuller (2008) claimed that they can learn some teaching techniques from school, such as the usage of positive reinforcement (Olsen & Fuller, 2008.) They can also interact and discuss with their children in compliance with the school curriculum (Olsen & Fuller, 2008). This can provide a useful reference for parents to design their parenting at home.

Fourth, parents can make contribution to schools. Olsen and Fuller (2008) d promoted a family-driven approach to school collaboration. The family-driven approach refers to "service delivery where goals are established in true partnership with families" (Olsen & Fuller, 2008, p.53). Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) reviewed literature about parental involvement. They found that recent empirical studies had underestimated the importance of parental roles and parental self-efficacy in explaining parental involvement. Based on these findings, Walker et al. (2010) conducted a survey of 853 parents and found that parental involvement was motivated mainly by the social relationship context, especially when invited by teachers or children.

3.3.2) Benefits for teachers: Teachers can also be more effective in teaching their students as a consequence of parent-school partnerships (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars,

2000; McDermott-Fasy, 2010; Nowell & Salem, 2007; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Steh & Kalin, 2011). These benefits can occur in three ways, better understanding of their students, well designed teaching strategies, and good morale and higher ratings by parents.

First, with effective parent-school collaboration, teachers can have a better understanding of their students. Nowell and Salem (2007) pointed out that they can receive information about their student's routine practices at home and also understand the students' families. The more understanding teachers have, the more they can address students' special needs in their teaching. This also has positive impacts on teachers' willingness to listen to parents' voices, especially those with special educational needs (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000; Nowell & Salem, 2007).

Second, teachers can design their teaching strategies more effectively. In a mixed qualitative and quantitative study, Hellendoorn and Ruijssenaars (2000) invited 27 Dutch adults with dyslexia, aged 29 to 39, to describe their experiences. Most had experienced social problems with peers at school. They did not have friends in their school days (Hellendoorn & Ruijssenaars, 2000). Hellendoorn and Ruijssenaars (2000) and Steh and Kalin (2011) claimed that, with parental involvement, teachers could tailor-made various teaching strategies for these students, for example by organising supportive social interaction.

Third, parent-school collaboration can have positive effects on teachers' morale and the respect they receive from parents (Steh & Kalin, 2011). When parents are involved, they and the teachers share the responsibilities of educating their children (McDermott-

Fasy, 2010; Olsen & Fuller, 2008). Nowell and Salem (2007) found that better communication between parents and teachers could enhance the relationship with parents of children with SEN (Nowell & Salem, 2007.)

Overall, the research on parent-school partnerships has indicated that, as long as parental involvement is valued, it can be beneficial to both parents and schools (Cheng, 2005; Christenson et al., 2005; Olsen & Fuller, 2008; Nowell & Salem, 2007; Walker at el, 2010). Parental involvement in schools can generate better educational outcomes and achieve mutual benefit for both parties.

3.4) Barriers to parent-school collaboration

Parent-school collaboration has many benefits, such as making both teachers and parents more understanding about the students' needs. three major barriers to parent-school collaboration have been identified.   These are marginalized parental opinions (Alison et al., 2019; Bagley & Woods , 2010; Blok et al., 2007; Christenson et al., 2005; Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004), negative attitudes of school personnel (Dabkowski, 2004; Kim and Morningstar, 2005; Nowell & Salem, 2007), and structural and psychological barriers to collaboration (Christenson et al., 2005; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2012, 2014; Stein & Sharkey, 2015).

First, regarding marginalized parental opinions, Alison et al., (2019), Blok et al. (2007) and Lindsay & Dockrell (2004) pinpointed that school personnel often failed to listen to parents' opinions, which hindered the collaboration between family and school. Alison et al., (2019) conducted a study involving 18 parents and guardians of children

with special education needs, and revealed that school personnel often ignored their requests. Blok et al. (2007) conducted an in-depth survey with 21 couples, and revealed that parents tended to take part in face-to-face communication with teachers rather than receiving printed information. Parents are aware of their important role of social participation and inclusion in school, however their expectations may not be not realistic in mainstream schools (Blok et al., 2007) and their opinions are often ignored by school personnel (Blok et al., 2007). Bagley & Woods (2010) conducted a 3-year longitudinal investigation into the interaction between parents and schools and revealed that schools' decision making is often privileged, so that the needs and preferences of parents can be marginalized. Christenson et al. (2005) found school teaching staff unwilling to disclose school information to parents and disrespectful about parents' participation, which caused the relationship between the parents and the school to deteriorate.

Second, to investigate negative attitudes of school personnel, Nowell and Salem (2007) studied seven parents of students who had participated in special education mediation programs. One parent commented "I'm dealing with all of these people and finding out that the ones that I thought I could trust, I can't trust. It's definitely set up for a very negative feeling toward anything at this point" (Nowell & Salem, 2007, p.308). The school did not show any trust in the parents; another respondent expressed "Now they won't tell me anything. They used to tell me things—now it's nothing… That's it. Because I made waves. I know that's what it is" (p.308). Kim and Morningstar (2005, p.97) conducted a study with 25 family groups and found that "barriers to family involvement included professional attitude", including "blaming the family for the child's difficulties" (Kim & Morningstar, 2005, p.97). In confronting such barriers,

parents felt mistrusted (Dabkowski, 2004; Kim & Morningstar, 2005).

Third, Christenson et al. (2005) described structural and psychological barriers which were dynamic and interrelated: "Understanding family constraints is seminal to educators developing sensitivity and responsiveness to families' needs and desires for their children's schooling experiences" (Christenson, p. 89). Structural barriers included "lack of role models, information, and knowledge about resources; lack of supportive environments and resources; economic, emotional, and time constraints; and child care and transportation" (Christenson, p.88), while psychological barriers included "feelings of inadequacy, low sense of self-efficacy; adopting a passive role by leaving education to schools; linguistic and cultural differences; suspicion about treatment form educators; and perceived lack of responsiveness to parental needs or desires" (Christenson, p. 88). Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2014, p.103) also described psychological barriers that caused parents of children with specific learning difficulties to feel "intimidated during interactions with, and disrespect from, these authorities (e.g. educational bureau, educational psychologists, etc.)". Stein and Sharkey (2015, p.6) gave an example of structural barriers, "when parents have made the decision that their child is best served as a general education student, they have exercised their right to involvement in their child's education. However, this may go against the recommendations of school professionals". School professionals might take the opposite opinions to parents. Christenson (2005) concluded that these barriers hindered parents and teacher collaboration.

Overall, parents encounter different types of barriers from schools and professionals that inhibit the building of relationships with the school. The main barriers are

marginalized parental opinions (Alison et al., 2019; Bagley & Woods, 2010; Blok et al., 2007; Christenson et al., 2005; Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004), negative attitudes of school personnel (Dabkowski, 2004; Kim and Morningstar, 2005; Nowell & Salem, 2007;), and structural and psychological barriers to collaboration (Christenson et al., 2005; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2012, 2014; Stein & Sharkey, 2015).

In summary, the literature has indicated that parental involvement could enhance the awareness of parental roles, establish parent-school collaboration and achieve mutual benefit between teachers and parents. Benefits to parents are that they can = be more effective in parenting their children, better understand their children's school education, be well-trained, and contribute to their children's schools. Teachers can benefit by having a better understand of their students, information that enables them to design their teaching strategies more effectively, good morale, and respect from parents. However, previous studies have also pinpointed three major barriers to parent-school collaboration, namely marginalized parental opinions, negative attitudes of school personnel and structural and psychological barriers to collaboration.

4) <u>Social cultural context in Hong Kong (Asia Pacific region)</u>

As mentioned in the conceptual framework for this study, there has been very little research about the impact of family-school collaboration on students with dyslexia in the social cultural context in Hong Kong. Literature specific to the experiences of Hong Kong parents of children with dyslexia is scarce (e.g. Li, 1998, 2006; Ma, Lai, & Pun, 2002; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014; Tsai & Lena, 2009, Tsang & Leung, 2005). In other words, it is necessary to address this research gap. In the following section, more will be explained about Chinese parents of children with dyslexia and

parent-school collaborations in the Hong Kong context.

4.1) Parent-school collaborations in the Hong Kong context

Academic databases, such as ProQuest, have identified only a handful of studies (e.g. Li, 1998, 2006; Poon-McBrayer, 2012; Tsang & Leung, 2005) of parent-school collaboration and dyslexia in Hong Kong. Most of the existing ones focused on difficulties other than literacy (e.g. Ma, Lai, & Pu, 2002; Tsai & Lena, 2009), but they did reveal some interesting findings.

Ma, Lai, and Pun (2002) conducted a qualitative study with the parents of 24 children experiencing psychiatric consultation. Their study examined the parents' distress and their involvement with a child having an emotional or behavioral problem. The results of this study shed light on the need to enhance counselling services and professional help to relieve parental distress.

Tsai and Lena (2009, p.151) conducted a qualitative study with 49 parents to investigate their feelings about their intellectually disabled children participating in sport. They found that most parents sought inclusive sport involvement for their children but they often gave up their efforts quickly due to rejection by staff and other participants.

It should be noted that the studies described above were not aimed at parents of children with dyslexia. Only a few studies were identified in the databases about parent-school collaboration and dyslexia. These studies are reviewed as follows.

Tsang and Leung (2005) conducted a home-school cooperation project for students with dyslexia in three secondary schools in Hong Kong. The parents' knowledge of special education needs helped the teachers to devise better support services, and the project also used positive psychology to improve tripartite interactions among teachers, parents and students.

Poon-McBrayer (2012) investigated service delivery for students with dyslexia in Hong Kong through their parents' experiences. Ten mothers participated in this study and revealed that barriers occurred in parental involvement, such as rejection by school personnel rejected and minimized parent participation in school. Poon-McBrayer (2012) also identified were various forms of school exclusion, e.g. incomprehensive school practices of intervention, limited support from student-support teams, and ineffectiveness transition services in schools.

4.2) Chinese parents of children with dyslexia

As stated in pervious sections, studies related to parent-school collaboration and dyslexia are scarce in the Hong Kong context (e.g. Li, 1998, 2006; Poon- McBrayer, 2012; Tsang & Leung, 2005). Only several studies of Chinese parents of children with dyslexia were found (e.g. Deng et al., 2001; Huang & Gove, 2012; Lam et al., 2012; Poon-McBrayer, 2012; Poon-Mcbrayer & Mcbrayer, 2013, 2014). These studies highlight Confucianism has a strong influence in the Chinese culture. Confucianism emphasizes five types of basic human relationship, parent–child, emperor–subject, husband–wife, elder–younger, and friend–friend (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). These concepts are central to everyone in Chinese context (Huang & Gove, 2012).

4.2.1) Importance of harmonious concept

Through the emphasis on these five basic interpersonal relationships, the Chinese culture focuses on maintaining harmonious interpersonal relationships. The harmonious concept of Confucianism has contributed to the development of special education in China, for example because of the focus on helping and caring for people with disabilities (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014).

4.2.2) High expectations for education

According to Confucianism, families place a high value on their children's education, which can lead to prosperity and respect for the entire family (Huang & Gove, 2012; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). Chinese parents believe educational achievement can lead to upward social mobility for their children. Parents thus play a dominant role in educating their children (Huang & Gove, 2012; Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014) and are willing to sacrifice unconditionally to educating their children, for example by quitting their jobs, moving home to a district with a better learning environment, and negotiating with school personnel and professionals for reasons far beyond medical support (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014).

4.2.3) Social welfare concept of special education in a hierarchical system

The ancient Chinese political system created a strict hierarchical order, and individuals with disabilities were at the bottom of this hierarchy (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). Deng et al. (2012, p.296) added that "professionals, parents, and other personnel have had little influence on national policy regarding special education, and they have never formed advocacy groups as in the West". Confucianism emphasizes respect for

authority and maintenance of harmony, which might affect parents' attitudes to working with professionals and school personnel (McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). Deng at el (2012, p.296) concluded that "under the influence of Confucianism, the Chinese have been educated to respect authority, obey rules, and accept their status within society, and, coincidentally, the centralization of imperial power traditionally dominated the feudal dynasties for centuries …… although progress has been made in every aspect of the lives of people with disabilities, China is still far from being a culture that involves wide acceptance and awareness of disability". Chinese culture regards children with disabilities as individuals who should have access to social welfare or medical support but not social inclusion (Deng at el, 2012).

In summary, the research reviewed here has shown that parents of students with special education needs often encounter various difficulties. Research on family-school collaboration has focused mostly on studies other than dyslexia, but these studies indicated barriers to family-school collaboration that could also apply to dyslexia. Although the unique Asian Confucian culture advocates taking care of people with disabilities, it also fails to meet the ideas of social inclusion. This situation provided a basis to address a gap in the research gap by exploring the experiences of parents of children with dyslexia in Hong Kong regarding family-school collaboration.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the existing literature on the emotional concerns of parents of children with dyslexia and their involvement with their children's schools. The section about the parents' emotional concerns highlighted three aspects of their

experiences: the emotions associated with accepting the diagnosis of dyslexia, the high level of stress induced in providing parental support, the frustrations experienced in trying to negotiate with school personnel. The sections on parental involvement outlined an awareness of parental roles, establishment of parent-school collaboration and mutual benefits for parent and school. Finally, three major barriers to parent-school collaboration were described: marginalized parental opinions, negative attitudes of school personnel, and structural and psychological barriers to parent-school collaboration. The social cultural context in Hong Kong was introduced to illustrate the development of parent-school collaboration related to children with dyslexia in the Asia Pacific region. This led to identification of the research gap that became to focus of this study and led to the formulation of the research questions, interview protocols and the collection and analysis of data.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This chapter begins by re-stating the purpose and research questions of the study (Please refer to Chapter 1). The rationales are then explained for selecting a qualitative research paradigm consistent with my personal background and the nature of the study population. This is followed by the discussion of insider and outsider biases, the reasons for selecting a phenomenological research approach and the use of subjectivity, reflexivity and bracketing. Detailed research procedures, including ethical procedures, recruitment of informants and the methodology of phenomenological research are presented. This chapter concluded with a description of the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

Research Objectives:

- To examine the unique experience (e.g. emotions) of parents of students with dyslexia in parent-school collaboration process;

- To examine possible barriers these parents encounter in the parent-school collaboration process;

- To inform stakeholders e.g. policy makers, school counselors, educators about the parents' perspective of parent-school partnerships.

Research Questions:

- What are the emotional experiences of parents in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

- What are the barriers these parents experience in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

1)   <u>Rationales for selecting research paradigm</u>

1.1)   Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a set of common beliefs about the knowledge and philosophical assumptions which interpret social reality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The literature highlights a number of theoretical paradigms that can underpin research design, including positivist, postpositivist, interpretivist or constructivist, transformative and pragmatic (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

According to Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), a research design based on positivist and postpositivist approaches refers to scientific research based on the rationalistic and empiricist philosophy, such as propounded by Aristotle, Francis Bacon, John Locke, August Comte, and Emmanuel Kant. Positivists aim to examine a theory or describe an experience through observation and measurement to predict and control forces that surround us (Creswell, 2014; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In contrast, postpositivists work from the assumption which any piece of research is influenced by well-developed theories apart from the one which is being tested (Cook & Campbell, 1979; Creswell, 2014). Postpositivists perceive the world as "ambiguous, variable and multiple in its realities" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p.195) what may be the truth for one person or cultural group may not be the "truth" for another" (O'Leary, 2004, p.6).

Researchers adopting interpretivist and constructivist approaches have the intention of understanding the human experience. They perceive reality as "socially constructed" (Mertens, 2005, p.12). Interpretivist and constructivist researchers tend to rely upon

"participants' views of the situation being studied" and recognize their participants' background and experience (Creswell, 2014, p.45). Creswell (2014) pointed out that interpretivist and constructivist researchers focus on specific contexts in which people live, situate and work to understand their social, historical and cultural settings. Creswell (2014, p.45) concluded that "qualitative researchers seek to understand the context or setting of the participants through visiting this context and gathering information personally. They also interpret what they find, an interpretation shaped by the researcher's own experiences and background."

Researchers adopting a transformative approach insist that their research studies be intertwined with politics and contain an action agenda to change the lives of the participants. Creswell (2014) claimed that both interpretivist and constructivist paradigms not go far enough to advocate participants to change their marginalized situations, so a transformative approach often addresses some important social issues, such as empowerment, inequality, oppression, domination, suppression, or alienation. Transformative research "provides a voice for their participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives" (Creswell, 2014, p.46). A pragmatic approach does not commit to any philosophy or reality (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). Instead of focusing on methods, researchers address all approaches to understand the research problem (Creswell, 2014). Pragmatism utilizes multiple methods, different worldviews, assumptions and forms of data collection and analysis. All of the above theoretical paradigms have their own particular ontologies, epistemologies and methodologies (Creswell, 2013; Fisher, 2010).

1.2)   My selected paradigm: The Constructivist Research Paradigm:

The constructivist research paradigm was employed in my study (Creswell, 2013). I am going to explain the reason for selecting this paradigm in terms of three aspects, namely: ontology, epistemology and methodology (Creswell, 2013; Fisher, 2010).

Ontology is defined as "what is reality" (Creswell, 2013, p.56). This refers to the nature of reality and its characteristics (Creswell, 2013). Constructivist research assumes the existence of multiple, value-laden realities. Constructivists believe that human beings construct meanings in the way people engage with the world. They recognize the subjective meanings of participants, which are varied and multiple, "leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas" (Creswell, 2013, p.42). The goal of research is thus reliant upon the views of the participants (Creswell, 2013; Fisher, 2010; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). In my study, I, as a researcher, recognized all participants' backgrounds and experiences which shaped their own interpretations about having children with dyslexia; for example, parents may have had frustrating or traumatic experiences of handling diagnostic, academic or mental health issues of their children with dyslexia, and such experiences may constitute their knowledge and meaning-making of having a child with dyslexia.

Epistemology is defined as "what counts knowledge and how knowledge claims are justified" (Creswell, 2014, p.41). Here, there are two focus points related to meanings and knowledge. First, knowledge and meanings of a phenomenon in the research are constructed by both the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014) and Maxwell (2013) referred to the knowledge of the world, which was inevitably constructed by us on our own. In this research, the participants 'voiced' their

experiences of bringing up children with dyslexia, and the researcher attempted to make sense of their experiences. Meanings were thus constructed. Second, meanings and knowledge are often constructed in a specific context. Constructivist researchers also focus on the specific contexts in which the participants live and work in order to understand the participants' settings (Creswell, 2014). My study was underpinned by the belief that the meanings and knowledge about children with dyslexia are inevitably constructed subject to their specific social, educational and cultural development processes.

Methodology is defined as "how is the research conducted" (Creswell, 2014, p.56). Regarding methodology, constructivist researchers intend to interpret the meaning of the participants' experiences, which are shaped by personal, historical and cultural factors (Creswell, 2014). This informs the process of the research. Qualitative studies often involve some emerging themes which are shaped by the researcher's experience while collecting and analyzing the data. The methodology also involves interview questions, data analysis processes, etc. During the data analysis, the researcher gathers information from the participants and this enriches and details the emerging. The details of the methodology of this study will be introduced later part in this chapter.

2)   Rationale for selecting a qualitative research approach

2.1) The justification for using qualitative research

There are several reasons for using a qualitative study, including that it enables: 1) the study of a marginalized community (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013); 2) a detailed

understanding of the issue from the informants' perspective (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013); 3) the minimization of the power relationships between the researcher and participants (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013); and 4) understanding of the contexts and settings around the informants (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

2.1.1) The study of a marginalized community

Qualitative research can ensure that subjects have enough space to express their experiences, especially if they belong to a marginalized community that may not have very much opportunity to uncover their experiences (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Qualitive research can provide informants with enough space to express their own experiences.

2.1.2) A detailed understanding of the issue from the informants' perspective

Qualitative research generally involves an interview process and a lot of communication (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). Not only do the interviewees have enough space to respond to questions, but generally they can also have the opportunity to do so in depth. The researcher can have a detailed understanding of their study topic from the informants' perspective.

2.1.3) The minimization of the power relationships between the researcher and participants

Unlike quantitative research, the qualitative researcher maintains an equal relationship with the interviewee (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). The interviewee's expressions and responses are the main content of the research. Throughout the research process, the researcher cannot change or modify the content of the interviewees' expressions,

only interpret it. The power relationship between the researcher and the interviewee is minimized.

2.1.4) Understandings of the contexts and settings around informants

An important characteristic of qualitative research is that it can help to understand the contexts and settings around informants (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). The contexts and settings around informants might be critical factors affecting how they interpret their own experiences. In my research, the experiences of parents of students with dyslexia were also related to the entire education environment and Asian culture.

Some writers (e.g. Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013) have suggested an important criterion for researchers to consider in conducting qualitative research methodology: a match between the researcher's worldview and personal training background and the research approaches (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013).

2.2) The researcher's worldview and personal training background

Maxwell (2013) explained that researchers should be aware of their personal backgrounds, goals and experiences which can shape and influence the nature of the research. My personal goals for this research arose from my personal background as a counseling teacher in a secondary school, where I have been working with the parents of children with dyslexia. These experiences motivated me to understand more about the parents' experiences, from multiple perspectives, not only medical and clinical. My interests in the topic of children diagnosed with dyslexia, their parents' experiences and the phenomenon of their routine hardships have developed from my concern for the

well-being and best interests of these children and their parents. Maxwell (2013, p.38) indicated two other goals that are relevant to this study, 'the practical goal' and 'the intellectual goal'. The former of these refers to accomplishing something (Maxwell, 2013, p.38), while the latter is concerned with understanding something (Maxwell, 2013, p.38). These goals also guaranteed my motivation to complete the proposed research.

<u>My professional and personal background</u> guided me through the research process, to match the characteristics and the justifications of qualitative research outlined above:

1) My career as a coordinator of special education in a local school enabled me to connect with the research target groups, children with dyslexia and their parents, and thus to accomplish the research;

2) My perception of children diagnosed with dyslexia has been built and shaped by my routine work. Children with dyslexia are often marginalized in our current elite-oriented 'mainstream' education system (Forlin, 2007). No matter how much effort they put into their studies, the system still fails to provide them with supportive, fair treatment (Forlin, 2007). Through this study, facilitating the parents to voice their concerns and experiences has helped to inform my future practice;

3) My education and counselling training background is another key factor (Please refer to Chapter 1, p.2 to p.3 on my background). My educational background has equipped me with a good understanding of special education issues. My relevant working experiences and knowledge learnt as a researcher can enrich my study, but some

personal biases needed to be addressed as they may have resulted in negative consequences. Creswell (2014) outlined the term 'backyard research', referring to researchers conducting studies in their own organizations and the consequent need to be aware of the imbalance of power between the researcher and the participants. All participants who were invited to take part in the research were given clear explanations about its nature and every process. Some techniques were adopted to prevent conflicts of interest or dual roles, for example, no informants recruited had any other interests with me, thus allowing them to feel free to be reflective. To ensure the qualitative validity and minimize the bias, validation strategies were incorporated, including triangulation and member checking.

The researcher's own 'worldview' is an important factor affecting the selection and implementation of a suitable research approach (2013, p.42). Creswell (2013) pointed out that social constructivists believe "individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work" (p.44). Individuals' perceptions of the world and its meaning are unique, varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for a complexity of views. The goal of the research also relies very much on the participants' views of the situation being studied, which is in line with the qualitative approach. Crotty (1998) insisted that "human beings construct meanings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p.45).

As mentioned earlier, my personal background and my personality drove me to complete the entire research. Creswell (2013) stresses that researcher should also be aware of their own 'powers' in negotiating every aspect of the research. During my research, I needed to be aware of the 'power' of my dual role, as teacher and researcher,

and to be considerate of the diversity of the different informants. For example, I anticipated that the informants might have very negative perceptions of teachers' capacity to handle students with special education needs. I needed to reflect that, although I am a teacher, I may have negative feelings about this opinion, but as a researcher, all types of experiences of the informants should be respected and taken into account. In addition, I believe that the meaning of the world can be diverse, unique and varied for different individuals. The nature of my personal background and worldview directed my selection of a phenomenological study and qualitative research approach, and guided me to be a reflective and constructivist qualitative researcher.

Although my worldview and personal training background match the rationale of qualitative research approach, I needed to be aware of the power relationship due to my dual identity as a researcher and a teacher. In the following, a discussion between insider and outsider researchers will be addressed.

2.3) Awareness of <u>insider and outsider biases in constructivist qualitative research</u>

The concept of the insider and the outsider research in qualitative studies was important to the constructivist paradigm of this study, because the researcher's role could affect the informants, for example their willingness to fully disclose their opinions versus possible fear of disclosure. The insider researcher is a member of the community who "shares an identity, language, and experimental base with the study participants" while the outsider researcher is the "nonaffiliated group member" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009, p.54). The advantages of being an insider researcher are easier access to the research community and greater acceptance by the study participants, but it might not be

favorable to outsiders. For example, there would be benefits for a researcher with a specific learning difficulty and experience of coping with this difficulty to study the experiences of others with similar experiences. As well, insider researchers' knowledge of their informants may enable them to treat the data in greater depth than an outsider may be able to do. However, insider researchers can also be "clouded by personal experience" (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Nakata, 2015). For example, insider researchers might have their own preconceived thoughts on students with special education needs, and then over — or under — estimate the actual conditions of the students and parents. In contrast, the outsider researcher is not a member of the community, so the researcher can be an objective observer (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). The advantages of an outsider researcher include that they may discover some valuable things that insiders might not realize because of being too familiar with the community, and that they may be privy to sensitive information that is not known by others in the community (Bonner, & Tolhurst, 2002). However, outsider researchers need to take time to establish the community's trust and need to spend time coming to understand a particular culture and its jargon particularly terms and language usage in marginalized groups; an example is the use of the term 'A zai' in Hong Kong to describe people with autism.

In my study, I was an outsider researcher, or a non-member of a marginal community, in the sense that I do not have either dyslexia myself or children with dyslexia. However, I am working in a secondary school as a special education coordinator (SENCo) and counselling teacher. This position enables me to understand special education issues, the group of students and families with special education needs, and the local culture related to special education. As Creswell (2013) stated, I needed to be aware of my 'power' affecting the study due to my dual role of school counselor and researcher. In

a later section, I will explain the bracketing experience in my study.

The reasons for selecting qualitative research as my research method have been discussed in detail above. The next section explains further why I chose a phenomenological approach to the study.

3)   <u>Rationale for selecting a phenomenological approach</u>

The phenomenological qualitative approach was identified as the most relevant method for my study, to give an understanding of in-depth and collective individual experiences (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013). In the following, I will highlight the reasons for selecting this approach.

3.1) Approaches of qualitative study

According to Creswell (2013), there are five approaches for studying qualitative studies. They are ethnography, case studies, narrative research, grounded theory, and phenomenology.

Ethnography focuses on complete immersion into the culture, beliefs and values of informants, emphasizing the interaction with informants and observation of functions and is different from targeting individual experiences. Harris (1968) defined ethnography as "a qualitative design in which the researcher describes and interprets the shared and learned patterns of values, behaviors, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group" (as cited in Creswell, 2013, p.101). Case studies normally focus on an event or activity which can lead to making suggestions about similar situations in the future rather than uncovering the lived experiences of individuals. Creswell (2013,

p.107) differentiated case study from ethnography in that "the entire culture-sharing group in ethnography may be considered a case, but the intent in ethnography is to determine how the culture works rather than to either develop an in-depth understanding of a single case or explore an issue or problem using the case as a specific illustration". Narrative research focuses on telling stories as chronological events that transform into a narrative comparison to the researcher's own life. Czarniawska (2004, p.17) defined it as a specific type of qualitative design in which "narrative is understood as a spoken or written text giving an account of an event/action or series of events/actions, chronologically connected" (as cited in Creswell, p.84). Grounded theory aims to convey emerging themes into a general theory (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013, p.95) explained that "the intent of a grounded theory study is to move beyond description and to generate or discover a theory, "unified theoretical explanation" (Corbin &Strauss, 2007, p.107)".

According to Creswell (2013), there are specific characteristics of phenomenological approach. The first is an emphasis on a phenomenon to be explored, such as an educational idea of professional growth, or experiences of people with disabilities. The second is that the phenomenon is explored with a group of individuals who have all commonly experienced the phenomenon. This will turn focus on the individuals' life experiences, and how they experienced both subjective and objective experiences in common to share with others. Phenomenology focuses on identifying a phenomenon which constitutes common meanings of lived experience of individuals (Creswell, 2013). Creswell (2013, p.89) defined that "the basic purpose of phenomenology is to reduce individual experiences with a phenomenon to a description of the universal essence".

3.2) My justification for selecting a phenomenological approach

Of these five approaches, only phenomenological studies focus on the 'essence' of human experiences about a phenomenon through uncovering the lived experiences of the informants. In my understanding, essence belongs to everyday experiencing of the world. In my study, the focus of phenomenology was not to build up a model or theory, but to understand the essence of the experiences of parents going through the process of parenting their special needs children, within their social systems, such as the school and inclusive education system. Several individuals were studied and invited to share their lived experiences; this approach coincides with the logic of phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Parents of children with dyslexia shared their experiences and then I planned to report the essence of the phenomenon. In other words, my concern was the parents' daily experiences in educating children with dyslexia, within the parent-school collaboration. In my study, I mainly reflected the meanings of these lived experiences. I described the essence of the lived phenomenon of caregivers and identified emerging themes, in order to discover the meaning of the data (Moustakes, 1994; Creswell, 2013, 2014).

4)   <u>Research Procedure</u>

In the following section, I will first discuss the ethical considerations, including confidentiality and management of the research risks. This will be followed by information about the recruitment of informants, the theoretical foundation of phenomenology and the methodology of phenomenological research.

4.1) Ethical Review: As in all research, an ethical review is necessary to protect the privacy of informants. Ethical approval was sought from The Education University of Hong Kong after the research proposal was approved in January 2017 (Appendix 2). Procedures for ensuring confidentiality, voluntary participation, and management of research risks will be highlighted below.

To ensure confidentiality, the informants' names were not released. Pseudonyms were used. The data were stored in a locked, password-protected area. The audio documents were used exclusively for the transcription process. The audio documents and relevant data will be destroyed after the completion of my thesis.

For voluntary participation, it was explained to the informants that their participation was completely voluntary and that they reserved the right to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, or refuse to answer any of the questions for any reasons.

Related to the management of research risk, one of my concerns was the informants' emotional conditions, especially in the process of interviews. In a study of this nature, it was possible that some questions might arouse stress related to past experiences. My training in counseling has equipped me to manage stressful emotions and to identify their strengths. As well, all informants were informed about the purpose, process, potential risk, and their rights of withdrawal before the study. They understood my role of qualitative researcher. The informed consent forms were given and explained clearly. A safe and private, contained meeting room was arranged to conduct the interviews, to ensure a safe, secure and comfortable environment. If the informants needed counselling services, my plan was to refer them to some counselling agencies, for

example, the Hong Kong Psychological Counselling Center.

4.2) Methodology of phenomenological research: In this section, the methodology of phenomenological research will be described, including recruitment, data collection, researcher reflexivity and data analysis (Anderson & Spencer, 2002; Creswell, 2013, 2014; Moustakas, 1994; Smith, Larkin & Flowers, 2009). In order to ensure the consistency of the study, I followed the phenomenological research procedures suggested by Smith et al. (2009, p.40-107). According to Smith et al. (2009, p.40-107), the research procedures under phenomenological approaches include the following steps: 1) recruitment, 2) data collection, 3) reflexivity in qualitative research, and 4) data analysis.

4.2.1) Recruitment:

Smith et al. (2009, p.48) claimed that "samples are selected purposely because they can offer a research project insight into a particular experience". Creswell (2013, p.158) named this 'purposeful sampling'. This sampling approach was employed to obtain the information-rich sample needed for this study. The reason for selecting purposeful sampling was because it refers to finding a group of people who have deep knowledge and rich experience in relation to the research problems and phenomena in question. Smith et al. (2009, p.52) recommended a sample size of three, while Creswell (2013, p.91) suggested around 10-15 people. The participants in phenomenological research must have experienced the phenomenon, so there are some criteria. The criteria for selecting the informants for this study were 1) parents of children with dyslexia in mainstream secondary schools; 2) experience of parent-school collaboration; 3) willingness to share their experiences.

Recruitment flyers were sent out to target participants (Appendix 3). The informants were recruited from three main sources: (1) referrals from the special education community (e.g. Special Education Society of HK; HK Association for Specific Learning Disabilities); (2) referrals from SENCOs and professional groups (e.g. educational psychologists, social workers) from other schools; (3) referral from teachers in my serving school. Twelve parents of secondary-school children with dyslexia were selected for this study based on the stated criteria. They had experienced the issues related to supporting their children in secondary school. The target participants were contacted through email or phone calls through non-governmental organizations and regular schools. The selected participants were interested and able to verbalize their experiences fluently. The informant demographics are shown below:

Table 1: Informant Demographics:

Pseudonym	Relationship	Children with SEN	Present study level	Age	Education level
Chloe	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S5	57	Secondary 3
Karen	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S5	59	Primary
Adeline	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S4	50	Secondary 3
Irene	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S3	48	Secondary 5
Lily	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S3	46	University
Florence	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S4	46	Secondary 5
Tiffany	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S5	48	Secondary 3
Winter	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S4	60	Primary
Bonnie	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S1	44	Secondary 5
Donna	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S6	53	Secondary 3
Elaine	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S6	61	Secondary 3
Zoey	Mother-Child	Dyslexia	S2	45	Secondary 3

Please note that all the informants above had clear boundaries with me to avoid conflicts of interests, e.g. their children were not in my classes or my counselling caseload and

were not under my mentorship. I was aware of my dual roles and set the boundaries very clearly. In this table, pseudonyms have been used for all informants. The demographics include information about the informants' children and their current study level. Some of their children were diagnosed with more than one type of special education need.

4.2.2.) Data collection

The data collection was a process of "inviting participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences" (Smith et al., 2009, p.56). Smith et al. (2009, p.56) outlined the considerations to be taken into account in choosing a suitable method to collect data, and suggested that the in-depth interview is one of "the best means of accessing such accounts".

In-depth, semi-structured interview:

To conduct an appropriate interview, several things need to be considered (Smith et al., 2009, p.57): 1) preparing for the interview; 2) conducting the interview and 3) rhythm. Smith et al. (2009, p.62) suggested to use in-depth, semi-structured interviews, starting with a question, and allowing the participant to express descriptive episodes or experiences. In order to encourage the participants to talk at length, I also used open-ended questions.

Preparing for an interview

Interviewing allows the researcher and the participants to construct and engage in a dialogue. First, the participant responds to an open-ended question, and then the researcher is able to enquire further as needed. Researchers should consider several

points with regard to preparing questions and deciding time and place (Smith et al., 2009, p.62-63).

1) Preparing questions

Open-ended questions are more suitable for qualitative research (Smith et al., 2009, p.60-61). Smith et al. (2009, p.60-61) suggested that six to ten open questions can occupy 45 to 90 minutes of conversation. Because detail accounts of experiences are required, questions should be open and expansive, and the participants could be encouraged to respond at length. The researcher can start with a question that allows the participants to recall their experiences in a comfortable way. During the interview, the researcher should not dominate the dialogue, and the participants should be able to express and describe their own experiences freely and openly.

Open-ended questions can facilitate the informants to speak freely in their own terms and share experiences with the researcher during the interview. A semi-structured interview guide can give some informants a feeling of structure and safety to go into a specific direction, which gives special meaning to their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Semi-structured interviews are also designed to shed light on the research questions. In my study, the semi-structured interview questions were provided to the informants a few days before the interview. After the initial interviews, the questions were revised to ensure that they were most suitable for the research purpose (Appendix 4). I normally started the interviews with open-ended questions, such as, "Share with me why you are interested to this topic/ this interview". I allowed the informants to set the pace of the interview, speaking at their own paces and sharing their experiences on their own terms. If any informants showed signs of feeling uncomfortable to respond my open questions,

I took the lead back and used semi-structured questions to reduce their anxiety.

2) Deciding time and place

Interviews should be arranged in a place where the researcher can facilitate a comfortable interaction with the participants and enable them to provide detailed accounts of the experiences under investigation (Smith et al., 2009, p.62-63). In my study, the interviews were conducted in my conference room, or other locations suggested by informants to ensure their privacy and confidentiality. Each interview took approximately 1.5 hours to ensure in-depth data collection. Time breaks and refreshments were included if needed, to reduce the informants' stress levels.

Conducting the interview

Before conducting the interview, ethical approval was obtained to ensure the safety and confidentiality of the research participants (Appendix 5). The research was conducted from 2017 to 2019. Smith et al. (2009, p.64) emphasized that "the most important thing at the beginning of the interview is to establish a rapport with the participant". Given that it is common for people they meet for the first time. To reduce any such tension, I normally chose to start our conversation with some small talk, for example about the kind of day the parent had had. I thought this would help both of us to feel more relaxed. Smith et al. (2009, p.64) highlighted the importance of the researcher having a 'flexible manner'. In the interview process, although some open-ended interview questions had been designed before the interview, I was not eager to ask these questions. As an active co-participant in the interview I needed to be flexible, let the participants lead the interviews and ensure that they had enough time to express and describe their own experiences about bringing up a child with dyslexia. For example, one participant

expressed his dissatisfaction about a friend's opinion of special education. I acted as an active listener to my participant. I also asked prompt questions to collect more information if needed, for example simply asking, "Can you tell me more about this? How did you feel about that?". As suggested by Smith et al. (2009, p.66), I transcribed each interview immediately, before moving to the next participant. This practice gave me time to reflect on my interview process and strategies.

Rhythm

Rhythm refers to 'the dynamic of the interaction' (Smith et al., 2009, p.68). For example, in an entire interview, the participant's response might jump to a topic that was discussed earlier or open up a new topic which the researcher had not expected. Interviewing is a complex and sophistical process. Researchers have to be responsive. With growing experience, the researcher may come to know when it is more appropriate to guide the participants to narrate their own experiences, possibly with certain words, such as "Why?". In my study, many informants repeatedly told about experiences that concerned them the most about a specific issue. The interview process often became unstructured and could not have been preset, but the information obtained was often richer than expected. If the informants went off-topic, I led them back with my semi-structure questions.

4.2.3.) Reflexivity in qualitative research

Smith et al. (2009, p.179) described reflexivity in qualitative research as a way of assessing validity and quality in phenomenological analysis. In addition to Smith et al. (2009), other researchers' views of reflexivity in qualitative research will be considered here (Creswell, 2013; Maxwell, 2013 & Morrow, 2005). The researcher should be

aware of his/her own role affecting the research process (Morrow, 2005). Morrow (2005, p.254) claimed that "qualitative researchers address a number of important issues to accomplish the goal of managing subjectivity, including making their implicit assumptions and biases overt to themselves and others, reflexivity and representation". In my study, reflexivity and bracketing are implemented to ensure subjectivities. In this section, I will explain how I acknowledged and managed my subjectivity through reflexivity and bracketing.

Subjectivity: Smith et al. (2009, .180) described subjectivity as researchers being sensitive to the context of the research, which might involve a powerplay between the researcher and informants. Likewise, Creswell (2013, p.248) defined subjectivity as meaning "that the researcher needs to have heightened self-awareness in the research process and create personal and social transformation". The researcher needs to be highly consciousness of understanding of his/her own psychological and emotional states in the entire research process. Morrow (2005) added that researcher has to limit, control, or manage subjectivity. Researchers should pay attention to and be aware of their own biases, values, assumptions and beliefs which can influence the result and process of the study when they become involved closely in the informants' phenomena (Maxwell, 2013). For example, researchers might have personal perspectives or preconceived judgments about students with special education needs, i.e. researchers with medical views might not agree with removing barriers insisted upon by those preferring social models. Hence, researchers need to deal with their own biases, values, assumptions and beliefs through reflectivity (Creswell, 2013; 2014; Morrow, 2005; Patton 2002).

Reflexivity: Simth et al. (2009, p.181) highlighted that reflexivity requires the researcher to have self-awareness when interpreting the data collected, without biases or assumptions. However, Creswell (2014, p.268) illustrated that reflexivity goes beyond awareness of biases and assumptions, and is concerned with how researcher's background can shape the direction of the study. Although researchers in phenomenological qualitative studies are required to get closely involved in the informants' lived experiences, the focus should remain on the 'essence' of these experiences and high consciousness of their own biases and assumptions (Creswell, 2013, 2014). For example, in the case of teacher-researchers, their teaching experience might shape and affect their understandings of students. For my study, I also had the dual role of researcher and teacher, so I prepared a reflective note (Appendix 1) which helped me to record and 'bracket' any improper assumptions I may have had. I will explain this in detail the following section. This begins with a discussion of bracketing, a common technique of reflexivity.

Bracketing: Smith et al. (2009, p.181) mentioned the importance of bracketing in phonological analysis, describing this concept as a means of validation through addressing sensitive and self-awareness. Researchers should be sensitive to the content, in order to ensure the content of the data is valid and consistent with the research goal. Similarly, researchers should be self-aware of their potential biases and assumptions which might affect their research process (Simth, 2009, p.180-181). 'Bracketing' is a method used in qualitative research to mitigate the potentially deleterious effects of preconceptions in the entire research process (Tufford & Newman, 2012). Giorgi (2009) clarified that bracketing does not involve forgetting our experiences, but at the same time does not let the past knowledge be involved in the studies. 'Backyard research'

means that researchers conduct research in their own organizations (Creswell, 2014). In this context, they should be aware of the imbalance of power between the researcher and participants, especially research conducted in researchers' workplaces. In my study, I had to 'bracket' my previous experiences and knowledge in the process of the interviews and data coding. I let the phenomenon to tell me the experiences of parents, and their stories based on the theoretical and conceptual framework.

Unplanned bracketing experiences: It is quite common to encounter some unplanned experiences during interviews. One informant criticized school counsellors as being unhelpful, and said that teachers were unsupportive to his son. However, after a long conversation, I became aware that the school counsellors had devoted much effort and time, and school had already made concessions in the case. The informant was so angry about the school arrangement for her son. As an experienced school counsellor and teacher, I knew that I had my own value judgement and biases about these roles. In the beginning, I was angry at having to listen such criticisms of teachers and school counsellors. However, I realized that the reason why this parent was angry and dissatisfied. When situations such as this arose, in order to execute self-reflection, I took a deep breath, drank a cup of coffee or tea, or even suggested a break time, to allow myself to go through the bracketing process. I wrote down my biases and assumptions in my reflective study notes. I finally realized the variety of experiences of informants, then was better equipped to respect and accept the lived experiences of my informants.

In the interview process, it is very important to adopt a bracketing process. However, it is impossible to employ absolute bracketing. In order to address the imbalance of power that might occur in an interview, I often reflected on my role of researcher. In addition,

awareness of the informants' emotions was necessary. When I observed that my informants were feeling vulnerable or anxious from exposing their life stories, I volunteered to share my personal experiences and perspectives of the special education issues. I found that my personal feedback and sharing of experience usually helped to support informants to reduce anxiety, and then carry on to further express their life stories. It was also helpful to establish trust and a safe atmosphere for in-depth sharing.

4.2.4.) Data analysis

Data analysis refers to the process of making sense of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Smith et al. (2009, p.79-107) broke down the entire process of data analysis in a phenomenological study into 6 steps, 1) reading and re-reading, 2) initial noting 3) developing emergent themes, 4) searching for connections across emergent themes, 5) moving to the next case and 6) looking for the patterns across cases.

1) Reading and re-reading

The first step of the data analysis is reading and re-reading. This step is to ensure the participant is the focus of the analysis. The interview transcripts are scrutinized to capture the impression and general idea of the informants' experiences. Smith et al. (2009, p.82) pointed out that "if the transcript is from an interview, it is helpful to listen the audio-recording at least once while first reading the transcript." There are several advantages of reading and re-reading in the initial stage. First, it can reduce the 'noise' produced in the process of beginning analysis, such as overwhelming unrelated ideas from listening to the audio-recordings. Repeat reading helps to bracket the ideas. Second, it can provide a model of the interview structure. Reading and re-reading can

give the researcher a sense of the structure of the interview, which can be used to inform necessary revisions for the next interview. Third, reflection of the interview can be done. For example, the researcher can read the transcript and reflect how the trust was built across the interview, highlight the important features, identify rich and detailed information, and point out any contradictions. In my study, the transcripts were recorded verbatim in Cantonese and translated into English. Reading and re-reading the transcript let me highlight significant statements, and had a sense of understanding of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon.

2) Initial noting – exploratory comments

The second step is initial noting. Smith et al. (2009, p.83) explained that initial noting "examines semantic content and language use on an exploratory level." This process is to ensure the researcher becomes familiar with the transcript and understands the participant's statements. This is a free textual analysis, which means there is no specific method for initial noting. The aim is merely to produce a comprehensive and detailed set of notes and comments on the data. Exploratory comments are to explain the original statements in the transcripts. Smith et al. (2009) suggested three types of exploratory comments, namely descriptive, linguistic and conceptual. Descriptive comments focus on the key words and phrases used by the participant. Linguistic comments involve the use of pronouns, pauses, laughter, tone, metaphors, etc. Conceptual comments deal with the annotation of the statements, which requires some interpretation on the part of the researcher. In my study, the initial noting process was carried. Some examples are shown in Table 2:

Table 2: Examples of significant statements and exploratory comments

Significant Statements	Exploratory comments
The teacher thought that he could "cover the sky with his hands!" and push the wrong things to the students.	Metaphor was used: "Cover the sky with his hands", strongly blamed teacher with anger.

The school said that the tutoring class was taught by college students. My children were too rebellious and college students could not manage.	Rebellious: the word showed the child is the problem source. They shirk the school's responsibility to the child.

3) Developing emergent themes

The third step in the analysis process is developing emergent themes. Smith et al. (2009, p.91) explained that this involves investigating the "interrelationships, connections and patterns between exploratory notes". The purpose of this process is to analyze exploratory comments. The researcher moves back and forth among themes to make sure of the informants' narratives (Polkinghorn, 1989). This enables the whole interview to be broken down into a set of parts, and so that the interrelationships, connections and patterns can be examined to generate the emergent theme (Smith et al. (2009). In my study, significant statements were grouped according to emergent themes and formulated meanings (Creswell, 2013). There are some examples in Table 3:

Table 3: Examples of significant statements and formulated meanings

Significant Statements	Formulated Meanings
The teacher thought that he could "cover the sky with his hands" and push the wrong things to the students.	Negative and Unsupportive experience
The school said that the tutoring class was taught by college students. My children were too rebellious and college students could not manage.	Negative and Unsupportive experience
Because I chose to give up and give up his studies. So I don't seem to have any difficulty. To be frank, I have to bow to reality. He can't learn it. It can only be like this. Helpless.	Significance experience of change
After that, the teacher has been really good. During recess, the teacher will talk to him when he sees him. The teacher is very caring and will comfort my child and give him a prize.	Significance experience of change
I know that they will call themselves garbage in private.	Social and education barriers
I understand that learning ability is poor. Being able to score for the school, the teacher will treat them well. Other children can see it, they can see more. They say this themselves and feel that they are rubbish.	Social and education barriers
Educational psychologists... I have never seen them. He said that it's not only a matter of wanting to see him, but everyone has wait for an opening.	Not enough professional support
My child has no support for DSE. Extended time. Screen readers, many people say that all are useless.	Not enough Professional support
Psychologists also actively call the school. Later, when my child returned to school, almost no one would care for him. They see him as transparent.	Not enough Professional support

4) Searching for connections across emergent themes

The fourth step is searching for connections across the emergent themes. Smith et al. (2009, p.96) introduced several "specific ways of looking for patterns and connection between emergent themes", for example, abstraction, subsumption, polarization, and contextualization. Abstraction aims at developing a super-ordinate theme while subsumption targets at bringing all related themes together. For example, in my study, a super-ordinate theme, named 'Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration' emerged. All related themes were put together under this higher-level theme. Polarization focuses on the differences between themes rather than their similarity. Contextualization looks at the connections between emergent themes to identify the contextual elements, for example the moment of diagnosis, the first impression of family-school collaboration, etc.

In my study, NVivo qualitative analysis software was used. All sources of data, including the interview exercises, literature review and all completed transcripts were entered into NVivo to facilitate the organization of the data according to significant statements and meaningful units (Anderson & Spencer, 2002). As well as identifying significant statements from the narratives, all related emergent themes were clustered with formulated meanings (Anderson & Spencer, 2002).

Table 4: Examples of Theme Clusters with Associated Formulated Meanings

Themes	
Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration	
	Negative and Unsupportive experience
	Social and education barriers
	Not enough Professional support

5) Moving to the next case

The fifth step involves moving to the next case. Smith et al. (2009) advised the

researcher to conduct the processes of data analysis one by one. In my study, I followed this suggestion. After completed the process of data analysis stated in steps 1-4 for the first informant, then I moved to the next case.

6) Looking for patterns across cases

The final step is looking for patterns across cases. Smith et al. (2009, p.101) explained that this step was focusing on "a large surface and looking across them." In the process of dealing with different cases, I was going through reconfiguring and relabeling of themes. For example, in the initial stage, only a few cases were processed. Even though the super-ordinate theme had emerged, the label of the theme had been modified several times.

In the following, I will explain the trustworthiness of qualitative research.

5)   <u>Trustworthiness of qualitative research</u>

Several scholars (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Smith et al., 2009) discussed the establishment of trustworthiness through assessing validity. In order to ensure trustworthiness, triangulation and three validation strategies, namely credibility, transferability and dependability were employed in this study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

5.1) Triangulation

Creswell (2013) defined the term triangulation as "researchers making use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence for validating the accuracy of their study" (p.244). In my study, I corroborated evidence from different sources to help shed light on themes or perspectives. These

sources included children's information, school background, and some relevant documents issued by the Education Bureau, to verify the trustworthiness of the information. External reviewers and cross-checking of multiple coders, for example my doctoral peers, were also implemented.

5.2) Credibility (internal validity)

Credibility refers to the internal consistency of the study. Gasson (2004, p.95) described its purpose as to "ensure rigor in the research process and how we communicate to others that we have done so". To ensure the credibility, I employed prolonged engagement, peer debriefings, member checking and researcher's reflections (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301).

5.2.1) Prolonged engagement (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.301) is an investment of sufficient time to achieve certain purposes, such as learning about the culture, and building trust with members in the target group. I have been employed as a special educational needs coordinator (SENCo) since 2013. As a SENCo, I have experienced five basic principles of the promotion of inclusive education, these being strategic planning, implementation, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating various support measures for students with SEN. Based on the *Operation Guide on The Whole School Approach to Integrated Education* (Hong Kong Education Bureau), I collaborate with parents and teachers to support students with dyslexia on a daily basis, and understand the parents' difficulties. Over the past five years, I have come to realize that better collaboration with parents of students with SEN can be a key to supporting these students and promoting inclusive education. This role has not only enriched my understanding of SEN issues and students with SEN, but has also exposed me to the

experiences of their signature others, specifically their parents. In the past few years, I participated in a number of special education professional forums and political SEN campaigns (Appendix 6). I was invited by Hong Kong Paediatric Society to be a guest speaker at their professional forum in August, 2018. The topic was the perspectives of SENCo in supporting students with SEN. This gave me the chance to communicate with professors from local universities, social workers, nurse, psychiatrists, physical therapists, education psychologists and clinical psychologists. In addition, I was also invited by the Special Education Society of Hong Kong to be a speaker at its Education Center on May 2018 to share the experience of supporting students with SEN in Hong Kong. These opportunities enriched my experiences, deepened my understandings and also inspired me a lot about my study area. I also learnt about the SEN and school culture, and about building trust with parents, students and teachers.

5.2.2) Peer debriefing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.308) is a process of exposing oneself to disinterested peers who are not involved in the research in order to assist the researcher's thinking in the research process. In the entire process of the study, on-going discussions were conducted with postgraduate schoolmates and professional groups. To remove personal biases and judgements, a working group of postgraduate schoolmates was formed to share common findings about special education trends in Hong Kong. From 2017, a work-based group was formed to discuss special education issues in Hong Kong. From these discussions, consensus was reached that parents of students with dyslexia are often ignored under the current special education policy reform. The professional group included educational psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, medical professionals and some SEN teachers and lecturers from special schools. They not only provided me with a broader perspective to perceive the SEN issues, but also

inspired me to have a better senses of parents' emotional health. In addition, they also helped me to deal with values dilemmas and discuss my personal biases that occurred during the study. Starting from 2017, we gathered monthly to discuss and share our perspectives on the development of students with SEN. For example, we discussed the disadvantages of medical models and highlighted the shortages of educational models; this finally directed me to social models. It was really helpful to have such peer support in my research journey. In addition, two research peers, a research assistant and a PhD student, also helped me with coding two randomly selected transcriptions. In October 2018, two randomly transcriptions were sent to my research peers, and an inter-rater consistency was obtained through NVivo. This inter-rater consistency was approximately 90%.

5.2.3) Member checking occurs when "the researcher solicits participants' views of the credibility of the findings and interpretations" (Creswell, 2013, p.244). It is an effective tool for ensuring the quality of a study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) claimed that the member checking technique is "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p.314) to ensure the selection of data can 'stand out' to the researcher. In my study, all individual interview transcripts were verified via email with the informants. Since most of the participants were unable to meet with me again for various reasons, email verification was used instead of face-to-face communication. The informants' responses to the email were incorporated to adjust and revise the transcripts, narratives and themes. For example, in Winter's case, the original transcription stated that all teachers in the school treated her son badly, especially the ones teaching in Chinese. She corrected me and re-stated that some teachers were indeed good: "In Form 4, he changed teachers, and the teacher was very good to him. Now he is very confident that

he can pass the Chinese language". In response to this, I revised the original statement to 'some teachers' instead of 'all'. In another case, Florence claimed during the interview that religions were useless in helping her to deal with her son's dyslexia. However, after the review, she replied that God always took care of her, and her daughter also provided emotional support to her, so she wanted to add "Thanks to God, who gave me a daughter; it was my daughter who saved her brother". I contacted both participants to confirm those amendment. In addition, the results and the themes of the study were shared with the informants, and some of them gave me some suggestions, for example, highlighting the equal learning opportunities available to their children with dyslexia. They were quite excited to uncover their voices.

5.2.4) Researchers' reflections: as I mentioned in earlier, I employed the 'bracketing' technique (Giorgi 2009; Tufford & Newman, 2012) as a means of reflection throughout the interview process and data analysis. The bracketing ensured the informants' subjectivity with the essence of the phenomena of their lived experiences. To supplement my reflections, I also made reflexive notes to record any of my biases and assumptions which might have influenced the study process. In the interviews, many of the parents expressed the view that educational intervention can change their children's situations, so they had often arranged different supplementary classes for them. In my understanding, dyslexia is incurable and permanent, hence intervention could only equip the children with some helpful learning techniques, but not cure them. My instant opinion was that what the parents did was not practical at all. At this moment, I had to try to bracket myself with some counter arguments, such as, even though their reading and writing difficulties could not be cured, the supplementary classes may not be bad; or may not be ineffective, there are many possibilities. In addition, many of the

parents severely criticized teachers for showing bias or discrimination to students with dyslexia. Every time the parents blamed the teachers, I identified with the teachers due to my dual role. However, I would then take a deep breath and try to think in other ways, for example, teachers belong to a team which have good and bad; most have not experienced special education in their own schooling, and some may lack practical training. And if teachers do not consider the students' educational needs, I might need to explore the many factors underpinning this.

5.3) Transferability (external validity or generalizability)

Transferability refers to external validity or generalizability, which means that other researchers can generalize and apply the findings of my study to their own contexts (Morrow, 2005). Detailed explanations of my research process, information about the informants and the methodology and clear interpretation of the findings can enhance the extent of transferability (Anfara et al., 2002). Describing the research process in detail will help the reader to understand how the research results were generated. Other researchers can refer to my study and apply it to their own research. Hence, I have listed the research procedures systematically and in detail, in order to improve the transparency that could facilitate transfer of the research process.

5.4) Dependability (reliability):

Dependability refers to the extent of the reliability and consistency of the study data and phenomena across time, researchers and analysis techniques (Anfara et al., 2002; Morrow, 2005). Techniques to ensure dependability may include external audits and code-recode strategies (Anfara et al., 2002). In addition to engaging my research peers in the code-recode strategy, the previously described journey of study notes helped to

ensure reliability. Any methodological changes and shifts in the study process were recorded in my study notes. The parents of students with dyslexia told me about their diverse experiences, and some common themes were generalized. I found that the barriers to parents of coming out were related to the issues of family and school relationships, hence I stepped forward to study the cooperation of family and school, focusing more on the parent-school context. The interview questions were also revised and updated according to such methodological changes and shifts. In the interviews, I found that many parents mentioned the bad aspects of inclusive education, and there had been many conflicts between teachers and parents. Hence, I revised the interview questions regarding the collaboration between school and parents, such as adding a question about the experience of collaboration with school teachers or other professionals.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has summarized the rationale for selecting the constructivist qualitative paradigm and discussed insider and outsider biases, subjectivity, reflexivity and bracketing and rationale of selecting phenomenological research approach. Research procedures included ethical reviews, recruitment of informants and the methodology of phenomenological research were highlighted. Finally, the trustworthiness of qualitative research was also discussed.

Chapter 5 Results

The study aimed to answer two research questions: 1) What are the emotional experiences of parents in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them? And 2) What are the barriers these parents experience in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

This chapter summarizes the major results of the study (Table 5). Seven main themes were identified, indicating the parental experiences: 1) Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration; 2) Feeling discriminated about their children's experience; 3) Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking; 4) Feeling relieved and being more reflective; 5) Feeling powerless but critical to the education system and Confucian culture; 6) Feeling stressful in financial support; and 7) Feeling resilient in difficult time. These results reflect the overarching themes emerged from the research data. Text segments are presented to illustrate each theme. Pseudo-names are used so the parents cannot be identifies.

Table 5: Themes Related to Informants' Experiences with school

Theme	Description of the Theme
Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration	Parents and school failed to establish a trustful relationship. Most informants had encountered difficult experiences while communicating with schools. All informants reviewed undergoing three kinds of difficulties while collaborating with schools: 1) misunderstanding and inflexibility, 2) conflicts; 3) relationships harmed and mutual trust destroyed.
Feeling discriminated about their children's experience	Discrimination could either be explicit or implicit, both of which were widespread. Feelings of being discriminated against were common.
Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking	Parents were experiencing emotional difficulties, especially regarding taking care of their children and managing their academic-related issues.

Feeling relieved and be more reflective	When parents finally accepted their children's difficulties, they might turn out to be more reflective about the situation.
Feeling powerless but critical to the education system and Confucian culture	Parents could not get rid of education system in development of their children. Confucian culture is also a critical factor affecting their education value to their children. Most informants felt powerless, but critical to the current education system and Confucian culture.
Feeling stressful in financial support	Having huge financial burdens was another common issue of concern. The expenses of supporting children with special education needs were described as high.
Feeling resilient in difficult time	Parents of children with dyslexia often encountered emotional ups and downs, but most of them could finally establish their own ways to ease their emotions.

Theme 1: Feeling frustrated in Parent-school collaboration

First, the informants were asked to describe their experiences regarding two aspects: parent-school collaboration and communication with school personnel. In response, all informants recalled having felt unwelcome and insulted. Most of the informants recalled having encountered terrible experiences with schools. All recalled undergoing three kinds of emotional difficulties while collaborating with schools: misunderstanding and inflexibility, conflicts, and relationships harmed and mutual trust destroyed.

Experiencing Misunderstanding and Inflexibility

Almost all of the informants had encountered misunderstandings and misinterpretations of their students when communicating with teachers about their children's needs. They talked about encountering teachers who lacked awareness or knowledge about special educational needs. These teachers expected their children, despite having diagnosed special educational needs, to follow the same learning pace of those without such needs, and were unwilling or not sufficiently aware to provide accommodation or flexible

measures in class to catering for students with special education needs. Even though some teachers may have had knowledge about the needs of the SEN students, due to some rigid school policy, for example, the pressures of teacher appraisal requirements, they were not able to support these students. In addition, when working with teachers on their children's learning adjustment, the informants perceived that teachers often had unrealistic expectations that the students would be able to make same great progress. Therefore, if the teachers encountered students who had not progressed in their learning or achieved unexpected lower grades, they could not accept it. Folin (2010, p.182) stated "the Asia-Pacific region …… still being expected to meet examinations and standards using a didactic traditionalist approach provides an almost impenetrable challenge" for implementing inclusive education. This situation can be reflected in teachers' requirements for homework and grades, and by the school management's requirements of teachers. I will highlight the following themes, with direct quotes from informants' interview transcripts.

Winter, the mother of a Form 4 student with dyslexia, recalled how teachers had misunderstood her son. When her child was in Secondary Three, his Chinese teachers used some unreasonable methods, such as forcing him to do a large amount of copying exercises, or re-do assignments or dictation. According to Confucian beliefs, every people is educable (Forlin, 2010, p.181), and teachers hence expected that they would get good scores through repeated practices. Not only did her child not improve, but also the relationship with the teacher deteriorated. She claimed the teacher did not understand how to educate children with dyslexia:

The teacher taught my child, but his grades did not improve. So, the teacher forced my

child to do the same homework until he met his requirements and reached a satisfactory score. My child did not have this ability, he had dyslexia, but the teacher ignored it, and felt that that was an excuse.

The teacher's request seemed to be too rigorous, and pushed everyone to meet the teacher's own standard/requirement (more than a passing grade). He didn't understand at all that they (students) were unique with individual learning paces/strengths, and different from person to person. The students had already tried their best, and the teacher shouldn't force them anymore.

This teacher required his students to have good scores regardless of their diversities and difficulties. Due to the teacher's misbelief, all students were pushed to obtain a certain grade. No one could be excepted.

Irene, the mother of a Form 3 student with dyslexia, described that her child's teachers always stuck to their own teaching style without flexibility, and professional knowledge on students with special educational needs. In an examination-oriented culture, the teachers believed everyone could be taught in the same method with a didactic traditionalist approach. However, as a result, some students were treated better than others because they were superior in such culture. Even it was a culture in which all students were expected to perform equally regardless of their ability levels.

Take dictation as an example; the teachers only used their own methods to teach. For example, they arranging dictations for the whole class (with all students), without working out any ways to accommodate my child. He (the teacher) ignored that the child

had dyslexia. In fact, the teacher could take him out and teach him individually, use other methods. Most teachers don't know how to deal with teaching students with dyslexia.

Adeline, the mother of a Form 4 student with dyslexia, encountered an experience similar to Winter's. The teacher was inflexible in dealing with the student's homework record. Adeline was concerned that a Form 1 English teacher had not realized the difficulties of her son with dyslexia:

I remember that a teacher used to write "You didn't hand in homework. You didn't hand in homework," in my child's handbook. I asked the teacher whether he would like to have negative comments written so frequently in his handbook when he was at school. If he also didn't like it, why couldn't he sympathize with my child's situation?"...... The teacher knew that he had dyslexia, so why did he still write "didn't hand in?".

Another mother, Karen, disclosed a similar situation about inflexibility in dealing with homework. She claimed:

He had owed homework for more than seven days, and the teacher (S2 Chinese Teacher) called me every day. The teacher said he needed to explain to the principal. The teacher said he had no choice. Actually, I had no way either. He failed to hand in his homework, the teacher must figure out a way. The teacher couldn't just say that he needed to explain to the management. I think there should be greater responsibility behind the role as a teacher. As a teacher, you must be mentally prepared to meet such students who might not be capable of handing in their homework. If not, please don't be a teacher. But

anyway, punishment should be given because it is a matter of responsibility.

Both Karen's and Adeline's sons were given penalties because of overdue homework. The teacher often forced Adeline's son to attend after-school detention due to overdue assignments, as the teacher did not realize the special educational needs of this student. For example, Adeline described how her son's low literacy ability and orthographical skill related to his language use: "Even though he had just read it (vocabulary) and read it more than ten times, he still couldn't remember the word and also failed to write it". The situation worsened when her son reached Form 3. Adeline said:

My son had some special SEN features, e.g. low literacy ability and orthographical skill. The teacher did not understand. Or the teacher understood but was not willing to accommodate Him. The situation was getting worse.

The teacher kept asking my son why he didn't hand in or finish his homework. Actually, it's not that he didn't want to finish, but he couldn't finish it, he couldn't do it. The teacher seemed to never be satisfied. Huh! Students with dyslexia were required to write more than 400 words... How to finish it? In primary five and six, 200 words had to be written, and the junior secondary school had to write 400 words... ... The teacher did not understand them at all.

... Some teachers would explain that a certain homework task must be done well. I guess most were related to teacher performance appraisal. Uh... I wanted to ask the teachers if they wanted children to learn, or just for their own convenience. The teachers were not concerned with the former (student's learning benefits), most of them were simply

thinking about the latter (their own job security, passing the performance appraisal).
Ok, I would do it for you. Ugh… …

With regard to school homework policy, Adeline raised the issue of the teacher's authority. She thought that school should give more autonomy and flexibility to teacher to handle it.

I understood that the school would have academic requirements for teachers, and teachers would have work pressure. Principals should give teachers more autonomy and flexibility so that they can judge how to treat homework for students with dyslexia. However, there the school did not give flexibility, without any reason, then my child needed to bear it.

Winter commented that teachers should pay more attention to the different abilities of students, since some may be high academic performers but others may not. Because different students have different abilities, teachers' requirements should also be different. Irene, Adeline and Karen claimed that more flexibility should be given to the students with diverse needs. Adeline commented that teachers should be aware of the special education needs of different students. They also pointed out that homework should be adjusted to suit students' abilities. Adeline thought that schools should give more authority to teachers in handling their students' assignments, including setting suitable goals for students with special education needs.

As shown by the above extracts, the informants realized two key points. The first is that not all teachers have the knowledge and awareness to address the needs of students

with special educational requirements, therefore, parents encounter frustrations in the school parent collaboration process. The second is that, even though some teachers understand their children's education needs, they are not necessarily able to accommodate them sufficiently due to school administrative barriers.

Experiencing Conflicts, Marginalization, Unethical Treatments

Conflict is the second stage to have emerged from the data, after misunderstanding and inflexibility. Parent-school collaboration means parents are partners with teaching staff to collaborate in school issues (Cheng, 2005; Epstein, 1992; Shriberg, 2013). However, the partnerships between the parents interviewed in this study and their children's school seemed not to be working out well. Most informants shared the view that collaboration would be impossible if teachers were not willing to work with parents. The main barriers to parent-school collaboration identified in previous studies were marginalization or undermining of parental opinions (Bagley & Woods , 2010; Blok et al., 2007; Christenson et al., 2005; Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004), and teachers having negative attitudes and unprofessional practice (Dabkowski, 2004; Kim and Morningstar, 2005; Nowell & Salem, 2007). Both of these barriers arose in my study, along with the belief that the situation would be even worse if teachers did not understand the needs and difficulties of the dyslexic students.

1) Parental opinions were undermined or marginalized

When conflicts occurred between parents and school, the parents' opinions were often undermined. Chloe, the mother of a Form 5 student with dyslexia, recalled an incident of a few years ago. When her son studied in Form 2, his class teacher led the class out

for a study tour. Her son was separated from the group and left behind on the train, and the class teacher reported to the school that he was so naughty and had not listened to the teacher's instructions. Chloe insisted that the class teacher deliberately neglected his responsibility to her son.

The teacher thought that he could sweep his fault under the carpet and shy away from doing wrong things. The teacher thought SEN students could be bullied. I remembered that in the junior from of secondary school, my child's classmates and teachers went out together to the Light Rail Transit station. However, the teacher did not pay attention to the fact that the student did not get off the train. The teacher shirked his responsibility and said that my child played with his classmates and did not let him get off the train.

At that time, I asked the teacher if he had failed to pay attention to my child, but the teacher just said that my child was naughty. The teacher ignored me and undermined my opinion.

Chloe was furious about how she was undermined in this experience. She argued with the class teacher. However, no one in the school stood up and helped her. No school personnel were willing to listen to her. Chloe insisted that it was lucky that a parent who witnessed finally helped her to clarify the case:

Fortunately, there was a neighbor on the light rail. She was also the parent of a classmate. She witnessed the incident, so the teacher could not shirk responsibility. I was very angry. At that time, my child was a little rebellious. Maybe, because of his experience in Form 1, he had not formed a good impression in the teacher's mind, and

there was discrimination.

Teachers should know the special needs of different students when they participate in outdoor activities. But in this case, the teacher did not take account of the fact that the student may have had difficulty in receiving instructions due to his dyslexia. When Chloe's child was left behind due to the teacher's lack of attention, the teacher further pushed the blame to the student. Chloe was angry that this teacher discriminated against a student with special learning needs.

Karen, the mother of a Form 4 student with dyslexia, claimed that a teacher had tried to force her son to accept an arrangement to withdraw from the school. Karen explained that the school had imposed an academic minimum requirement for every student, but that students with dyslexia might be unable to meet this requirement. According to the Guide for Integrated Education, students with SEN have equal rights and opportunities with peers in both academic and non-academic opportunities (Education Bureau, 2019). School should respect and treat students with diverse needs properly. However, Karen's experience was counter to this:

One day, two teachers asked me to sign the paper to record my son as having a 'demerit' (because of poor academic submission records). Then, they told me that the child didn't like to study in that school and tried to persuade me to take him to study in another school. I felt very angry and discriminated against. I felt aggrieved. I didn't think a school could treat students like this, even though this school may be academic-oriented and my child did not perform well. I really didn't want to think about it. It was too utilitarian. I had already taught my child to correct, to improve… How come? I

explained to the school but they totally ignored me. Why couldn't the school give him a chance? And why would they force me to transfer the child to other school? No one listened to me.

Tiffany, the mother of a Form 5 student with dyslexia, claimed that she experienced an unpleasant experience regarding her son's promotion to the junior forms in secondary school. Although the school did not try to expel her child, the focus was on students with higher academic achievement. Different from other parents, Tiffany reported that she had applied for her child to be retained in the same form because his academic performance was not satisfactory. However, she claimed that the school rejected her request, even though the child was ranked in the bottom 10% of the form. Tiffany wanted the school to retain her child, while the school wanted to promote him. So, there are two cases raised here; one is a school just aiming to send a student with dyslexia away, and the other is a school letting these students graduate quickly. The rights and equal opportunities of students with dyslexia were not upheld in either situation. The parents' voices seemed to be marginalized. Tiffany said:

Also, my child was ranked the worst in the whole class, and some of the students performed very well. The school would only provide assistance to high performing students, aiming at improving them further. My feeling was that the school did not want to pay attention to the students with special educational needs, who they called "poor performers". They tried to avoid paying attention to them. I have seen parents of disabled and academically weak children requesting the school to retain their children in the same form, but the school refused. The school didn't listen to the parents' requests. I felt that the school wanted to send them away quickly and let them leave school after

Form 6. I saw this and then I moved home, and my child also changed to study in another school. The rights and equal opportunities of students with SEN was undermined. There was a lot more tolerance in the new school.

The transcripts above illustrate how the parents' voices were ignored and undermined. Chloe's narrative highlighted that unfair treatment of students with dyslexia in school. Facing unfairness, Chloe tried to ask for help and to fight for her son, but no teaching staff were willing to listen to her. Karen's and Tiffany's stories illustrate that schools might fail to ensure students' rights to have equal opportunities and to ask for special arrangements, but that their attempts to have these rights addressed ended up in unhappiness and feeling unwelcome. Both parents were dissatisfied and finally decided to arrange for their sons to continue their studies in other schools. Parents' opinions were often marginalized in the stage of conflict.

2) Teachers having negative attitudes and unethical/unprofessional practice

In addition to marginalized parental opinions, negative attitudes of school personnel are also common in conflicts. Winter remembered that she and her husband had a serious conflict with the class teacher when her son was in Form 3:

I remember that when my child studied in Form 3, my husband was also there, and the teacher and my husband had a quarrel about how to teach my child with dyslexia (teacher set a very high and unreasonable academic requirement for her son, requiring him to redo the same assignment repeatedly. The parents did not agree with this teaching arrangement). At that time, the teacher was arrogant, and during the

conversation, he threw a book. It turned out that the teacher had lost his temper and threw his work permit on the ground. He told my child that he would quit his job. The child was afraid to pick up the work permit from the ground, but the teacher threw it again. My child picked it up several times, but the teacher was still not satisfied. My child then said, "If I jumped (suicide), would you be satisfied?".

Winter expressed this conflict between the parents and teacher as being hard to resolve, because the teacher lost his temper. He could not accept a student with lower academic abilities in his class despite the school's claims of willingness to embrace learning diversity.

Adeline also shared her poor experience with a teacher. She recalled that when her son was young, a teacher described him as 'nothing important, or rubbish.' She felt that her son was insulted and decided to complain to the teacher:

... In the past, a teacher was crazy, and often told his students, "You are nothing!" Later, my child was in that teacher's class. I talked to the teacher about what he was saying and demanded him to explain the difference between "nothing" and "rubbish".

In addition, Adeline also claimed that the teacher had accommodated her son when he had been diagnosed as having challenges with literacy, with a deficit level and poor executive functioning. She stated that the teacher kept recording 'missing assignment' on her son's personal profile. She was frustrated and expressed that it was impossible for a student with severe dyslexia and a low level of executive function to hand in assignments systematically, as other students without the diagnosis of SEN could do.

Her son was unhappy and so stressed from trying to meet the teacher's requirements every day. She had tried to communicate with the teacher on the phone to ask him to be more accommodating. However, the teacher responded negatively, so the situation remained unchanged. Even though the parent wrote to complain, the teacher simply changed to issuing verbal warnings to her son, instead of recording in written form:

I argued with the teacher. Later, the teacher changed to verbally blame my child. He blamed my child properly *every day... My child told me that afterwards, then I came to school and argued with the teacher again and requested him to be more accommodating. There is no difference between verbally blaming and writing. My child was studying in the North District, which was one of the academic-focused schools. If the grade was not good, the teacher would force the student to do well... so it was inevitable that such thing would happen.*

My child had no friends. He observed that one day when his classmate did not finish homework, the teacher suddenly threw the student's book to the floor from the table. My child had been afraid of going to school since then. He would rather be lying in bed holding onto the sheets. He was unwilling to go to school. The doctor suggested taking him to the hospital for a further medical check. It didn't take a week to prove that he had anxiety. From dyslexia to failing to complete homework, to seeing the teacher lose his temper, then to suffering from anxiety... ...

Her son had difficulty completing assignments. With endless warnings issued by the teacher, her son ended up suffering anxiety. Winter's and Adeline's cases disclose that, although the teachers presumably accepted the principles of equal opportunity, there

were still some unresolvable conflicts.   Both parents and students were under a lot of stress from the negative attitudes of school personnel, and both had demonstrated features of anxiety. Both parents were affected emotionally by the schools' uncooperative attitudes. Although they tried to negotiate with the teachers, the situation remained unchanged. They were anxious that everything was out of control, and their children were suffering.

As shown by the above extracts, the informants realized that disagreements and/or conflicts unavoidably existed in the collaboration because there was no trust between the two parties, especially if teachers did not understand the students' needs and difficulties o the parents' frustrations.

Relationships harmed and mutual trust destroyed:

The informants experienced distrust in the parent-school collaboration. Parent-school relationships were unavoidably ruined by the conflicts between parents and teachers, most of which remained unresolved. McDermott-Fasy (2010) described mutual trust as a factor affecting the quality of partnerships between school and parents. Once the relationship breaks up, and mutual trust destroyed, this can have devastating consequences and effects on both parties.

Adeline recalled that she was once invited to attend a school meeting about her son's study. This meeting directly destroyed the relationship between parents and teachers.

Later, when I went back to the school, I had a meeting. The principal, vice principal, discipline master, and class teacher all sat and asked me: "You just want an

explanation?". At first, the principal said that I just needed an explanation. He said, "If you want, I apologize to you". He spoke for half an hour and later sent everyone else out. In the room, there were only me and him, and he said rudely, "I grew up in the resettlement area… … if you are dissatisfied, let me know." I thought that it was a gangster speaking now... I asked him if the Education Bureau provided a special study allowance and what he had done. He said that he gave a lot of things, such as a language training group, a literacy training group, an educated psychologist... I thought these groups were useless. As for educational psychologists, I had never seen them. He said that I was not the only one requesting to see him and that everyone had to queue up and wait. Later, he said there was a lecture, but the lecture was the same as that done by the public hospital. What should I do? ... The only thing that was useful was the time extension for the exam.

I thought (something) was ridiculous! Fair? They were born to be treated unfairly.

Adeline was first distressed to be treated unreasonably, and then angry with the principal's attitude. In her opinion and experience, she felt that the Principal was impolite and narrow-minded. Adeline described the experience of meeting the principal as a disaster.

Zoey, the mother of a Form 2 student with dyslexia, shared her experience about suing a teacher for unprofessional practice and physical harassment. Zoey claimed that her son had been beaten up by an English teacher due to an outstanding submission. Zoey noted that three months after the incident, she decided to take legal action:

I remember the day my child owed him homework. The English teacher pinched my child's neck and also kicked him. Three months later, I heard about this from his classmates, then I reported I to the police.

The English teacher was a male teacher and my child was very afraid of him. It seemed that he was used to using violence. Since the incident, my child has been unable to continue his studies, and to learn English at all. It has been three years since primary four, and he is still very resistant to learning English. He was so scared. After consulting a psychiatrist, we dare not mention the case at home. But even if we don't mention it, we still have it in our hearts. The psychiatrist said that we should not pay too much attention to the academic results for the time being, and should focus on helping him get out of his psychological shadow first. The psychiatrist also advised us not to force him. I found it was so hard for me to stop forcing him; learning was not for results……also asking me to give up any expectation. Difficult!

Similar to other informants' stories, the relationship was completely destroyed due to unprofessional conduct and a mistrustful experience between the parents and school. The parents and students struggled with the lack of cooperation and the barriers. According to the social relational model, the main barriers in the lives of people with disabilities come from society and culture (Reindal, 2008). Both Adeline and Zoey confronted the unequal treatment from achievement-oriented school cultures and a society in which teachers were not willing to accept students with disabilities. As a result, the parent-school relationships were harmed and mutual trust destroyed.

Theme 2: Feeling discriminated about their children's experiences

Almost all parents experienced discrimination in their attempts to cooperate with their children's schools. The forms of discrimination can be classified as explicit and implicit (Blank, et al., 2004; EOC, 2019; Feigenbaum, 2018). Discrimination, according to the EOC (2019), means "treating a person unfairly because of who they are or because they possess certain characteristics". Explicit discrimination involves "direct hostility expressed or behavior" by others (Blank et al., 2004, p.56), meaning that parents of students with dyslexia are discriminated against through direct expression and behavior with unpleasant consequences due to their children's disabilities, such as expulsion from school or deduction of marks (Blank et al., 2004; Feigenbaum, 2018). Implicit discrimination, as defined by Blank et al. (2004, p.56) and Feigenbaum (2018), is "subtle and unconscious (such as nonverbal hostility in posture or tone of voice)". Implicit discrimination might involve being treated in a poor, unfair, unwelcome or improper attitude or manner (Blank et al., 2004; Feigenbaum, 2018). Discrimination is in fact widespread among parents of students with dyslexia in Hong Kong government schools.

Explicit discrimination:

Chloe perceived explicit discrimination as unequal treatment of her complaint regarding her son's participation in extra-curricular activities. She explained that her son was not permitted to enroll in extra-curricular activities due to his poor academic performance. His self-esteem was therefore damaged. She described that her son's health was affected, and that he looked like a 'pig' without these activities. When Chloe complained to the school, her case was turned down immediately, without reason. She

felt discriminated against when dealing with her son's experience:

He didn't perform well and was often banned from participating in different activities, so at that time he felt like a pig, and his body was also like a pig. He didn't do anything well. I told the school, but it was useless! The school did not allow him to attend.

In addition, Karen recalled her son being prohibited from participating in after-school supplementary lessons. She was so upset and dissatisfied about the school's decision, but without support, she finally accepted the arrangement. She felt helpless and claimed:

The school said that the supplementary lessons were taught by college students. And as my child was too rebellious, the college students would not be able to manage him.

There was no way to eliminate discrimination! Discrimination! But I had to take care of the public interest. That was not a one-on-one tutoring. I had to consider the interests of others. He had reading and writing difficulties. Hey didn't know many words and he was also weak at speaking.

Karen was explicitly discriminated against by the direct rejection of her request for her son to participate in after-school supplementary lessons.

Chloe's and Karen's narratives illustrate that explicit discrimination existed in their experiences with schools. With limited resources and the achievement-oriented culture, parents were persuaded to give up what they perceived to be their children's rights, as in the case of Karen's child not being able to participate in supplementary lessons. Both

parents' stories suggested that the school might not have sufficient resources to help students with special needs, since resources normally tend to support those students with higher-achievements in an elitist culture like Hong Kong.

Implicit discrimination:

Implicit discrimination involves being treated in a poor, unfair, unwelcome or improper manner (Blank et al., 2004; Feigenbaum, 2018). Adeline remembered that an English teacher always unconsciously annoyed and upset her son overtly and publicly in lessons through making improper comments, such as 'It's lucky that you submitted homework this time, otherwise… …' This teacher's taunting of her son never stopped. She complained about the situation, but the attitudes of the teacher and principal were so unfriendly. She again had a sense of being discriminated against:

It was the same situation in secondary school. There was a very strict teacher who was always asking questions in a way like asking a criminal. But the school handled it grossly and hastily. The teacher sometimes came to my child and said, "You have to give me homework."/"It's lucky that you have a textbook today." The teacher did these unconsciously but they were really provocative.

…… Later, when I went back to the school, I had a meeting. The principal, vice principal, discipline master, and class teacher all sat and asked me: "You just want an explanation?". At first, the principal said that I just needed an explanation. He said, "If you want, I apologize to you". He spoke for half an hour and later sent everyone else out. In the room, there were only me and him, and he said rudely, "I grew up in the resettlement area… … if you are dissatisfied, let me know." I thought that it was a

gangster speaking now...

Adeline's story indicated that the teachers, and even the principal, might have discriminated against her implicitly through improper attitudes and language. When the principal claimed that he had grown up "in the resettlement area", Adeline felt threatened. The principal intended to take hostile action against her during the meeting. Zoey also shared her experience of implicit discrimination. First, she complained that the teachers always ignored her phone calls. When she encountered problems, she would phone the school, but normally teachers were unavailable to answer her calls. No one would call back. She felt that she was unwelcome at the school. Second, she commented that discrimination is widespread in local schools in Hong Kong.

Because secondary school teachers are very busy, I had tried to find a teacher. It usually took a few days to reply to me, sometimes there was even no reply. When I got a reply from the teacher, I had forgotten what had happened. Actually, I knew that the teachers felt that I was creating trouble for them, and did not want to answer my calls at all.

To be frank, discrimination was possible and widespread. There were many cases of discrimination. Because of having dyslexia, poor academic performance, the students were easily ignored or even discriminated against.

She also reported that teachers would refer to students with dyslexia or lower academic performances as 'rubbish', and asked other students not to play with them. Even she complained to the school, no one would value her requests. Ignorance was another kind of implicit discrimination.

Elitism? Yes, my child still had a few years to graduate. I was really worried. Schools had money and would usually choose to invest in high-capacity students. I knew.

At the beginning of Form 1, I felt that there was discrimination. ... The teacher would say that they were rubbish and they were not good at learning. The teacher said this directly. Up to now, in class AB (the class with weaker grades), teachers will say that they are rubbish. The teacher told the classmates in the good class not to play with them. In fact, the whole school, even all schools in Hong Kong were like this. It's needless to be said overtly, but many of them were indeed like this. I tried to report to the school about this, no one was willing to listen. I thought it was the culture. Difficult to change.

Adeline's story indicated that inclusive education had been promoted for many years, yet some teaching staff not only failed to achieve it, but even violated the inclusive principles. Even when she raised the issue, she was treated by implicit discrimination through the improper attitudes and language of the school principal. Zoey pinpointed that she was implicitly discriminated against due to ignorance on the part of the school. Implicit discrimination was very common, and presented in different ways.

Theme 3: Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking

All informants described the experiences of taking care of their children, from diagnosis of dyslexia to their daily lives at secondary school. Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer, (2013, 2014) also described parents going through emotional difficulties while supporting their children with learning disabilities. The emotions the parents had

encountered included discouragement, frustration and exhaustion.

Elaine, the mother of a Form 6 student with dyslexia, described her experience of teaching her son to study in the junior forms in secondary school. She remembered that teaching her son was a terrible (恐怖) time in her life. No matter how much time and effort she paid, her son did not show any improvement. Even if he had just learned something, he would totally forget it a few seconds later:

(It was) really discouraging (激死). Say the dictation for example. I helped him to read the content twice, but it wasn't enough, I ended up reading it five times and even six times. After reading for the tenth time, he finally remembered. I was very happy, but when I asked him to read it the eleventh time, he couldn't do it again. I was very angry. I asked him, 'Why would you be so stupid?' Thinking back now, I realize I said some very insulting words.

Elaine's story illustrated that being the parent of a child with dyslexia was a tough role, especially in relation to learning. Not only feeling frustrated, Elaine experienced ups (happy that her son remembered the dictation content) and downs (angry that he totally forgot after a few seconds) in the process of teaching. She described the experience as very discouraging and frustrating.

Zoey shared her experience of teaching her son. Like most of the informants, she quit her job so that she could have more time to take care of her son. However, she was still so stressed with managing his assignments. She recounted that every day she picked up her son from school and taught him from 4 pm to 12 am, but a ton of assignments

remained unfinished. Zoey described the experience as discouraging and frustrating:

In fact, it was very stressful. His homework (e.g. Chinese composition) was usually not completed, and he couldn't finish it before 12 o'clock. From about six to seven o'clock, we would do homework and we often needed to do it till late night. I was willing to help him, but I still had to take care of two other children. My husband had to go to work. He worked in the catering industry. Usually arriving home late, he couldn't help to take care of the children. The daily living and studying of my children were all to be taken care of by me.

According to Zoey, since her husband needed to work, she was the main caretaker to manage her children's study issues. It was quite common among out informants that the mothers were the prime or sole caretakers of their children. Zoey felt exhausted from teaching her child.

Elaine's and Zoey's cases illustrate that taking care of children with dyslexia could be very discouraging and frustrating. Encountering endless homework assignments, especially Chinese dictation and composition, was really an exhausting experience. They needed to be supported.

Theme 4: Feeling relieved and being more reflective

When the parents experienced emotional difficulties, they would end up accepting that they had a child with dyslexia, in which resulted in their embracing their unique parental role. Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, 2014) pointed out that, in cases where

parents were not respected in home-school relationships and their children did not receive proper support from the school, the parents might go through a process of emotional adjustment.

Karen said that she found it useless to argue with her son about academic issues. Due to his learning difficulty, no matter how much effort her son invested, the academic result would not change. Karen said:

Learning... ... what I did was to work alongside him. However, it was useless. They had difficulties in themselves, no matter how much they read, it couldn't help much. Moreover, they did not like to read books because they were not motivated to read. The reality, however, was that you must study... Sometimes, I gave up, he didn't know how to do his homework, he couldn't do it, and I couldn't do it. I was used to it (relieved). Sometimes, I argued with the teacher, and I really had no way.

Similar to Elaine and Zoey, Karen also underwent a process of emotional difficulties, including frustration, discouragement and exhaustion. Related to the grief cycle, Karen finally gave up, and accepted her son's difficulties. She felt relieved. However, here she rose above the grief cycle, by choosing to stand up for his son and argue with the teacher.

Learning was even more difficult. He was very self-centered and had already owed too much homework. I couldn't manage it. I valued his extracurricular activities, such as watching the news together, and discussing it together. Probably because he was still young and in secondary 2, he was willing to do it. He knew that these were things that needed to be done, and he did not dare to resist. Negotiating with them about learning,

asking them to learn, must have a bottom line, there was persistence. But in the third grade, he began to resist, against homework and school. Moreover, he rebelled and tried to say that if we forced him again, he would kill himself. Everyone was arguing at home, and he threatened to take a knife to commit suicide.

Because of overdue assignments, Karen was experienced at working alongside her son to complete assignments, although sometimes she forced him to do, and quarreled with her son, until one day, her son attempted to commit suicide. She changed her mind because she was aware of giving him unaffordable pressure. In order to reduce disputes and conflicts with her son, she finally decided to adjust her academic expectations of him.

Florence, the mother of a Form 4 student with dyslexia, felt helpless about dealing with her son's study issues. She used to blame her son for being naughty, not working hard to study. However, at that time, everything went out of control, her son was irritated. He took off his clothes and went to the kitchen to take a knife, then attempted suicide:

All Hong Kong students study hard. But he was still very lazy.... I said a few words to him. He took off his shirt and rushed into the kitchen with a knife and placed it on his neck. As a mother, I was really unhappy, my heart broke.

Florence felt heartbroken at encountering this incident. She realized that she could not force her son too much with academics, and also needed to adjust her own expectations. She went through a process of emotional adjustment, and turned out to be more reflective. She learned something new from the experience of parenting a dyslexic child.

She did not force her son again about academic issues. Instead, she negotiated with school personnel:

Probably because of the past experience, since he entered the secondary school, I often talked to the principal, and hoped that my child would be treated fairly.

Karen's and Florence's narratives highlight the fact that both parents and children, to a certain degree, are under tremendous pressure to meet schools' requirements in today's education. The tension between parents and students should be acknowledged. In other words, these parents also felt confronted, and experienced difficulties with the elitist education system. They went through emotional adjustment, and became more reflective.

Theme 5: Feeling powerless but critical to the education system and Confucian culture

With emphasis on Confucian culture, Forlin (2010) and Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer, (2014) also highlighted that the Hong Kong education system is an elitist, academically oriented system which values academic performance and marginalizes children with learning disabilities in mainstream education due to their poor academic performances. All of the informants shared their worries about their children's prospects, and most of them felt powerless in the current education system and Confucian culture in Hong Kong.

Winter recalled that her son studied very hard for the public examination in Hong Kong,

however she understood it was a great challenge for him. She planned to let him study abroad as one of the alternatives:

He couldn't enter any of Hong Kong's universities. The competition was too intense. There were more than 70,000 people and only a thousand people could enter the university. He had no chance. He was studying hard late in the evening. I hoped that Jinan University could accept him, as long as he could get over 400 points in the five subjects, Chinese history, geography, etc. He also bought some exercise and practice books, he kept doing those books. He had goals and motivation.

Winter had the insight that the competition to enter one of the local universities is too intensive in Hong Kong. She had no choice but to consider an alternative for her son. She realized that the Hong Kong education system is elitist and academically oriented. There were no chances for her child with dyslexia. She criticized that the current support for students with dyslexia is not enough in Hong Kong. Her child so far had not received suitable accommodation, except for a time extension in the exam.

Hong Kong has no support for children with dyslexia, except from giving them extra time. The government has a record of children with dyslexia. By the age of 18, there is no actual support. And the application for accommodation took so long

I was very worried about what the child would do in the future. Being in school was still fine, but one day he would have to work in society. By then, how could he survive with the poor grades? What would he do in the future. … poor grades, needless to say. What would people think of him?

Winter worried that her son might not be treated fairly after graduation. His academic performance was one of the factors. Also, she criticized that the Hong Kong government does not provide children with dyslexia with sufficient support, or show concerns about their futures. Winter expressed her worries "What do people think of him (her son)?".

Elaine commented that some countries, especially western ones, permit students to simply give verbal responses to questions instead of producing written responses. She criticized that Hong Kong does not provide enough support for her child. She also expressed her worries about her son's future:

In the special education policy, I... thought there were only a few choices, because it only extended the time for attempting and resting. I know that in foreign countries, if students have difficulty with hand-muscle activities they can use a computer to answer, they don't have to use hand writing to answer. In the future, in Hong Kong, I don't know how.

When talking about the future, Tiffany first described the process of selecting elective subjects with her son. She also presented her worries about the unique written format for answering questions in the public examination, even for physical education:

He said that he wanted to study at the Hong Kong Design Institute, but he needed to work hard. He chose visual arts, but it also needed to be expressed in words. He had to be capable to express ideas through words. For him, this caused a lot of pressure. His school once took them to the Institute to visit. It helped him discover his interest, but

the barrier was that the exam always relied on word expression.

In addition, he had to study PE, but even PE required students to take written exams. Uh... There were no subjects in Hong Kong that did not have a paper test.

She felt powerless in the process of handling his public examination. Like Tiffany, Chloe also compared the Hong Kong situation to other countries:

Students in foreign countries can take oral exams instead of written assessments. Hong Kong still has no such arrangement. If students could answer orally, the learning process would be totally different.

Adeline commented that even speech-to-text systems and screen-reading software were not helpful enough for her son.

Speech-to-text system. Rubbish! The school said that the screen reader and speech-to-text system should be selected separately. But it actually did not work like this... The screen reader was too slow to read, and it didn't work. They were only useful in Liberal Studies. It didn't help much.

She insisted that she had been fighting for special education for more than ten years, however there was still much room for improvement. She also criticized there is not enough inclusion in our education system that so many students are still unsupported:

I have been fighting for more than ten years. I was fighting against the school, and there

was no improvement. Nothing has changed over the ten years and my children have grown already. I really couldn't see the value of doing these many things. Many parents only face their own interests, the interests of their children, but they are afraid of causing trouble. Once their children have graduated, it seemed all efforts have been useless.

Inclusive education was wrong. If teachers are not so caring, how to integrate? The things that we did were good for their results. If they (students with dyslexia) were called disabled, how could they be put together with other students? They couldn't match, compete, and they would only have less confidence and more difficulty to catch up. They were not very special. They were just sandwiched in the middle. I thought they should be placed in a more proper placement (different types of schools), e.g. some for the barriers, some for the autism, and some for the transition... this would be better. Schools in Hong Kong specifically recruit more students of different types.

She emphasized that inclusion might not be the best solution for dyslexic children in Hong Kong because of the Confucian culture. She criticized that teachers are not so caring, inclusive education is impossible. Students with dyslexia might not easily cope with their difficulties in competing with other students. Their academic performances cannot match those of other students, so she suggested to modify the current recruitment of students in schools.

Chloe reported the experience of graduates with dyslexia perceived negatively by society. Employers might not understand the difficulties of students with dyslexia. Chloe stated a number of unavoidable barriers:

There were many SEN students here. Some students studied till Form 4 in secondary school, and if they had good grades, they would transfer to other school or start working in society. Some girls came back to share and said that they encountered discrimination. Some bosses would feel that the students from this school (especially SEN) were inferior because the banding was not high, and others looked at people with dyslexia with colored glasses.

Similar to Adeline, Chloe reported the experiences of the graduates to illustrate that inclusive culture is not well-developed in Hong Kong. Children with dyslexia are inferior in competition with peers in their careers.

Winter's and Elaine's cases indicated that the methods of accommodating dyslexic students' needs in examinations in Hong Kong are ineffective and insufficient. In addition to time extensions, other alternatives, such oral instead of written exams, could be considered. Adeline's and Chloe's stories illustrated education and society barriers to students with dyslexia. Both parents were critical and reflective on existing the education system and Confucian culture. They, just like other informants, were confronting these barriers every day.

Theme 6: Feeling Stressed about Financial Support

The informants were also concerned about financial burdens. Rearing a child with special education needs imposes a huge financial burden on the parents, especially for training and therapy. McBrayer and McBrayer (2014) and Wang et al. (2016) claimed

that there is a differentiation in parental roles promoted by Confucian culture, with mothers taking the key role in educating the children while fathers are the main financial supporters for the family. Hence, due to the high demands of the caregiving, one of the parents, probably the mother, will often be forced to quit her jobs and give up her career. Chloe described her decision to give up her job:

When I knew that my child had dyslexia, I resigned. I didn't really have a choice! *You can imagine that taking care of him is too hard.*

Adeline recalled her memory of being highly pressurized while taking care of her children:

I pressurized myself, and my family couldn't help much. A lot of things had to be taken on myself, just to take care of them (three children) ... How could I go to work?

Karen was the only informant having a job, but she was a single mother. She claimed that she had no choice. What was lucky was that the secondary school provided her son with rented accommodation:

I couldn't give up my job. He could live in the dormitory. I was a single mother, I had no choice, I had to work.

In addition, medical check-ups also had to be financed by the parents if the school-based psychologists could not meet assessment needs. Winter claimed that:

The child felt annoyed and did not want to do it (assessment), because the school-based educational psychologist claimed that we must do it for special provision for the HKDSE (public examination), but I didn't know how much a "time extension" could help. We needed to wait for so long if we were to do the assessment arranged by the school. Hence, we needed to look for institutions outside school. We had to pay for an educational psychologist outside school. Although we also had to wait, the time was quite short. It cost 10,000 dollars. At that time, I thought that it would be better for him to go to tutoring and be more effective once we had the reports. I thought so at the time. How did I know that he had to do an intelligence assessment first, all of them cost money, such as reading and writing assessments, and then training groups, etc. They were so expensive!

Without jobs, parents might need to cut costs in caring for their children. However, despite the government having offered learning support grants to students with special education needs, the parents were still pushed to offer their children various therapies or training.

Theme 7 Feeling resilient in difficult time

The themes above-mentioned are all negative results. In fact, there is a positive finding in the research. After experiencing emotional cycles, parents would end up stronger and able to cope with their own emotional difficulties. Parental resilience is defined as "the capacity of parents to deliver a competent and quality level of parenting to children despite the presence of risk factors" (Gavidia-Payne, Denny, Davis, Francis, & Jackson, 2015, p.111). It refers to how well a person can adapt to the negative events in their life

(Cohen, 2018; Sawyer, & National Children's Bureau, 2009). Cohen (2018) stated that a person with good resilience had ability to bounce back more quickly and with less stress than someone whose resilience was less developed.

Donna described her way of bouncing back:

When I argue with my child, I will hide in my room. Because I can't control it (my emotions), I will beat him. I need to take a deep breath. I can't control it. A few days ago, I helped my son to do revision. And I cried. Really hard for me to accept his weakness. I hided in my room again.

Adeline also recalled her experience of building emotional resilience through seeking helps from others:

(After conflict with school) There was a teacher in the school. When I encountered emotional problems, I would find her. She helped me a lot.

Lily had similar experience:

My child had dyslexia, and I really didn't know what it was at first. I felt very sad. I kept asking myself why my child would encounter such thing. Really unfortunate! Why me? Why my child? However, my daughter helped me. She comforted me. I ended up figuring out and changed my mind, thinking that dyslexia is not a big problem. And then, I start to move on.

Florence preferred to talk to her God:

Thank God for giving me this experience.

In the study, most parents experienced emotional difficulties, but in the end they all became strong, tough, and even developed their own ways to ease their emotions. Some chose to seek help from others, take a deep breath, talk to God, etc. Such strategies not only boost resilience, but also strengthen their capacity to nurture their children. Resilience is very important experience for parents.

Special Case (different from major themes)

The major themes were presented in above. There were some exceptional cases in which different experiences were shared. For example, one informant, Adeline, said that since her conflict with the school, one teacher seemed to have developed more awareness about the needs of SEN children, and changed her attitudes and ways of supporting them:

A teacher, one of the school middle management, with the parent-school conflict experience, seemed to learn from those incidents. She started being helpful in resolving many issues in constructive ways. For example, when my child owed her homework assignments, she would stay behind after the lesson, and teach him individually, as she understands individual support is important to SEN children………… This kind of assistance could relieve my burden a lot. By the end of the year, my child had not received any penalties or demerits. I knew that the teacher accommodated his needs

and helped him to avoid those records.

The teacher really helped me so much. For example, I had never bought any summer homework for my child since Secondary One, because he didn't know how to do it. It didn't help him at all. But I found that in the end, my children would have a copy. It was bought by the teacher.

In this case, the teacher's attitude was very different from those teachers who continued in conflicts with parents. She made efforts to accommodate the needs of the student, in a way indirectly reducing the parent's the emotional burden.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has provided the detailed results of the study. Seven themes were identified based on what the informants shared. These seven themes were: 1) Feeling frustrated about parent-school collaboration. Parents and schools not only failed to establish harmonious relationships, but also experienced conflicts and quarrels. Three stages of the parent-school relationship were identified: misunderstanding and inflexibility, conflict, and relationships harmed and mutual trust destroyed; 2) Feeling discriminated against about their children's experience. All informants described encountering explicit and implicit discrimination in dealing with their children affairs with school. Discrimination against dyslexic children was widespread in local schools; 3) Feeling emotional difficulties in care-taking. Most of the informants experienced discouragement, frustration and exhaustion from taking care of their children; 4) Feeling relieved and being more reflective. Many parents finally accepted their

children's difficulties, and hence may have turned out to be more reflective; 5) Feeling powerless but critical of the education system and Confucian culture. The education system and Confucian culture were two aspects parents could not escape from in relation to their children's development. Most of the informants felt powerless but remained critical of various educations and social barriers in Hong Kong; 6) Feeling stressed about financial support. Caring for children with dyslexia is highly cost-intensive due to medical expenses and therapies. Parents might also need to quit their jobs in order to care for their children. 7) Feeling resilient in difficult time. Parents became more stronger after experienced emotional difficulty.

Chapter 6 Discussion

This study examined the experiences of parents supporting dyslexic children in Hong Kong secondary schools. Seven key themes emerged in relation to their experiences of school-parent collaboration. These seven themes are 1) Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration; 2) Feeling discriminated about their children's experiences; 3) Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking; 4) Feeling relieved and becoming more reflective; 5) Feeling powerless but critical of the education system and Confucian culture; 6) Feeling stressed about financial support; and 7) Feeling resilient in difficult time. In this chapter, the results of this study will be discussed in the context of the literature that informed the study. The limitations of the study will also be addressed.

Limitations of the Study

Twelve informants, all parents of students with dyslexia, were interviewed in the study. Their children were studying at different form levels, from Form One to Form Six in Hong Kong local (i.e. government) secondary schools. All informants were the main caregivers to their children, and experienced in parent-school collaboration in the Hong Kong education system. However, there were three research limitations. The first is that the father's role was not addressed. The study was originally designed to include both parents, however all informants who accepted my invitation were mothers. There are two possible reasons; first, the parental role in Chinese traditional culture, with fathers often taking the role of financial supporters while mothers are often the caregivers of their offspring (Rimkute et al., 2014; Tam, 2009); and second, mothers are more likely to participate in school-related duties and would thus be more familiar than fathers with

school (Rimkute et al., 2014; Tam, 2009). Tam (2009) emphasized that Chinese mothers in Hong Kong are more involved in children's education with love and care, and also more efficacious in matters concerning their children's academic performances. The second limitation of the study was that no female dyslexic students were involved. Only one informant had a daughter with dyslexia, however this child was only seven years old and was studying in primary school, so did not fulfil the criterion for this study. However, this predominance of males may be explained by the fact that there are more males than females in the population of students diagnosed with dyslexia (Arnett et al., 2017). The third limitation of the study was that the informants' socioeconomic status was not taken into account. This might have affected their responses and their experiences of school-parents collaboration, as may have the schools' bandings (rankings in Hong Kong's selective secondary school system). Socioeconomic status may affect the parents' resources, their academic pursuits and their expectations for their children. People with high socioeconomic status find it easier to access resources and may have less financial pressure. They may be more influential in society, and teachers could thus be more willing to listen to their voices. Schools with higher bandings might tend to value students' academic performances, and devote learning resources to them, thus ignoring students with lower academic performances. A fourth limitation of the study was associated with risk in building trustfulness between the outsider researcher and informants. As an outsider researcher, a necessary considerable amount of time was spent to establish the informants' trust, but it was still a question of how much experience they were willing to disclose. For example, parents might choose to hide some information because they are afraid of the treatment of their children at school. However, I tried my best to collect as much as useful information as possible within these constraints.

Discussion of Results

In this section, the results will be discussed in relation to the two research questions, and compared with the existing literature and models discussed in the literature review chapter. The results outlined briefly in Tables 6-11 will be discussed in relation to the themes that emerged from the data. Recommendations will be given at the end of each discussion.

Research Questions:

1) What are the emotional experiences of parents in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

2) What are the barriers these parents experienced in the parent-school collaboration process? How do these experiences make sense to them?

Frustrated about parent-school collaboration

The informants shared their experiences of participating in routine school duties that involved collaborating with school members (e.g. working with teachers in supporting their children). Three subthemes or stages were identified: 1) misunderstanding and inflexibility, 2) conflict, and 3) relationships harmed and mutual trust destroyed. Table 6 summarizes these three stages:

Table 6:
Theme 1 Informants' experience of frustrated in parent-school collaboration

Theme	Description of the Theme
Frustrated about parent-school collaboration	Informants experienced three stages in parent-school collaboration: 1) **Misunderstanding and inflexibility**. It is quite difficult to establish a harmonious relationship between school and parent. Misunderstandings often happen. There are some possible reasons: 1) not all teachers are considerate of the needs of special education; 2) although some teachers might understand their education needs, they might not have authority or right to provide accommodate their needs sufficiently. 2) **Conflict**. In the second stage, there was lot of unfair treatment to students with dyslexia. The parents needed to fight for their students' rights. Although teachers were presumably serving under the principles of equal opportunity and accepted indicators for inclusion, there were still some unresolvable conflicts. 3) **Relationships harmed and mutual trust destroyed**. In final stage, relationships were destroyed completely, due to unpleasant experiences between parents and school. Parents and students have been struggling due to a lack of cooperation and barriers established by the school.

First, it is noticeable that parent-school collaboration is hard to establish and maintain, as reflected by the informants in this study. **Misunderstanding and inflexibility** often happened in collaborative processes. All informants experienced frustrating, disappointing and mistrustful experiences with school members. Some teachers might not be equipped with enough knowledge to support students with special education needs, while others are not willing to provide support. The former is due to a lack of knowledge, while the latter involves teachers' attitudes. In addition, inclusive education might also be not be applied well in schools. For example, the informants recalled teachers unable to provide individual teaching for students with dyslexia, and a tendency to stick to didactic traditionalist approaches without flexibility. The present study indicated that the parents often encountered barriers in communication with school personnel, and they felt they were not trusted by the school due to inadequate

knowledge and unprofessional attitudes of teachers. Inclusive education was not working well in their children's schools.

According to the inclusive education policy in Hong Kong, teachers can implement individual tailored teaching approaches, which vary the demand and complexity of the learning content, process, product and environment in order to provide adequate flexibility to meet students' diverse needs. However, the experience of the parents in this study appeared to be inconsistent with the principles of inclusive education in Hong Kong. For example, the inclusive policy statement states that: "Teaching staff appreciate students' capabilities from different perspectives and do not expect all students to follow one single learning style or to attain the same academic level" (Education Bureau, 2019, p.16).

Moreover, the findings are similar to those of some international studies (Forlin, 2010; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Lam, 2015; Nowell & Salem, 2007; Taylor, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2012). Nowell and Salem (2007) indicated that, once parents and teachers fail to communicate well, conflicts will happen, resulting in adverse impacts on the parent-school relationship. Some studies have also reported that inadequate knowledge of teachers about dyslexia and limitations of inclusive education might also be barriers to parents trying to support their dyslexic children (Forlin, 2010; Humphrey & Mullins, 2002; Lam, 2015; Taylor, 2017; Yildiz et al., 2012). For example, in Lam's (2015) study, the participants described the experience of sharing their difficulties with teachers. These teachers lacked understanding of dyslexic children, and interacting with them teachers was perceived as a 'painful experience' for parents. These parents even considered some incidents as "child abuse", when teachers shamed students or made

them felt inadequate. These factors resulted in adverse consequences to the parents' relationships with teachers, and barriers to inclusive education (Lam, 2015, p.70). In my study, Adeline also described her experience of negotiating with teachers who lacked an understanding of special education, about accommodating her son's overdue assignment, and claimed that such an experience destroyed her relationship with the school, and created barriers between herself and the school.

The present study revealed that teachers, even those with special education training, placed considerable demands on students with dyslexia. There was some discussion that this situation might exist exclusively in the Hong Kong context, specifically as a consequence of teachers' performance appraisal requirements. The Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) (2016) stipulated that schools should develop their own performance assessments. Common methods of performance assessment promoted by the EDB are "lesson observation" and "assignment inspection" (Education Bureau, 2016, p.18). In order to achieve good teaching performance, teachers are required to submit their students' assignments to their subject master or the principal. Teachers with unsatisfactory performances (e.g. their students' assignment did not reach the standards of their peers) might be penalised, such as with low scores in their appraisals, or the need to do self-improvement plans. Therefore, many teachers try different means to force students to hand in their assignments, possibly with some "standards", without addressing the diversity of students' learning needs and progress, or without making any accommodation for special needs. According to my observations in the school communities in Hong Kong as an SEN coordinator, and discussion with teachers teaching SEN students in mainstream schools, I found that, even for students with dyslexia, teachers may tend to ask them to do the same assignment several times, or

keep doing it until they reach their own performance standards. For example, a teacher might request students to copy excellent examples of Chinese composition, or they might ask students to do a large number of copying, dictation, and writing exercises with a large number of words in order to improve their performances. When students can provide acceptable assignments, teachers can express that their teaching is effective, and thus receive good teaching appraisals.

This study found that there are many difficulties and barriers in parent-school collaboration, some of which come from teachers' inflexible academic requirements. Students with dyslexia are unable to cope with such academic requirements, resulting in frustration with their parents. Parents often ask their children's schools for help, but the schools might not make proper accommodation for them, hence forming a vicious cycle (Chien & Lee, 2013; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013). I learned from the results and the literature that there are gaps between parents and schools regarding the inclusive practices for SEN children. The first of these is that teachers do not have enough knowledge or flexibility in tailoring their teaching approaches, resulting in forcing students with dyslexia to achieve unachievable standards (Barned, Knapp, and Neuharth-Pritchett 2011). The second gap is that parents are not welcome to get involved in school practice or are not on the same power level to do so (Chien & Lee, 2013; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013). According to the school-parent collaboration model, successful collaboration should be one of equal power between the school and parents t. Parents should be empowered. Based on previous studies and my findings, there are some insights about improving the situation. The first is to narrow the gaps between the parents' and teachers' understanding of inclusive practice, for example by enhancing communication and discussion between parents and teachers

regarding inclusive practices. Another is to educate the teachers about inclusive practice, for example, encourage them to have more SEN training, not only to understand but to realize the needs of students with SEN.   A third insight is to change teachers' attitudes towards parents, e.g. recognize their roles in inclusive education. The fourth is to empower parents to work in collaboration with the school, for example by inviting parents to take part in routine school functions, such as school information day or sports day. The fifth is to educate parents about their rights in school-parent collaborations.

Second, parent-school collaboration should be established by mutual agreement (Cheng, 2005; McDermott-Fasy, 2010). However, professionals often ignore the parents' concerns (Blok et al., 2007). Some informants have claimed that, in Hong Kong, teachers often have to deal with multiple teaching and non-teaching duties every day. Many teachers find it difficult to tailor-make their requirements to suit every individual student subject to the school homework policy. Even principals might not be considerate and understanding to parents of students with special needs, such as those with dyslexia. In my study, the principals tended to support the teachers rather than the parents. For example, one of the informants, Adeline joined in a meeting with teachers, but the principal only stood by the teacher's side throughout the process, and was not even friendly to the parents. This finding coincides with other studies in other parts of the world, such as the United Kingdom (e.g. Blok et al., 2007; Lindsay & Dockrell, 2004) and the United State (e.g. Nowell & Salem, 2007). Parents' opinions are always devalued and disrespected by teachers and other professionals, causing conflicts between parents and helping professionals in schools. For example, Blok et al. (2007, p.4) claimed that "many parents feel that the school does not listen to them enough"; Nowell & Salem (2007, p.308) reported a parent's statement "I'm dealing with all of

these people [school teaching staff] and finding out that the ones that I thought I could trust, I can't trust. It's definitely set up for a very negative feeling toward anything at this point." Conflicts occurred inevitably in case the school and parents fail to achieve their mutual agreements.

Different from previous studies, the current research found that, in the conflict between parents and teachers, the role of parents is often not supported by the school, and will only cause them to be more marginalized. It seems that the more parents complain, the worse their situation becomes, forming a vicious circle. Moreover, as a result, parents' emotions are often trapped in the emotional cycle, making them more depressed and struggling. In regard to the experiences of parents of dyslexic children being marginalized in school contexts, I would like to refer to the themes discussed in the social model of disability, to better understand parental experience and their children's difficulties. These are systemic barriers, negative attitudes of professionals, such as teachers and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently), which constitutes the greatest obstacle for people with disabilities. In this model, disability, for students with learning disabilities is not only 'personal deficiencies' that constitute their lived experiences in everyday life, but also the behaviors and attitudes of others (Shakespeare, 2006; Reindal, 2008), such as teachers' attitudes or expectations towards students with disabilities. In the following, systemic barriers, the negative attitudes of teaching staff and the exclusion by society will be highlighted.

First, systemic barriers mean policies, practices or procedures that result in parents of children with disabilities receiving unequal treatments. In my study, parents of children with disabilities expressed that they are not welcome to communicate with schools.

Parental roles of children with disabilities were undermined in participation with school personnel to deal with school issues. I think the systemic barriers mentioned here can be said to come from the rigidity of the school system, and this rigidity comes from the deep-rooted elite thought. Because of the elitism, the need for inclusive education, and the voices of parents of children with disabilities are often ignored.

Second, the negative attitude of teaching staff towards the parents of children with disabilities is also the theme emphasized by the social model. The reasons for teaching staff having negative attitude are complicated. Dalkilic & Vadeboncoeur (2016, p.129) explained "A child's wish may be to be understood, but this might decline due to an educator's understanding of the activities children must do". Teachers encounter systemic barriers, which force them to posit quite negative thoughts. Systemic barriers may be closely related to teachers' negative attitudes. The systemic barrier of school is rather inflexible, in this rigid school system there are nothing teacher can do. As a result, they can only respond negatively including attitude, to parents.

Third, the social model is also concerned with people with disabilities experiencing exclusion by society (Reindal, 2008; Shakespeare, 2006). Although the Education Bureau has promoted inclusive education since the 1970s (Hong Kong Government, 1977; Lui et al., 2015; Poon-McBrayer & Lian, 2002), children with disabilities, such as those with learning disabilities and their parents are still confronting exclusion by schools, teachers and peers. Forlin, Sin, & Maclean (2013) also mentioned that competition in academic performance can lead to the exclusion of underperforming students with disabilities. I will explain this in detail in the next section. The social model of disabilities pays attention to the lives of people with disabilities, and

especially points out systemic barriers in their daily lives (Shakespeare, 2006; Reindal, 2008). These barriers are systemic barriers, negative attitudes of professionals and exclusion by society (purposely or inadvertently).

Based on the findings and this discussion, I suggest that 1) there is an urgent need to strengthen teachers' knowledge and caring about special education needs, and eventually remove various barriers and accept students with diverse learning needs. For example, parent education should not be limited to providing only special education knowledge, but also to allow them to understand the rights and interests of special education children, and to protect them from suffering from social obstacles. 2) Teacher training should also not only emphasize student achievement and support for special education students, but also extend to understanding their difficulties and the rights of children with disabilities, as well as teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. In this study, the parents experienced teachers' unprofessional attitudes and misbehavior towards them and their dyslexic children; these are examples to reflect on.

Third, as levels of trust diminished between the schools and parents, both parents and students suffered. If teachers discriminate against students with dyslexia, their parents might sue them on the grounds that they have infringed the principles of inclusive education and discrimination against people with disabilities. A subgroup of parents in this study had played advocator roles for their children. This subtheme supports other studies (Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014), which claimed that parents should become advocates by speaking out about the rights of their children in Hong Kong. However, the other groups of parents in my present study chose to arrange for their children to study in other schools instead of taking an advocate role. They stated that it

was useless and time-consuming to speak out about their rights because their children only had to spend six years in secondary school. This meant that once their children graduated or went to study aboard, they did not need to be involved in any special education action. Although some parents in the study chose to speak up for their children with dyslexia, most parents actually tended to make concessions to avoid trouble with school personnel, and they also thought that it was unhelpful to speak up. Unlike previous studies, my study indicated the adverse impact of Hong Kong's elitist, academically-oriented education system. Hong Kong education emphasizes students' academic performance. Most schools are eager to admit high-achieving students and to discard those whose academic performances are not satisfactory. Based on this culture, everyone pursues academic achievement. Even if teachers are accused of treating students with learning disabilities unreasonably, the school will generally choose to ignore or avoid them. Even if parents complain and take legal action for years, the school will still not improve. The social model of disability emphasizes that everyone has different needs, and needs different care (Shakespeare, 2006). However, there are various institutional or personnel barriers in society (Reindal, 2008), and these also exist in mainstream schools. The social model provides an explanation of this situation. Traditional Chinese society is influenced deeply by Confucianism, so academic performance is generally emphasized (Poon-Mcbrayer & Mcbrayer, 2014). Parents of students with dyslexia encounter institutional barriers, for example that everyone must attain high academic achievement, and they are under pressure in such an environment. With this insight into the achievement-oriented nature of Confucian culture, I realized that the government and Education Bureau have an urgent need to understand the voices of parents of children with special education needs, realize their situations, strengthen the culture of inclusive education, and address more appropriate expectations, offer

suitable ways to accommodate students' needs, and provide facilities and opportunities which suit everyone with different abilities, so that the public can pay more attention to their diverse needs.

Based on the above discussion, educators should be reminded about the diversity of needs of parents and students. Parent-school collaborations should be based on equal power and mutual respect, and be beneficial to both parties. If possible, parents and educators should cooperate well with each other. Principals should also delegate more authority to academic panels, and flexibility to subject teachers to tailor-made home-work assignments for students with diverse learning needs. Special education coordinators, as well as school education psychologists, should cooperate with educators and parents to provide appropriately tiered assignments if necessary (Education Bureau, 2019). Both teachers and administrators should be aware of creating equal opportunities of their students, as well as parental rights in the collaboration process. Parents also need to be educated about their children's and their own rights according to the principles of inclusive education, as stipulated by the Hong Kong Education Bureau (2019).

Discrimination in school

All informants told stories about their experiences with discriminatory practices against their SEN children and themselves in the school-parent collaboration process. It is significant to note that implicit discrimination existed in everyday school life, and occurred in multiple ways. Table 7 summarizes the results related to discrimination.

Table 7: Theme 2 Informants' experiences of discrimination relating to their children's experiences

Theme	Description of the Theme
Discrimination relating to their children's experience	The forms of discrimination could be classified as explicit and implicit. Informants indicated that inclusive education has been promoted for many years, but some teaching staff not only failed to achieve, but also violated, the inclusive principles. Discrimination is common and occurs in various forms.

There are two types of discrimination, explicit and implicit.

Explicit discrimination in school

Explicit discrimination is a discrimination involving "direct hostility expressed or behavior" by others (Blank et al., 2004, p.56). All parents explained their common experiences discrimination while attempting to cooperate with a school. Explicit discrimination is quite common in schools. One of the experiences reported by the parents in this study was teachers trying to persuade them to give up their applications for their children to participate in extra-curricular activities and after-school supplementary classes. The parents explained that there were two reasons for teachers to do this. First, the elitist culture forces teachers to enroll high-achievers in their classes. In order to ensure high levels of class performance, only high-achievers are welcome to their lessons. A second reason is teachers' concerns about their performance appraisals. In Hong Kong, all teachers are required to be appraised every year, and their students' academic performances are one of the key factors affecting these appraisals (Education Bureau, 2003). The Education Bureau (2016) stipulated that schools should develop their own performance assessment processes, and lesson observations and assignment inspections are generally included as assessment items. It is worth noting that one informant, Karen, also considered the possibility that her child might interrupt the lessons and cause difficulties, so she was willing to concede, giving up her child's rights to the extra-curricular activities and after-school supplementary classes.

This finding about discrimination reflects previous studies (Forlin, 2010; Lam, 2015; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). Lam (2015) found that children with dyslexia were not welcome in regular classes. The examination-oriented curricula in Hong Kong are inflexible and create an elitist culture which has no room for students to be left behind (Forlin, 2010), and accommodating their needs seemed to be not well-accepted (Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). Inclusive education has not been accepted fully by educators in Hong Kong, and in my study, parents, e.g. Winter, reflected that some people still think that special provisions are a benefit for students with disabilities. Although these previous studies did not emphasize discrimination specifically, they described elements of it, such as schools being unwelcoming to children with dyslexia, the elitist culture, and immature inclusive education. This study reveals the daily experience of parents of children with dyslexia in cooperation with schools. Parents of children with dyslexia are discriminated against or prejudiced by teachers by virtue of routine practices, such as using insufficient resources as an excuse to bar dyslexic children from taking part in after-school activities, which violates the concept of inclusive education (Education Bureau, 2019). According to the inclusive education statement, "Given the diverse student needs in all regular classrooms, 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, 2019, p.1). Parental accounts of their experience challenged the actual implementation of this statement in schools to support children with SEN. This is despite the fact that the Education Bureau (2019, p.1-2) highlighted that schools should provide "opportunities for students [with SEN] to take part in various school activities".

Implicit discrimination in schools

Implicit discrimination means treating a person in a poor, unfair, unwelcome or improper manner (Blank et al., 2004; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019; Feigenbaum, 2018). It often happens in subtle ways in schools (Blank et al., 2004; Feigenbaum, 2018). Unlike explicit discrimination, implicit discrimination is invisible, subtle, covert and unconscious. Sometimes, teachers who are implicitly discriminating against others may not even know it (Bertrand, 2005). In the study, the informants reported that their requests were always ignored, and teachers, even principals, might unconsciously choose some words to offend them. Zoey and Adeline claimed that when they complained to the schools that teachers were looking down on students with dyslexia, involving verbal and non-verbal hostility, their complaints were ignored. They believed such ignorance was intentional. They were worried that persistent verbal antagonism could eventually become harmful. The teachers' behaviors they described not only violated the principle of inclusive education, but also went against the idea of it. Even when the parents went to the school to complain, the principal could not help. Implicit discrimination is always subtle and therefore the ways in which it often occurs are not unlawful. The parents felt helpless to confront implicit discrimination relating to to their children's academic issues. Sometimes, parents of students with dyslexia might seek help from teachers. However, it is quite common that teachers will not provide enough help; in other words, they might choose to ignore both parents and students' needs. This finding echoes the research results in the literature. Eccles and Harold (1993) and Christenson et al. (2005) described an unwillingness by school personnel to cooperate with parents if the relationship between the parents and the school was not well-established. Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2014, p.103) also outlined that parents of children with specific learning difficulties often "felt

intimidated during interactions with, and disrespect from, these authorities (e.g. school personnel, education bureaus, educational psychologists, etc.)". Building onto the findings of previous research, the present study further depicted that school personnel often unconsciously discriminate against students with dyslexia and their parents in their daily use of language and mannerism, such as by ignoring their calls or using offensive language. These situations are quite widespread in ordinary secondary schools in Hong Kong. The social model states that discrimination is ubiquitous and lies in the daily lives of people with disabilities (Shakespeare, 2006). As a miniature of society, schools also face different forms of discrimination. This issue cannot be ignored.

The existence of discrimination confirms the focus of the social model (Shakespeare, 2006) and the social relational model (Reindal, 2008). As mentioned previously, this model is characterized by systemic barriers, negative attitudes and exclusion by society which constitutes the greatest obstacle for people with disabilities (Reindal, 2008; Shakespeare, 2006). Schools generally treat parents of students with learning disabilities inequitably, most likely due to social factors and the elitist culture which does not accept students performing poorly. Unfortunately, students with dyslexia have weaker academic performances than their peers due to their poor neurological and cognitive abilities. Forlin, Sin, and Maclean (2013) also commented on competition in academic performance resulting in the exclusion of underperforming students with disabilities. However, the implementation of inclusive education in Hong Kong means that every school should implement a policy of inclusive education and accept students with dyslexia. The dilemma is that the school resources may not be enough to support such a policy. As a result, uneven distribution of resources can occur. Under such circumstances, students with learning disabilities become victims and cannot be treated

properly. When parents complain to the school, both explicit and implicit discrimination arise. This finding gives me insight about the allocation of education resources, the implementation of education policies and the need for special education laws.

As shown by the informants' experiences, it is necessary for education policy makers, teachers and principals to review their schools' inclusive education policies, ensure that all educators and teaching staff follows the inclusion indicators (Education Bureau, 2008), put the inclusive education into practice properly, allocate education resources appropriately, and achieve the idea of caring for students with diverse needs (Education Bureau, 2019). Unlike western countries (such as the United States) or other Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong does not have a special education law (Poon-McBrayer & Wong, 2013; Yell, 1995), and discrimination against students with dyslexia is quite prevalent in schools. Hence, Lui et al. (2017, p.628) commented that there are concerns about "the quality of inclusive practices and the school culture of accommodating students with SEN among the mainstream schools in Hong Kong." From the Equal Opportunities Ordinance on children with learning disabilities, it is clear that discrimination is occurring if teachers treat a student with a disability less favourably than another person without that disability (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019). It is obvious from my study that many teachers violate this ordinance. In addition, teachers who do not give all students fair learning opportunities are also violating the Code of ethics or code or practice of educators (Council on Professional Conduct in Education, 2015).

Emotional difficulties in care-taking

The study informants reported difficulties associated with taking care of their children with dyslexia and that they commonly experienced emotional difficulties. This result is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8: Theme 3. Informants' experiences of emotional difficulties in care-taking

Theme	Description of the Theme
Emotional difficulties in care-taking	Experiences of taking care of their children, especially academic-related issues. Informants illustrated that taking care of children with dyslexia usually led to emotional difficulties. Their narratives highlighted that both parents and children, to a certain degree, are under pressure in handling school requirements in today's education.

It is hard to imagine the difficulties experienced by parents who are taking care of children with dyslexia. In this study, the results revealed that the child's diagnosis of dyslexia caused the first shock for the parents. These parents' responses to the diagnosis reflect Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Kessler's (2014) five stages of grief cycle. The five stages of grief can explain, to some extent, the circumstances and experiences faced by parents of students with dyslexia, but there are differences and limitations. When faced with a confirmed diagnosis, parents generally feel shocked and unaccepting. However, with the intervention of educational psychologists and teachers, most parents soon enter the bargaining stage. The difference is that the unaccepting emotions will also appear again during the hard times of caring for their children's academic affairs and dealing with endless pressures given by schools. Other emotions, such as, discouragement, frustration, helplessness, depression and anxiety, and the need to negotiate also appear one after another rather than sequentially throughout the process of rearing a dyslexic child. The grief cycle, however, limited to emotional processes. It does not address environmental factors. Parents of children with dyslexia cannot avoid biases and prejudices in their social context. In the following sections, discussion will focus on what the informants did to take care of their children's routines, focusing on their

feelings of stress and helplessness in taking care of their children, and their mental health issues. This finding fits exactly with what was mentioned in Chapter Two, the theoretical framework. Parents generally fall into an emotional cycle after facing their child's diagnosis of dyslexia, as if they were in a grief cycle (Delany 2017; Levi, 2017).

Full of stress and helplessness in taking care of children

The informants reported that they felt stressed and helpless trying to deal with their children's endless homework assignments. They explained that they needed to teach and guide their children to complete homework assignments overnight. However, in spite of the time and effort devoted, their children's academic performances still fell behind those of their peers. The parents felt not only depressed, but also discouraged and frustrated. This finding is in line with some western studies (e.g. Bonifacci et al., 2014; Dyson, 1996, 2003). Bonifacci et al. (2014) explained that when children find it hard to study effectively because of their disabilities, their parents will be bothered and stressed about the children's growth and academics. Dyson (2003) revealed that the growth of children with disabilities is related to the parents' stress. The more stress a parent feels, the more the child will suffer because of the learning difficulties. Both parents and children find they cannot cope with too many homework assignments, increasing the pressure on parents to take care of their children. The results of my study also revealed Chinese dictation and composition to be the most challenging of all types of homework. The parents had tried various methods to teach their children to learn and recite vocabulary, including story-making and multi-sensory teaching. However, it is impossible to create a story for every word, and some abstract vocabulary is not easy to express with physical touch. Some of the parents thought that arranging for their children to take part in private tuition could help to minimize the shortcomings of their

academic performances, even if they knew that the specific learning disability was neurobiological problem in origin ([EIDA], 2002; Lyon et al., 2003; Shaywitz, 2008). Only a few of the informants' children had been able to catch up with peers after making great endeavors. Unlike English, only the phono-semantic compound characters have sound recognition in Chinese, and many characters have no rules to follow (Ho et al., 2002). For students with dyslexia, recognizing Chinese characters is the most difficult. Learning Chinese echoes the emotional difficulties of parents for parenting their children with dyslexia. The parents in this study felt stress from dealing with their children's academic issues, especially learning Chinese. The implications for the finding are that, because learning Chinese language is more difficult for students with learning disabilities, instead of dealing with the Chinese language, parents may consider arranging their children to an educational environment that does not require Chinese language study. In addition, the education Bureau must consider the difficulties of students with dyslexia facing Chinese learning and make appropriate curriculum adjustments.

Mental health of parents of children with learning disabilities

The mental health of parents of children with learning disabilities should not be ignored. Many of the parents in my study had experienced their children's strong emotional responses to academic affairs, such as expressing thoughts about suicide, which I will mention again in the next section. The parents seemed to be in a dilemma. For one thing, they wanted their children to learn well and did not want them feeling inferior in accepting academic failure. For another, the parents were worried that their children might hurt themselves because of the academic pressure. Sometimes, they chose not to touch upon the academic issues with their children because they felt so stressed and

helpless to deal with these issues. In the previous literature, Bailey et al. (2007) and Singer (2006) claimed that mothers of children with disabilities have high rates of distress, depression and anxiety. Dillon-Wallace, McDonagh, and Fordham (2014), Gallagher and Whiteley (2013) and Singer (2006) reported parents of children with disabilities being at greater risk of poorer physical and psychological health than parents of children without disabilities because of the extra efforts involved in taking caring of their children. In addition, Gilson et al. (2018) found that many parents of children with disabilities were reluctant to seek mental health services due to time constraints, but that their preferred choice of mental health services was individual counselling. In Hong Kong, the mental health of parents of children with disabilities is mostly ignored, and not to be considered in the context of inclusive education. I suggest that policy-makers should give more attention to the mental well-being/mental health of parents of children with disabilities, and that counselling services agencies should also provide more mental individual support to these parents.

The experiences of the informants in this study suggest that the Education Bureau might need to reflect on the current education plan. For example, students with dyslexia could have different language proficiency requirements from those expected of other students, especially for Chinese language. Teachers, counselors, and other school personnel also need to pay more attention to the heavy pressure experienced by parents.

Relieved and reflective

After going through the different stages of grief cycle, denial, shock, anger, bargaining, and depression, parents will eventually accept the reality and their child's diagnosis of dyslexia. They then become willing to face the difficulties with their child. In my study,

it appeared that the parents' negative emotions were relieved eventually, but that often there would be a lot of reflection. In the following, two sections, parental emotional relief and the process of becoming reflective parents are discussed. The results are summarized in Table 9.

Table 9: Theme 4. Informants' experiences of relief and being more reflective

Theme	Description of the Theme
Relieved and being more reflective	When parents finally accept their children's difficulties, they might be relieved, and turn out to be more reflective.

Parental emotion

The parents in this study mostly realized that they needed to change their expectations towards the child's academic performance after a major conflict with the child, and this led eventually to emotional relief. The parents talked about their conflicts with their children. Some children had threatened to commit suicide because they could not bear the pressure of school. The parents stated that they ended up changing their attitudes and expectations about their children's academic performances. This situation reflects a dilemma between academic expectations of children and parents' understanding of dyslexia. On one hand, parents hope that their children can achieve good academic results, and on the other hand, they hope to break through the obstacles of learning difficulties by forcing their children to study more. However, this can eventually become unbearable for the children, and the parents will be frustrated physically and mentally. As a result, the relationship between the child and the parent can break down.

This finding connects to the study by Multhauf, Buschmann, and Soellner (2016), which pinpointed that the more academic problem students have, the worse the relationship between parents and children will become, conflicts will arise about issues

like homework and supervision, and the parents will have higher stress levels. Additionally, Bonifacci et al., (2016) indicated that emotional problems of parents of students with dyslexia related to their child(ren)'s emotional status. In order to maintain the relationship with her child, Karen, one of the parents in this study, changed her mind because she was aware of giving her son unaffordable pressure. To reduce disputes and conflicts with her son, she finally decided to adjust her academic expectations of him. She claimed that she felt relieved. Reindal's (2008) social relational model takes into account that even children with learning disabilities are inevitably affected by a traditional culture which upholds parents' expectations of their academic achievements, and the Kübler-Ross and Kessler (2014) stages of the grief cycle explains that parents will eventually accept reality, feel relieved and work together with their children. This finding inspired me that many parents are willing to re-consider their parenting priorities after developing a better understanding of their children. They put the child's mental well-being and parent-child relationship as top priority, over the academic performance (Forlin, Sin, & Maclean, 2013).

Becoming reflective parents

In previous overseas studies the focus has been only on the emotional difficulties of parents with dyslexic children (e.g. Bonifacci et al., 2014; Chien, & Lee, 2013). Most of them have not considered the changing parental roles, from passive to a more active, role of exploring resources and advocacy. A local study that adopted the social model of disability (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014) found that parents might go through a process of emotional adjustment, and move on to advocacy. The present study has similar but not identical findings to those of Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, 2014). Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, 2014) emphasized the parental role of

advocacy, but the present study identified a more reflective role of the parents. After experiencing the grief cycle, the parents finally accepted reality, and even embraced their existing parental roles. When conflicts arose in parent-school cooperation, they tended to become strong, and to speak up for their children. It is a vicious cycle that parents keep forcing their children, and their children keep experiencing academic failure. The situation ends up with a bottleneck, and the emotions of both parents and children will collapse. Some parents or children may suffer from depression, or even think of suicide. The current study found that, as long as the parents accept the situation, emotions will be relieved. Parents begin to reflect on what is the best for their children, and the tension of the parent-child relationship will be improved. As discussed in the previous section, the social relational model places strong emphasis on how social and environmental factors influence a person's life (Reindal, 2008). Many parents choose to make concessions, reflect on their own teaching styles, eventually accept the reality and let their children grow up without pressure. The results of this study reflect changes in the parental role in both social and school contexts, from requiring children to perform academically, to accepting their dyslexia, and even to fighting for their needs, e.g. emotional support (Orphan, 2004). My result is different from that of Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, 2014). One parent in my study stated that she and some other parents had fought for their children's rights for many years, but in the end, withdrew because their children graduated. They did not end up with any political power. They acted in a reflective role rather than an advocacy role.

Although the advocacy role of the parent does not emerge easily, parents of children with disabilities can form support networks in which they can share the difficulties of their everyday lives raising children with disabilities, and seek help and advice. Orphan

(2004) explained that parents of children with disabilities often want to seek help after experiencing an emotional journey. Parent education about how to face their own emotions can also be helpful for their mental health. For example, Orphan (2004) recommended that parents of children with disabilities should learn 'the art of loving neglect', because once they 'neglect' their focus on their children's disabilities, then they can let their children develop their own strengths. By doing this, parents can relieve their emotions. In addition, parents should also learn to have performance-led expectations of their children. This means they should base their expectations about their children's academic performances on their actual performances rather than social or school requirements (Orphan, 2004). Changing parents' attitudes is undoubtedly a big step in caring of their children. Based on the above discussion, I suggest that when the government implements inclusive education, it should also take into account the education of parents. Love and care in an inclusive culture should be promoted, rather than merely pursuing academic performance or removing learning barriers.

Based on the above discussion, more concern should be given to the tension between parents and children, and parents and schools. The results of the current study serve as a reminder that teachers, psychologists and counsellors should also pay more attention to parents' and students' mental health.

Powerless but critical of the education system and Confucian culture

The informants indicated that they had felt powerless in confronting the current education system and Confucian culture in Hong Kong. These parents of children with dyslexia were not satisfied with the current supporting services in Hong Kong. Most of them criticized that there was not enough awareness of special education in Hong Kong.

Their children were often seen as inferior. Table 10 summarizes this theme.

Table 10:
Theme 5 Informants' experiences of powerlessness in the education system and society

Theme	Description of the Theme
Powerless but critical of the education system and Confucian culture	The education system and Confucian culture are two aspects parents cannot avoid in relation to their children's development. However, most of the informants felt powerless, but were critical of the current education system and Confucian culture.

First, the current study revealed that parents were concerned about their children's futures. Their responses to questions regarding their children's futures varied from considering encouraging them to study abroad, or to study technical or skill-based programs to take over family businesses. Regardless of the variations among informants, their responses revealed that educational support and measures to accommodate their children's needs were not enough to protect or ensure their futures in Hong Kong. Why do parents have this idea? I think it is because parents are influenced deeply by traditional Chinese Confucianism. Traditional Confucian culture is deeply rooted in Chinese customs, and society requires people to perform well academically. Parents hold the traditional Confucian concept that children have to enter university in order to glorify their families (Huang & Gove, 2012; Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2014). The parents claimed that there were no alternative ways for students with dyslexia to continue to further study after Form 6 in Hong Kong. This means that it is impossible for their children to enter local universities due to the high academic standards of the entry requirements. The parents were very worried.

Given that Confucianism values an elitist culture, even though parents know that their children have learning disabilities and it is difficult for them to get good academic grades, they still do everything possible to ensure that they can enter university. This

finding added to those reported by Yang et al. (2015). These authors focused on students with SEN but not specifically with dyslexia, and reported that these students were facing unattainable academic requirements of the local universities. To make the best choices, the parents needed to plan in advance, but the choices were quite limited. This finding raised the question of what parents can do to help their planning for the future.

Second, accommodation of their needs is not enough for students with dyslexia to survive in the school system (Poor-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013, 2014; Yu & Yin, 2016) or Hong Kong's public examination system (Yu & Yin, 2016). Although Hong Kong has promoted inclusive education for many years, parents still feel that their children's futures are not guaranteed. One possible reason is that Hong Kong's inclusive education policy is inadequate (Poon-McBrayer & McBrayer, 2013). This finding also echoes the study of Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013). Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, p.68) reported that there is "a number of issues relating to a failure to enforce school accountability for supporting students with SpLD and their families in mainstream schools … … the still prevalent use of grade retention, limited instructional accommodations, lack of progress monitoring, passivity about seeking resources on the part of schools and little support for parent participation". In other words, the measures to accommodate parents and children with learning disabilities seem to be insufficient in Hong Kong. My study focused more on the public examination system and support practices, which were not mentioned in the Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer study. First, the Hong Kong examination system still adopts a paper-based model which is very difficult for children with dyslexia (Ng, 2014; Yu & Yin, 2016). Some parents in my study stated that even the physical education subject requires a paper test. The entire examination system is very inflexible, and their children basically have no choice.

Under the current education system, parents of children with dyslexia were powerless (Yu & Yin, 2016). The diversities of school exits were quite limited (Yu & Yin, 2016). Second, the support offered for dyslexic students in examinations is limited to providing time extensions, paper enlargements, etc. These provisions are not enough for students with learning disabilities. Most of the informants claimed that only time-extensions were allowed for dyslexic students. Some of them criticized that this was useless because their children had literacy impairments which could not be compensated through extra examination time. Their cognitive and literacy difficulties could not simply be remedied through extending the examination time. However, in my study, a few of the parents expressed opposite opinions, saying that more examination time could give their sons more opportunity to figure out the correct answers in the exam. Although parents can appeal to the Hong Kong Examination Authorities if their application for special arrangements for the public examination are rejected, this does not alter the fact that the provisions remain insufficient and unsuitable. Time-extension is one of the special provisions made in public examination (The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2014). Others are exam break-time, adjustment of the exam paper, speech-to-text and screen reader (The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2014a). However, in general the informants thought that these provisions were of no use to their children. The informants questioned whether the Education Bureau and examination authorities could use verbal instead of written formats in examinations. The written form is merely an expression channel, not the examination content. If the format of the examination remains unchanged, it is still unfair and unjustified for students with literacy impairments to sit with those who do not have such impairments, in the same examination setting with the same requirements (Yu & Yin, 2016). A literacy impairment is a deficit (Yu & Yin,

2016). This result gave me insights into the issues of inclusive education in Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2019), including whether appropriate support is in place and enough for children with learning difficulties (Ng, 2014), for example, can dyslexia be dealt with by allowing time extensions? It is unacceptable to push someone without legs to run.

Third, most importantly, previous studies have also found that children with dyslexia not only have linguistic and cognitive deficits (Ho, 2010; 2014), but also face educational (Blatz, 2014) and social barriers (Taylor, 2017), for example being stigmatized by others. Some international studies have indicated that barriers exist everywhere (Blatz, 2014; Bonifacci et al., 2014; Taylor, 2017), and there is no exception in Hong Kong. My study focused more on environmental and cultural factors. Although the informants' children were still studying in school, they also shared their concerns about their future acceptance in society. They were worried that employers might not understand the difficulties of students with dyslexia. They might not realize that people with dyslexia have literacy difficulties. One of the informants shared her experiences of being stigmatized by others. She said that her child had tried to work in part-time jobs while at school, but their employers became unfriendly right after knowing that her child had been studying in a so-called 'resource' secondary school. The informants also said that they had been informed by graduates from these schools that they found it more difficult to have jobs than graduates from other schools. Ironically, on one hand the Chinese Confucian tradition supports inclusive education and caring for people with disabilities (Poon-Mcbrayer, & Mcbrayer, 2014), but on the other hand, it emphasizes elitism and academic performance, and even the belief that only those with good academic results have good career futures (Huang & Gove, 2012). Ng (2014) stated

that, because of elitism, students with dyslexia find it difficult to be treated in fair ways under inclusive education. Yu & Yin (2016) questioned whether the elitist and academically-oriented education culture hinders the development of inclusive education in Hong Kong. As a result, teachers may have less awareness about attending to the needs of students with dyslexia, and even discriminate against them. In society, even though employers understand the culture of inclusion, they will still not accept these young people because they perceive them to be incompetent. The parents felt extremely worried and powerless.

According to the stories shared by the informants, parents encounter various barriers, including educational, institutional and social barriers. Reindal's (2008) social relational model is a reminder that parents and students with dyslexia cannot get overcome their living environments, and these environments constitute barriers affecting people. Parents undoubtedly struggle in their daily lives. The study results revealed that educators and school policy makers should review, evaluate and modify the current education system, the effectiveness of provisions, and special education policy. In addition, career planning is also necessary for students with dyslexia. Inclusive education is not only a concept relevant to schools, but also a culture that should engage everyone in our society.

Stress about Financial Support

The informants shared their experiences about their financial burdens. Most of them had quit their jobs after their children's diagnoses of dyslexia were confirmed. Only one informant who was a single mother continued to work. This theme is summarized in Table 11 below:

Table 11: Theme 6 Informants' experiences of stress about financial support

Theme	Description of the Theme
Stressful in financial support	Financial burdens of informants are also a cause for concern. Rearing a child with special education needs can be very expensive.

In this study, the financial burdens of families with dyslexic children were considered. The parents shared that they needed to self-finance therapies or psychoeducational assessments when school-based educational psychologists could not help their children. According to the policy of the Education Bureau (Education Bureau, 2019a), one school-based education psychologist is normally required to take responsibility for at least three to four local schools per year. Students referred to the psychologist are required to wait in a long queue. This finding added to the existing literature; to date, the only other studies to consider economic burdens have been related to parents of children with other disabilities, e.g. autism (Jungbauer et al., 2002, Leonard et al., 1992; Thomas et al., 2016). Parents of children with special education needs in general encounter great financial pressures. This current study implies that government, schools and Education Bureau should evaluate their cash subsidies to students with special education, for example learning support grants. The current three-tiered funding model might also not be effective enough to relieve the parents' financial burdens. Many parents arrange for their children to participate in group training provided by the school and regular consultations with educational psychologists. Some even have regular training and treatments outside the school. Parents are required to pay for these, but the current three-tiered funding model does not include this. This finding suggests that financial support should be considered to subsidize parents directly. Schools should also deploy their resources flexibly and strategically to support students with special education needs. In addition, the ratio of school-based educational psychologist to schools might also be increased in order to benefit more children in need.

Resilience

The informants shared their different ways to build up their resilience. Some of them chose to take a breath, some of them sought help from others, etc. Parental resilience is defined as "the capacity of parents to deliver a competent and quality level of parenting to children despite the presence of risk factors" (Gavidia-Payne, Denny, Davis, Francis, & Jackson, 2015, p.111). Resilience is the process of managing stress when faced with difficulties, challenges, and trauma in everyday lives (Cohen, 2018). In this study, among seven themes, resilience is only positive finding. The theme is summarized in Table 12 below:

Table 12: Theme 7 Informants' experiences of resilience in difficult time

Theme	Description of the Theme
Resilient in difficult time	Parents of children with dyslexia often encountered emotional ups and downs, but most of them could finally establish their own ways to ease their emotions.

This finding connects to the study by Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, 2014) which pinpointed that in cases where parents were not respected in home-school relationships and their children did not receive proper support from the school, the parents might go through a process of emotional adjustment. However, their research focused on the process of emotional adjustment instead of parental resistance. My result is different from Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2013, 2014). This study found that after parents experienced emotional cycles, their resilience generally became stronger. In addition to taking breath and seeking helps, Sawyer, & National Children's Bureau. (2009) also stated other ways of boosting parental resilience. Parents with mental health problems are advised to do things to help reduce stress, for examples, "by having enough food in to cover meals for at least two days in case they become tired or unwell, having a few convenience meals to hand, preparing lunch boxes and clothes for the

children for the next day in advance" (Sawyer, & National Children's Bureau, 2009, p.72). Such strategies can help people to feel in control and 'stop the day seeming so overwhelming' (Sawyer, & National Children's Bureau, 2009, p.72). Orphan (2004) explained that parents of children with disabilities often want to seek help after experiencing an emotional journey. Seeking helps is also a kind of resilience (Cohen, 2018). I think resilience is a skill that everyone can equip and learn throughout their lives. This finding inspired me that not just emotional difficulties require our attention, parental resilience should also be more concerned.

Chapter Summary

This chapter first outlined the major limitations of the study, and then went through in-depth discussion regarding the six themes that emerged from the research results. These themes are 1) Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration; 2) Feeling discriminated about their children's experiences; 3) Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking; 4) Feeling relieved and being more reflective; 5) Feeling powerless but critical of the education system and Confucian culture; 6) Feeling stressed about financial support; and 7) Feeling resilient in difficult time. The recommendations generated from the themes were addressed at the end of each related discussion. An overall summary of the paper, and the overall recommendations for different stakeholders and future research will be highlighted in next chapter.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This chapter will conclude the research through offering recommendations to different stakeholders, followed by an overview of the study's contributions and suggestions for future research. This chapter also addresses the research objectives and significance of the study. The stakeholders addressed here can be divided into two groups, policy makers and practitioners. The former includes the Education Bureau and Equal Opportunities Commission, and the latter includes educators, parents, educational psychologists, school counsellors and social workers. This study has given rise to recommendations for all of these stakeholders.

Research Objectives:

1) To examine the unique experiences (e.g. emotions) of parents of students with dyslexia in parent-school collaboration processes;

2) To examine possible barriers these parents encountered in parent-school collaboration processes;

3) To inform the stakeholders e.g. policy makers, school counselors, and educators, about the parents' perspective of parent-school partnerships.

Significance of Research

The findings of this study are significant to key stakeholders in different ways:

1) for parents, teaching staff and professionals, the knowledge relating to parents' experiences of caring for their dyslexic children, particularly with regard to collaboration with the children's schools.

2) for school professionals (educators, school social worker, school counselors,

etc.), information to inform their training for collaboration with parents, and also to inform parent education.

3) for school professionals, insights into their daily practices of taking care of students with dyslexia, and showing concern for their parents' emotional needs.

4) for policy makers, suggestions about the possibilities of modifying educational policy for both parents and their students with special educational needs.

Recommendations to stakeholders

Table 13: Recommendations

Stakeholders	Connected to results and discussion
Policy maker	
1) Special education legislation should be established to ensure the rights of parents and their children with special education needs.	Theme 1: Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration Theme 2: Feeling discriminated about their children's experience Theme 3: Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking Theme 5: Feeling powerless but critical to the education system and Confucian culture
2) Indicators of inclusive education should be promoted effectively and regularly in secondary schools.	Theme 1: Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration Theme 2: Feeling discriminated about their children's experience
3) The Education Bureau should review the effectiveness of the three-tiered intervention model in Hong Kong.	Theme 2: Feeling discriminated about their children's experience Theme 6: Feeling stressful in financial support
Equal Opportunities Commissioner (EOC)	
1) EOC has the responsibility to "investigate and conciliate complaints relating to any act alleged to be unlawful under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance". 2) EOC should also strengthen publicity about the discrimination ordinance, and enhance public awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities. 3) EOC should cooperate with the Education Bureau to modify the special education guidelines for school teaching staff, including principals and teachers, on handling their students with special education needs.	Theme 1: Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration Theme 2: Feeling discriminated about their children's experience

Educators	
1) Principal should offer appropriate platforms and take the responsibility to ensure fairness and equality between both parties. Principal could be a mediator to minimize and remove the barriers and resistance to the collaboration. 2) SENCos should liaise with parents of children with special education needs and organize general meetings with them in order to deliver the messages and update information regarding special education. 3) Teachers should join some training courses to enrich their own knowledge about inclusive education, and hence reflect and adjust their own attitudes to parents and catering for students with special education needs in school.	Theme 1: Feeling frustrated in parent-school collaboration Theme 2: Feeling discriminated about their children's experience Theme 3: Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking
Parents	
1) Parents obtain advice from other experienced parents and professionals within the same community. 2) Parents obtain the latest information and join discussions with others regarding special education through this type of community. 3) Parents play an active role in the community and become more vocal about criticizing the current policy and education practices.	Theme 3: Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking Theme 4: Feeling relieved and be more reflective
School counsellors, social workers and educational psychologists	
1) Education psychologists should provide appropriate psychoeducational assessment for students. 2) Educational psychologists need to fight for increasing School-EP ratio. 3) School counsellors and social workers could apply the family approach in counselling instead of merely an individual one.	Theme 3: Facing emotional difficulties in care-taking Theme 4: Feeling relieved and be more reflective

Policy makers

As explained above, policy makers are mainly the Education Bureau personnel responsible for making and implementing education policy. The discussion about the current study has suggested that: 1) there is an absence of special education law for

ensuring special education occurs in regular schools and protecting the rights of parents and students; 2) there are biases and discriminations in secondary schools, which parents and children encounter in their everyday school lives; and 3) there are long queues waiting to receive official assessments, therefore resulting in deferred-training services.

First, based on the results (Chapter 5, theme 2, p.120-124) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 2, p.153-159), special education legislation should be established, since it could ensure the rights of parents and their children with special education needs. The Hong Kong government devotes a huge amount of financial support to special education every year. The statistics of budget and financial proposals from The Legislative Council Commission showed an increasing rate of around 8.5-11% of financial input to the special education sector over the past 20 years (The Legislative Council Commission, 2020). Despite this, Hong Kong has yet to establish the types of special education laws which our countries have, such as Taiwan, Macau and the United States. For example, in Taiwan, The Special Education Act was set up in 1984, and revised in 1997 and 2009, indicating the implementation of the full integrated education and developing the potentials of students with disabilities (Laws and Regulations Database of The Republic of China, 2019; Wu et al., 2010). As a result, Wu et al. (2010) found that special education in Taiwan was keeping pace with other countries, such as the United Kingdom, and was well-developed in three aspects: respect for the profession and professionals, accomplishment of full education for students with disabilities and the establishment of special education systems. The rights of parents and students with special education needs were legally protected (Wu et al., 2010). Macau established a special education law in the 33/96/M in 1996, regulating local schools to develop the

potentials of students with disabilities and respect the rights of these students (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, 2015). Students with special education needs are all handled in inclusive contexts by special education teachers under the School Operation Guide in Macau (Education and Youth Affairs Bureau, 2015). Another example is from the United States, where The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is covered in most teacher and administrative certification programs, thus ensuring the quality of special education is the best for students with special education needs (Couvillon & Katsiyannis, 2018). Couvillon and Katsiyannis (2018) pointed out even if schools fail to meet its requirements, the special education law can defend the rights of the students with disabilities, and increase the awareness of the responsibilities of roles of educators. The Special Education Society of Hong Kong, one of the non-government organizations, organized an annual forum about the topic 'Enlightenment from the draft of the special education law' in November of 2016 (The Special Education Society of Hong Kong, 2016). The chairman of the society is professor Kenneth Sin, the Director of the Centre for Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Education and a Professor in the Department of Special Education and Counselling at The Education University of Hong Kong. This society, composed of a group of enthusiasts in the special education sector, responds regularly to political issues in the special education sector and publishes relevant academic research in the only special education journal in Hong Kong. The organizer claimed that it is impossible to embody the fairness and equality of education due to the absence of a special education law in Hong Kong (The Special Education Society of Hong Kong, 2016). As illustrated by the results of this study (Chapter 5, theme 1, 3 and 5, p.104-119, p.124-126, p.129-134), the organizer claimed that discrimination and biases towards disabilities are quite common in mainstream schools in Hong Kong, such as, students with special education

needs not being accommodated properly, and being bullied by peers and teachers. The results of this study also revealed that it is quite time-consuming for parents of children with special education needs to negotiate their rights with schools (Chapter 5, theme 1, 3 and 5, p.104-119, p.124-126, p.129-134). Without such education law enactment, parents and students with special education needs will undoubtedly continue to face various barriers in school.

Second, based on the results (Chapter 5, theme 1-2, p.104-124) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 1-2, p.143-159), the indicators of inclusive education should be promoted effectively and regularly in secondary schools; this study has shown that biases and discriminations persist in schools. This kind of work has been used in countries or jurisdictions such as Taiwan in Asia (Guo & Wang, 2005; Huang et al., 2016; Wu et al. (2010), and United States in a western context (Couvillon & Katsiyannis, 2018; U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Guo and Wang (2005) pointed out indicators of inclusive education in ethical, psychological and legitimistic ways in Taiwan. Schools can follow the indicators to achieve inclusive education. Wu et al. (2010) indicated that the inclusive education in Taiwan was well-developing under the indicators and special education law in recent years. Likely, the United States also created rules/indicators for inclusive education based on their special education law, e.g. IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) and ESEA (Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) (U.S. Department of Education, 2020). Couvillon and Katsiyannis (2018) commented that schools might not be fully aware of the importance of the rules, but they can still serve as guidelines for inclusive education. Although, in Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (2016) issued a performance indicator for mainstream schools as a reference of school-based self-evaluation tools to measure the performance of inclusive

education, the effectiveness of the self-evaluation has been criticized by school teachers for the past few years (Sze et al., 2020). This performance indicator is comprised of four domains and 23 indicators (Education Bureau, 2016, p.1). Four of these indicators, serving under the 'student support and school ethos' domain, are relevant to student support and parent-school collaboration. The four indicators support student development, school climate, home-school cooperation and links with external organizations. Under these four indicators, the Education Bureau (2016) stated several focus guiding questions for teachers, for example, "Does the school suitably support students with diverse learning needs to help them integrate into campus life and develop their potential?"(p.22), and "How does the school evaluate the effectiveness of student support services?" (p.22). These indicators should be promoted widely and enhanced in mainstream secondary schools. Sze et al. (2020) proposed a modified version of performance indicators which should also be considered by the Education Bureau (Appendix 7). Additionally, for better parent-school collaboration, professional training and seminars could be provided regularly to teachers and parents. There are two reasons for this suggestion. First, teachers should equip themselves well to cooperate with parents. The role of parents cannot be ignored or underestimated. Teachers should respect parental roles in schools. Second, parents could also familiarize themselves with the school settings and understand the obstacles and barriers in schools e.g. limited manpower and resources, through training and seminars.

Third, based on the results (Chapter 5, theme 2 and 6, p.120-124, p.134-136) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 2 and 6, p.153-159, p.171-173), the Education Bureau should review the effectiveness of the three-tiered intervention model in Hong Kong. The findings from this study revealed that students with suspected dyslexia have to wait

a long time to receive official assessment, resulting in deferred training services. Parents of students with suspected dyslexia might eventually self-finance the educational assessment fee to enable early intervention to take place, instead of waiting for school-based assessment. Unlike the three-tier model in the United States, there are entrance requirements in-between the tiers in Hong Kong (Luk & Cheng, 2009). A student who wants to receive pull-out special education programmes needs to have a report from a clinical or educational psychologist. The current three-tier model rejects students suspected of having dyslexia. Currently, an educational psychologists' report is the only way for a case to be confirmed (HKEAA, 2020). The Education Bureau might review the current model and consider the possibility of amendment. For example, support services should include students with suspected dyslexia. Furthermore, one school-based educational psychologist normally serves three to four ordinary secondary schools in Hong Kong (Education Bureau, 2019a). Therefore, not all students with suspected dyslexia can be diagnosed quickly. The Education Bureau should consider increasing the ratio of professionals to schools.

With regard to the parents of students with dyslexia, if policy makers can consider establishing a special education law, strengthening the promotion and supervision of the implementation of inclusive education indicators, and reviewing the current three-tiered intervention model, then the various barriers to parent-school collaboration will be substantially removed, and their children with dyslexia will also receive fair and suitable treatment, thereby reducing both parents' and children's mental and emotional burdens.

Equal Opportunities Commissioner

Based on the result (Chapter 5, theme 1-2, p.104-124) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 1-2, p.143-159), teachers often undermine the rights of parents and students with dyslexia, and ignore their responsibilities of taking care of students with diverse needs. The Council on Professional Conduct in Education [CPC] (2015) drafted a code of ethics for educators, and claimed that all educators should have commitment to their students. According to this code of ethics, all educators "shall give all students fair learning opportunities" and "shall not discriminate against any student on the basis of race, colour, religious belief, creed, sex, family background, or any form of handicap" (Council on Professional Conduct in Education, 2015). Upon receipt of complaints, the secretariat of CPC will "contact the complainant and the respondent, collect and confirm the information submitted by both parties concerned, and then submit an investigation report to the case-filing panel for follow-up actions" (Council on Professional Conduct in Education, 2015). The CPC will also "advise the Permanent Secretary for Education on cases of disputes or alleged professional misconduct involving educators" (Council on Professional conduct in Education, 2015). Likewise, the Equal Opportunities Commission [EOC] (2019) is a statutory body which was set up to implement the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO). The Ordinances render unlawful acts which discriminate against persons with disabilities. The EOC has the responsibility to "investigate and conciliate complaints relating to any act alleged to be unlawful under the Ordinances" (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019). In view of violations of the Code of ethics of educators and DDO, the CPC and EOC can actively investigate related complaints and make advices to the EDB for further action. Teachers violating the code of conduct and DDO might receive punishment. The EOC should also strengthen publicity about the discrimination ordinance, and enhance public awareness about the rights of persons with disabilities. In Australia, Keeffe-Martin

(2000) conducted a case study about Daniel who had an intellectual impairment and was discriminated against by suspension from classes and exclusion from enrollment in high school. The Equal Opportunities Commissioner eventually took this case to court, and sued the school involved (Keeffe-Martin, 2000). Keeffe-Martin (2000) advised that the school principal should have enhanced his knowledge of special education. Similarly, in Hong Kong the Equal Opportunities Commission should cooperate with Education Bureau to modify the special education guidelines for school teaching staff, including principals and teachers, on handling their students with special education needs.

As for the parents of students with dyslexia, if the Equal Opportunity Commission can strengthen the promotion of the rights of students with special education needs and their parents, and sincerely cooperate with the Education Bureau to promote an inclusive culture, then the discrimination faced by parents in this study, e.g. parental' voices being ignored or undervalued, will be changed.

It is worth mentioning that Hong Kong has a Disability Discrimination Ordinance which, to a certain extent, protects students with disabilities from discrimination, but the Equal Opportunities Commission still need to rely on this Ordinance to work with the Education Bureau without law enforcement power. Therefore, I insist that as long as there is no special education law in Hong Kong, students with special education needs still do not have the legal protection they deserve.

Apart from policy makers such as the Education Bureau and Equal Opportunities Commission, stakeholders also include educators, parents, educational psychologists,

school counsellors and social workers.

Educators

Educators include principals, special education coordinators (SENCo) and teachers. Based on the result (Chapter 5, theme 1-3, p.104-126) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 1-3, p.143-162), teachers, even principals, often undervalue the needs of parents. In my study, conflicts often occurred between teachers and parents because of misunderstandings. Educators should be reminded that if they treat students with disabilities less favourably than their peers without disabilities, this may not only violate the Equal Opportunities Ordinance, but also break the code of ethics or practices for educators (Council on Professional Conduct in Education, 2015; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019). Referring to the DDO, the statement in item 6 of the part 1 under the topic of 'discrimination against persons with disability' stated that "a person discriminates against another person in any circumstances relevant for the purposes of any provision of this Ordinance if — on the grounds of that other person's disability he treats him less favourably than he treats or would treat a person without a disability" (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019). This may result in disciplinary action or severe penalties for educators, such as suspension or dismissal of teaching duties. Teaching staff who fail to comply are required to go through the procedure of an investigation process under the board of management or incorporated management committee (Education Bureau, 2019b). In case educators violate the Equal Opportunities Ordinance, schools and teachers involved may have to bear all the legal responsibilities.

In the synergy of parent-school collaborations, principals should offer appropriate

platforms and take the responsibility to ensure fairness and equality between both parties. For example, parents should be allowed to speak freely. No one can dominate the meeting. Principals might not need to attend meetings, but if necessary, the role of principal could be a mediator to minimize and remove the barriers and resistance to the collaboration. Cheung (2004, 2005, 2014) claimed that principals should take the key role in promoting reforms to break down the barriers, because the principal is the person with the highest authority, which is enough to change the atmosphere of the entire education team in a school. In addition, starting from the 2017/18 school year, EDB provided an additional teaching post to ordinary secondary schools, SENCos, to assist "the school principal and vice-principal in planning, coordinating and promoting the whole school approach to inclusive education in order to foster a more inclusive school culture and enhance the effectiveness of the support given to students with SEN" (Education Bureau, 2019c, p.2). SENCos should also liaise with parents of children with special education needs and organize general meetings with them in order to deliver the messages and update information regarding special education. SENCo has a critical role in ensuring that students with special education needs can receive supports from their schools, and that effective communication and harmony are cultivated between teachers and parents (Education Bureau, 2019c; 2020). In the United Kingdom, Wedell (2012) organized a SENCo forum as a platform for SENCos from different schools to share and communicate their experiences of daily practices. These kinds of forums can definitely enrich the SENCos' knowledge of special education, and also enhance their awareness of their students' special education needs (Wedell, 2012). In 2020, the Education Bureau latest issued a document named "The SENCo Manual" (Education Bureau, 2020) to SENCos of all ordinary primary and secondary schools. This promotes the concept of a graduated approach that originated in United Kingdom.

A graduated approach is a cyclic approach involving four steps: assess, plan, do and review (Education Bureau, 2020). 'Assess' means "gathering evidence to help formulate a plan to guide the students forward in their learning" (Education Bureau, 2020, p.48); 'plan' means any tailor-made learning methods for students which "are sufficiently clear to be easy to use by teachers and parents and that the small step approach focuses on achieving agreed outcomes and progress in learning" (Education Bureau, 2020, p.51); 'do' means "all actions take place as planned, ensuring everyone is working towards the same expected outcomes" (Education Bureau, 2020, p.52) and 'review' means "revise the success of the actions outlined in the plan in the light of student outcomes and progress" (Education Bureau, 2020, p.53). The graduated approach provides SENCOs with the opportunity to place a clear focus on agreed outcomes with parents and students. I suggest that SENCos should implement this approach well in their daily practices. Teachers should also join some training courses to enrich their own knowledge about inclusive education, and hence reflect and adjust their own attitudes to parents and catering for students with special education needs in school. Although teacher training courses on special educational needs have existed since 2012-2013 (Education Bureau, 2018), the current study revealed that teachers still face constraints in daily practice. For example, the elitist school culture does not allow so much flexibility in inclusive education. However, some research (e.g. Delkamiller et al., 2016; Feng & Sass, 2013) has indicated that teachers who accept special education training and inclusive practices are more capable of dealing with special education affairs.

In parent-school collaborations, if the principal can act as a mediator and emphasize all teachers' responsibilities and attitudes towards parents, and the SENCos can also lead

teachers to develop an inclusive culture, promote awareness of caring for students with special education needs, and provide teachers with different levels of special education training, then I believe that the attitudes of teaching staff will become friendly and reasonable, and parents will be treated better. Therefore, parent-school collaboration can be implemented without barriers, and achieve the intended benefits of collaboration. Students can thus grow well in such a supportive environment.

Parents

Parents of students with dyslexia were the main targets in my study. Based on the result (Chapter 5, theme 3-4, 7, p.124-129, p.136-138) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 3-4, 7, p.159-166, p.173-174), their experiences of rearing their children can be used not only to inspire policy makers and educators, but also to let other parents reflect on their own experiences. In order to ensure their children can receive proper inclusive education, parents are advised to establish a community to support each other. This community could serve as a multi-functional platform. For example, this kind of practice has been documented in the United States and United Kingdom, e.g. Parent to Parent, or the Asperger/Autism Network (AANE). Parent to Parent (2020) is a community in the United States which offers parent-to-parent support as a core resource for families whose children have special education needs. AANE (2020) is a regional group which serves families with autistic members in the New England area. Some studies (e.g. Coffman, 2001; Murphy, & Carbone, 2011; Smith & Chandler, 2004) have indicated that those communities can provide positive help and emotional support to parents of children with special education needs. There are some parents' groups in Hong Kong focusing on special education needs, such as the Hong Kong Association for Specific Learning Disabilities (1998), and SEN Parent Support (2016). These

organizations gather parents of children with SEN and dyslexia through online platforms, with the aims of sharing resourceful information and forming a support group. However, most of these organizations are limited to providing supporting services rather than advocating parents to press the government to make policy changes. Therefore, I make the following recommendations based on both the previous literature and my study. First, of course, parents can obtain advice from other experienced parents and professionals within the same community. Once they encounter difficulties or barriers, they can ask for support and advice from others. My study revealed numerous barriers that occur in parents' daily lives, in collaboration with their children's schools or at home. Therefore, they need someone to provide instant support. Second, parents can also obtain the latest information and join discussions with others regarding special education through this type of community. Once parents receive the latest news about special education, they can share with others and this can lead to further discussion. Third, parents can play an active role in the community and become more vocal about criticizing the current policy and education practices. Poon-McBrayer and McBrayer (2014) described a three-stage journey of parents' emotional adjustment which started with sorrow and self-blame, led to their becoming critical advocates. Parents can play critical roles in promoting inclusive education. They can speak out about their needs and barriers in such platforms.

If the parents of dyslexic students can trust each other and create a community, then they can constitute a political force that might mobilize other parents to fight for different education policies, eventually forcing the bureaucrats such as the Education Bureau to make appropriate changes to the current inequal treatment. In addition to establishing a community, parents often realize new meaning after experiencing an

emotional cycle. Such meanings can improve their relationships with their dyslexic children greatly, and also open a new page in their lives. I suggest that parents should also share these experiences with other stakeholders, so that the public can pay more attention to their experiences.

Educational psychologists, school counsellors and social workers

Based on the result (Chapter 5, theme 3-4, p.124-129) and discussion (Chapter 6, theme 3-4, p.159-166), parents of dyslexic children encounter emotional stress and pressure bringing up their children and handling parent-school relationships. School counsellors, social workers and educational psychologists should consider forming a support network and caring environment to address these parents' needs and those of their children. From the 2016/17 school year, the EDB extended the School-based Educational Psychology Service (SBEPS) to cover all public-sector mainstream schools. This service "aims at enhancing schools' capacity to cater for students' diverse educational needs" (Education Bureau, 2019c, p.2). Based on the EDB's guideline, education psychologists should provide appropriate psychoeducational assessment for students, and "directly or through collaboration with school personnel, provide appropriate individual counselling or training for students with severe adjustment difficulties to improve their adaptive capacity" (Education Bureau, 2019c, p.27). Thus, educational psychologist should cooperate closely with teachers of students with dyslexia. In addition to making general accommodation, such as time extensions or enlargement of examination papers, educational psychologists should provide teachers and parents with more concrete and effective recommendations (Abraham, 2016). Apart from assessment, Abraham (2016) mentioned that they could offer interventions and advice about teaching and caring for students with special education needs. In Hong

Kong, an educational psychologist now needs to deal with three to four schools, and this ratio needs to be improved (Education Bureau, 2019a). On average, they can only provide not less than 14 working days of service in one school per year (Education Bureau, 2019d). As a result, many of them have been reduced to only doing paper work, and cannot offer individual tutoring support to students. Educational psychologists also need to fight for this ratio to be increased, so that they can focus more on one or two schools and expand their services to students and parents. Similarly, school counsellors and social workers could apply the family approach in counselling instead of merely an individual one. In addition to family approach, Stanley (2012) emphasized that social workers could also provide individual counselling, home visits, and phone calls to the children with special education needs and their families. Social workers are in a unique position to collaborate with the school, family and child welfare agency to provide help for children with special education needs (Stanley, 2012). School social work services aim" to identify and help students with academic, social or emotional problems, maximize their educational opportunities, develop their potentials and prepare them for adulthood. The service is operated by non-governmental organizations" (Department of Social Welfare, 2020). In order to strengthen support for young people in need, the government increased the current 1.2 social workers in each secondary school to 2 in 2019, and at the same time increased supervision support. By strengthening the increase in manpower, school social workers can provide appropriate services to the students and their families who face complex problems regarding their academic, emotional and mental health (Labour and Welfare Bureau, 2019). Sometimes, social workers can also provide consultations with school staff about students' diverse needs (Stanley, 2012). In addition, school counsellors and guidance team teachers can also help to support students with SEN and their parents through individual counselling and guidance. For

example, they can provide counseling and even home visits, depending on the emotional status of the students and parents. In my study, many parents needed to face the pressure of educating children with dyslexia every day, and some of them had bad relationships with their children because of this. Counselling teachers could cooperate with social workers, to deal with the parents and students' emotions through providing guidance to both parties (Education Bureau, 2011). Since this study revealed that conflicts occurred either within the family or between family and school, students need to have access to counselling services, and parents should also be involved.

If educational psychologists, school social workers and counselling teachers work together to help students with dyslexia and parents, I believe the emotional difficulties faced by parents will be reduced greatly. Not only are parents more accepting of their children's diagnoses of dyslexia, but the road to growth will become smoother due to the support of all three parties.

Contributions and suggestions for future research

The current study makes several contributions to the knowledge development:

First, the existing limited studies mostly investigated the lived experiences of students with special education needs rather than their parents or caregivers. There have been some studies of parents' experiences, but these were mainly related to children with autism or attention deficit disorder (e.g. Tait et al., 2016; Chen, 2016; Chang et al., 2013). These studies have not focused on the experiences of parents whose children have specific learning difficulties or dyslexia. The lived experience of parents of

children with dyslexia in secondary school was investigated in this study, thus addressing the existing research knowledge gap. In addition, this study also contributes useful insights to inform different stakeholders, such as policy makers, educators, parents, school counsellors, social workers and educational psychologists, about the essence of parents' lived experiences.

Second, the parental experiences described in this study enrich the existing knowledge base about the perspectives of special education, inclusive education and parent-school collaboration. My three journal articles related to the development of special education and inclusive education were accepted by The Special Education Society of Hong Kong (SESHK), and published in the journal of SESHK in 2017, 2018 and 2020 (Appendix 7). One of these journal papers was also invited to be presented in the SESHK conference in 2018 (Appendix 7). The journal of SESHK is the only journal about special education in Hong Kong.

Finally, there are some suggestions for future research. As no phenomenological qualitative research can completely provide the entire picture of the lived experiences of a target marginal group, each facet of the findings provides a different perspective of the lived experiences of parents of children with dyslexia. Based on the findings of the current study, there are several recommendations for future research:

1) The current study uncovered the experiences of parents of children with dyslexia. However, all informants were mothers. I believe that there may be differences between fathers' and mothers' perceptions of their children's needs and in their processes of caring for their children with dyslexia. Yang, et al. (2016) claimed that both fathers and

mothers are important to the young person's development. The father's role in supporting a child with dyslexia is worthwhile for researchers to further investigate in future.

2) No female students with dyslexia were involved in this study. Although this matches the trend reported in the literature that more males than females are diagnosed with dyslexia (Arnett, et al., 2017), the parental experience of rearing a daughter with dyslexia might not be as same as that of rearing son. Future study could take gender differences into account.

3) Socioeconomic status might be a possible factor affecting informants' experiences of school-parent collaboration, as might the school banding (that is the ranking in Hong Kong's selective secondary school system). Therefore, for a deeper understanding, future studies could focus on schools with specific bandings and socioeconomic status. Quantitative or mixed studies could also be considered.

4) Case studies targeted at particular parents would enrich the current study and give deeper understanding to the unique stories of parental experiences of specific learning difficulties. This could also enrich the whole research field of parental experience.

5) Secondary school life could be divided into two periods, junior and senior. Based on the current study, it appeared that the factors affecting children in the senior forms were quite different from those in the junior forms. One of the key factors is public examination at the end of the senior forms. Future studies could–hence focus on a particular period rather than the entire secondary school life.

6) Studies indicated that students' grade levels could lead to various levels of emotional problems associated with their academic performance. Specifically, students at the timing closer to change schools, i.e., transitional period, are more likely to experience more emotional disturbances (Grills-Taquechel et al., 2010), i.e., Bonnie, mother of S1 student, easily felt more anxiety and depression, which might then increase their parents' emotional stress. Further studies could pay more attention on this area.

Chapter Summary

This chapter summarized the recommendations to different stakeholders, including policy makers, Equal Opportunities Commission, educators, parents, school counsellors, school social workers and educational psychologists. Contributions and suggestions for future research were also addressed.

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Appendix 1 Reflexive notes

Re-type version (part of them), the original pieces of writing is non-type version.

Aim: Record my biases and assumptions which might influence the study process

Bracketing
教育模式、醫療模式
大部分家長總認為教育可以改變讀障孩子。
其實，讀障根本不能根治。為什麼總去不斷補習、催谷……要入大學。
My opinion: 根本不切實際。

Counter argument:
讀障雖然不能根治，但補習又也許沒壞。
催俗，是文化影響，或者未必沒入作用，好多可能存在。
入不入到大學，許多可能，說不定。
為人父母，難免有不同想法，儘管理解下。
… …

Bracketing
Teaching role
十個九個批評老師不公
話教師不懂照顧讀障，總說教師歧視
控告老師
(感覺好像也在批評有雙重身份的我)

Thinking in other ways:
教師是一個團隊，有好有不好，難免
有的教師未接受特殊教育，有的接受了又欠缺實踐訓練
有的把教育把特教看得太輕，又或家長看得太重，好多可能，或誤解存在
如果處理不好，教師也沒有不被指責的原因
… …

Appendix 2 Ethical Clearance Approval Letter

香港教育大學
The Education University
of Hong Kong

21 November 2017

Mr SZE Ka Kei Patrick
Doctor of Education Programme
Graduate School

Dear Mr Sze,

Application for Ethical Review <Ref. no. 2017-2018-0025>

I am pleased to inform you that approval has been given by the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) for your research project:

Project title: Research Proposal: A Qualitative Study of the Experiences of the Parents of Dyslexic Children in Supporting Their Students in Secondary School Studies

Ethical approval is granted for the project period from 1 December 2017 to 31 December 2019. If a project extension is applied for lasting more than 3 months, HREC should be contacted with information regarding the nature of and the reason for the extension. If any substantial changes have been made to the project, a new HREC application will be required.

Please note that you are responsible for informing the HREC in advance of any proposed substantive changes to the research proposal or procedures which may affect the validity of this ethical approval. You will receive separate notification should a fresh approval be required.

Thank you for your kind attention and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,

Patsy Chung (Ms)
Secretary
Human Research Ethics Committee

c.c. Professor WANG Wen Chung, Chairperson, Human Research Ethics Committee

香港新界大埔露屏路十號
10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong
T (852) 2948 8888 F (852) 2948 6000 www.eduhk.hk

Appendix 3 Recruitment flyer

Dear Parent,

Hello, I am Patrick SZE, I am a postgraduate student in the Education University of Hong Kong, doing this research is to understand the experiences of supporting children with dyslexia in secondary schools.

You will be interviewed for about 1-2 hours, which process will be audio-taped and then transcribed. Breaks will be provided during interviews if needed. Tapes will be destroyed by the researcher after the research. Transcriptions will be used for data analysis and publications. Your sharing of stories will help this research to provide valuable information for teachers, counselors and school social workers, teachers as well as the public to understand the experience of supporting children with dyslexia and policy changes. Your participation and answers in this interview will be kept confidential.

Your name and personal particulars will not be revealed in any process of research. All research materials will be kept in a locked cabinet. I understand that you may have uncomfortable feelings when you are sharing some unpleasant past experiences. However, these discomforts should be no greater than what we experience in everyday life. If you continued to experience discomfort during interview, you can take a break, or you can stop the research procedure at any time. In addition, I can help you access counselor or therapist who may be able to help. Your participation is voluntary.

You can read this **attached consent form** to see if you have any concern. If you need someone else to assist you to understand or to clarify this consent form, you are welcome to do so. You can stop or withdraw from the interviews anytime without negative consequences.

You may contact the office for the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Education University of Hong Kong via email hrec@eduhk.hk to enquire on research participant's rights.

SZE KA KEI PATRICK
Principal Investigator

THE EDUCATION UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

CONSENT FORM

A qualitative study of the experiences of the parents in supporting their children with dyslexia in secondary schools

I _____ hereby consent to participate in the captioned research supervised by Dr. Diana KWOK and conducted by Mr. Patrick SZE, who are students of Special Education & Counselling in The Education University of Hong Kong.

I understand that information obtained from this research may be used in future research and may be published.   However, our right to privacy will be retained, i.e., the personal details will not be revealed.

The procedure as set out in the attached information sheet has been fully explained. I understand the benefits and risks involved. My participation in the project is voluntary.

I acknowledge that we have the right to question any part of the procedure and can withdraw at any time without negative consequences.

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

INFORMATION SHEET

A qualitative study of the experiences of the parents in supporting their children with dyslexia in secondary schools

You are invited to participate in a project supervised by Dr. Diana KWOK and conducted by Mr. Patrick SZE, who are students of Special Education & Counselling in The Education University of Hong Kong

The introduction of the research
A) What does the research involve?
    - The proposal research is to investigate the experiences of parents of dyslexic children in Hong Kong.
B) Why were you chosen for this research?
    - Your experiences of taking care offspring are valuable and unique to the research. The criteria of choosing participants are: all participants have a child who are diagnosed to have specific learning difficulties; all participants have at least one child who are studying secondary school; all participants are the main caregiver of the child;

The methodology of the research
A) Number of participants included in this study
    - Sample size: around 10-20 participants
    - All participants are connected via the registry of mainstream school records in EDB and/or professional teacher meetings of SENCOs.
B) Procedure of the research
    - Participants will be asked to attend an interview with principle researcher
    - Period of participation: the end of 2017 to the end of 2019
    - How much time it will take: only 1-2 times interviews within 1-2 years
C) Potential benefits (including compensation for participation)
D) Interviews will be transcribed for references.

The potential risks of the research (State explicitly if none)
Participants may encounter uncomfortable feelings towards past experiences. Researcher is a recognized counsellor in HKPCA, who is experienced to handle the potential risks of emotion problems.

Your participation in the project is voluntary. You have every right to withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences. All information related to you and your child will remain confidential and will be identifiable by codes known only to the researcher.

Describe how results will be potentially disseminated
- The current research will be reserved for publications in academic journals subject to
  The Education University of Hong Kong.

If you would like to obtain more information about this study, please contact Mr. Patrick SZE at telephone number ▬▬▬▬▬ or their supervisor Dr. Diana KWOK at

telephone number ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research study, please do not hesitate to contact the Human Research Ethics Committee by email at hrec@eduhk.hk or by mail to Research and Development Office, The Education University of Hong Kong.

Thank you for your interest in participating in this study.

SZE KA KEI PATRICK
Principal Investigator

Appendix 4 Interview Guide

Interview Guide

I) The interview will be held in a comfortable, safe, mutually agreeable location.

II) Opening Statement:

Hello, I am Patrick SZE, I am a postgraduate student in the Education University of Hong Kong, doing this research is to understand the experiences of supporting children with dyslexia in secondary schools.

You will be interviewed for about 1-2 hours, which process will be audio-taped and then transcribed. Breaks will be provided during interviews if needed. Tapes will be destroyed by the researcher after the research. Transcriptions will be used for data analysis and publications. Your sharing of stories will help this research to provide valuable information for teachers, counselors and school social workers, teachers as well as the public to understand the experience of supporting children with dyslexia and policy changes. Your participation and answers in this interview will be kept confidential.

Your name and personal particulars will not be revealed in any process of research. All research materials will be kept in a locked cabinet. I understand that you may have uncomfortable feelings when you are sharing some unpleasant past experiences. However, these discomforts should be no greater than what we experience in everyday life. If you continued to experience discomfort during interview, you can take a break, or you can stop the research procedure at any time. In addition, I can help you access counselor or therapist who may be able to help. Your participation is voluntary.

You can read this consent form attached to see if you have any concern. If you need someone else to assist you to understand or to clarify this consent form, you are welcome to do so. You can stop or withdraw from the interviews anytime without negative consequences.

You may contact the office for the Human Research Ethics Committee of the Education University of Hong Kong via email hrec@eduhk.hk to enquire on research participant's rights.

1) Informed consents will be obtained before the interviewing process.

2) The interview will proceed using the following question clusters as guides:
    1. How do you interpret the term 'dyslexia'?
    2. How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly related to your son? Explain.
    3. How often do you experience nervous and "stressed"? How do you describe these experiences?
    4. How often do you experience the things were going on your way? (e.g.

your son listens to you.)
5.   How do you cope with the things that you had to do for your son?
6.   What do you experience if you are unable to control irritations in your life regarding your son?
7.   In what extent, you have been experienced anger because of things that were out of your control?
8.   In what extent, you experience that difficulties of bringing up you son were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
9.   How do family members react when you experience 'stresses'? Supportive or non-supportive?
10.   Have you experience parent-school collaboration? Could you share your experience?
11.   Have you participated any kind of meetings and/or conferences with teachers regarded to your son? In that meeting or conference, could you make any decision?
12.   Who will you contact in case you have enquiries about your son's study? How often do you contact school teachers?
13.   How do you describe the experience of collaboration with school teachers and/or professionals? Good or bad?
14.   How do the teachers teach your children in class? In what extent, you trust school teachers who could teach your children well?
15.   In what extent, your family member could help in case you experience stresses?
16.   How do the HK SEN policies benefit your son? In what aspect?
17.   What do you experience when you help you son to apply for accommodation in public exam/school exam?
18.   What do you experience 'barriers' regarding to the SEN policy?
19.   In your understanding, how do you think about local culture towards the concerns of dyslexic children? Supportive or not? Fair or unfair?

Ending Questions:
1. Is there anything I have neglected to ask that you think is important to my understanding of your experiences?
2. Do you have any feedback on today's conversation? How's your feeling right now about our conversation?

Appendix 5 Interview Protocol (revised)

Research Questions
1) What experiences do parents encounter in the parent-school collaboration process?

2) How do these experiences inform school counselors/educators about the parents' perspective of parent-school partnerships in helping the child with dyslexia in the special education process?

Personal areas (microsystem)
1. How do you interpret the term 'dyslexia'?
   你怎麼理解「讀寫障礙」？

2. How often have you been upset because of something that happened unexpectedly related to your son? Explain.
   你經常因為孩子的事情而感到不歡嗎？試加以說明？

3. How often do you experience nervous and "stressed"? How do you describe these experience?
   你經常經驗到緊張或壓力嗎？試加以講述當中的經驗。

4. How often do you experience confidence about your ability to handle your son issues?
   你經常經驗到有信心和能力處理你孩子的事情嗎？試加以說明。

5. How often do you experience the things were going on your way? (e.g. your son listens to you.)
   你經常經驗到事情是向著你所想的方向進行嗎？

6. How do you cope with the things that you had to do for your son?
   你如何處理或應付你孩子的事情？

7. What do you experience if you are unable to control irritations in your life regarding your son?
   當你處理孩子的事情，遇到無法控制激動(情緒)時，你的經驗是怎樣的？

8. In what extent, you have been experienced anger because of things that were out of your control?
   在怎樣的程度上，你經驗到無法控制的憤怒？

9. In what extent, you experience that difficulties of bringing up you son were piling up so high that you could not overcome them?
   在怎樣的程度上，你養育孩子的過程中，經驗到無法克服的困難？

School / family (microsystem)
1. How do family members react when you experience 'stresses'? Supportive or non-supportive?
   當你遇上壓力你家人的反應如何？支持或反對？

2. Have you experience parent-school collaboration? Could you share your experience?
   你有經驗過家校合作嗎？試分享你的經驗。

3. Have you participated any kind of meetings and/or conferences with teachers regarded to your son? In that meeting or conference, could you make any decision?
   你出席過任何關於你孩子學習的校內會議嗎？在會中，你能作任何決定嗎？

4. Who will you contact in case you have enquiries about your son's study? How often do you contact school teachers?
   當你對孩子的學習有疑問時，你會找學校哪一位呢？有多頻密？

5. How do you describe the experience of collaboration with school teachers and/or professionals? Good or bad?
   你會怎麼形容家校合作的經驗？好還是壞？

6. In what extent, teachers' special education trainings are affecting your children learning?
   在怎樣的程度上，教師的特殊教育訓練能影響你的孩子學習？

7. How do the teachers' attitude towards inclusive education affecting your children in school?
   教師對融合教育的態度如何影響到你孩子在校的學習？

8. What is the most important characteristic of SEN teachers who teach inclusive classes?
   甚麼是實行融合教育的特殊教育教師最重要的個人特質？

9. How do the teachers teach your children in class? In what extent, you trust school teachers who could teach your children well?
   教師如何在班裡教育你的孩子？在什麼程度上，你相信學校教師能教好你的孩子？

(Mesosystem)
1. In what extent, your family member could help in case you experience stresses?
   在怎樣的程度上，你的家人能夠幫助你紓緩壓力？

2. How does religious help you to relieve stresses?
   信仰如何幫助你減低壓力？

SENs policy in HK (exo-system)
1. How do the HK SEN policies benefit your son? In what aspect?
   香港的特殊教育政策如何幫助你的孩子？在那個方面？

2. What do you experience when you help you son to apply for accommodation in public exam/school exam?
   當你孩子申請公開/校內考試時，你經驗了什麼？

3. What do you experience 'barriers' regarding to the SEN policy?
   對於特殊教育政策，什麼是你經驗到的障礙？

Culture and ideology (macro-system)
1. In your understanding, how do you think about local culture towards the concerns of dyslexic children? Supportive or not? Fair or unfair?
   依你的理解，你怎麼看本地文化對於讀寫困難孩童的關注？支持或反對？公平或不公平？

2. Do you experiences any unforgettable experiences about bringing up your son (in HK)?
   (在香港)養育孩子的過程裡，你有沒有經驗過任何無法忘記的經驗？

Others
其他？

Appendix 6 Prolonged engagement

Engagement in related research activities

Invited as speaker

Month and Year	Institution	role
2017.7.17	EDB Curriculum Development Institute --- catering students with diverse in language learning	Speaker
2018.3.10	The Hong Kong Teachers' Centre (HKTC) 2018 Education Meet 'Curriculum development and teaching practice' ----- inclusive education with new thought.	Speaker
2018.08.22	「Professional Forum on Child Health 2018 - Support at School to Children with SEN / SCN in Hong Kong」	Speaker
2018.08.23	Participating in executive committee of SESHK	Executive Committee
2018.09.01	Participating in executive committee of SESHK journal	Editor
2018.12.01	The Special Education Society of Hong Kong Ltd Annual Conference 2018	Speaker
2019.10.18	AD/HD society Annual Conference 2019	Speaker
2019.11.9	Linear And Creative Learning Center	Speaker
2019.12.12	Learning & Teaching Expo 2019- SENCo as agent of Change	Speaker

Participated in Community of practice

Community of Practice	
2018.12.10	School development leadership COP
2019.3.20	SENCo Joint-School COP
2019.9.1	SENCo Learning Circle (EDB)

Appendix 7 Publication

從醫療、教育及社會模式到社會關係模式，

討論其對「殘疾」的意義

施家祺

摘要

本文簡述「殘疾」議題的三大模式：醫療模式、教育模式及社會模式，並介紹折衷理論------「社會關係模式」。「醫療模式」與「教育模式」皆有其不足之處，前者強調殘疾人士的缺陷，後者則強調針對認知障礙而來的介入策略，然而「社會模式」的發展，以致過份擁抱殘疾身份，亦落得不太現實。筆者認為「社會關係模式」承認醫療模式的觀點，同時亦考慮到社會模式裡的種種現象窘態，實是平衡三者，迄今最為理想的殘疾理論模式。

This article aimed at analysing the three traditional disability models, clinical, educational and social model, and then introducing an adjust model, social relational model. Clinical model and educational model are criticized with their deficiencies that the former over emphasizs the malfunction of disabilities and the latter is heavily depended on the intervention towards cognitive disorders. However, social model embraces the identity of disability that is too unrealistic. The author highlighted that social relational model could balance these three models was so far the ideal model towards perception of disability issue.

關鍵詞：
醫療模式	Clinical Model
社會模式	Social Model
教育模式	Educational Model
社會關係模式	Social Relational Model
殘疾	Disability

前言

　　爭論不已的論題，熾熱的論辯，迄今吾人站於港人港地，到底該怎麼看待殘疾的問題呢？學界所謂醫療模式、教育模式，以及社會模式，哪一種模式才最適合我們用來看待殘疾的議題呢？

　　本文將探論三大模式：醫療模式、教育模式及社會模式，並介紹折衷理論------「社會關係模式」。筆者認為只有「社會關係模式」才能指出殘疾人士生活上的種種窘態，進而解構殘疾人士面對生活上的社會現象。

醫療模式

「醫療模式」的觀點主要是以醫療的角度出發理解「殘疾」問題，認為殘疾主要是由於病者生理上的功能缺損。20 世紀以前，以醫療模式來看待殘疾的問題，一直佔據著學術界主流的地位。十九世紀末，學習障礙被理解為腦神經障礙的一種。1877 年，德國腦神經學醫生 Dr. Adolph Kussmaul 研究一群有讀寫困難的病人，並指出這些病人未能如常閱讀與書寫，全因大腦上的病異 (Guardiola, 2001; Lawrence, 2009; 柯華葳、方金雅, 2010)。這個時候，讀寫困難被視為「文盲」的一種，並從此開創以醫療模式解讀學習障礙的長久歷史。

1887 年，Dr. Rudolf Berlin 率先以「dyslexia」來描述讀寫困難的人士，可是當時未引起學界的關注 (Lawrence, 2009; 柯華葳、方金雅, 2010)。1891 年，眼科醫生 Dr. James Hinshelwood 於醫學期刊《The Lancet》撰文展示自己長年的研究成果，指語言能力的失去或與視覺能力傳遞腦部的運作效能有關，而腦部損毀亦足構成語言能力的突然失去 (同上)。1896 年，Dr. W. Pringle Morgan 針對一名十四歲的讀寫障礙學童作出研究，亦重申了腦部發展與語文能力的重大關係。Dr. W. Pringle Morgan 更被公認為讀寫障礙之父 (Guardiola, 2001; 柯華葳、方金雅, 2010) 。

直至 1917 年，醫療模式的豐碩研究成果指出學習障礙為一遺傳而可治癒的病患，而男孩子的普遍發病率比女孩子高 (Guardiola, 2001)。

1925 年，美國神經學科專家 Dr. Samuel Torrey Orton 有了突破性的研究發展。他診斷出不少讀寫障礙的病人書寫文字、組字句時，皆會有邊旁倒置、誤串誤讀的情況，如把 b 寫成 d，把 was 寫成 saw。他提出以「strephosymbolia」與「developmental alexia」來形容此種現象，代替傳統以來的「文盲」概念(Guardiola, 2001)。直至 1930 年代左右，「dyslexia」一詞才正式普及起來，此詞來自希臘，「dys」意思是「absence」，而「lexia」的意思是「language」(Guardiola, 2001; Lawrence, 2009;柯華葳、方金雅, 2010)。

囿於篇幅所限，其他如聽覺、視覺障礙等殘疾議題，在醫療模式下皆被視為功能上的缺損，重在治療的概念上發展。醫療模式視學習障礙為一殘疾，並認為其具有遺傳及可治療的特徵，但是隨著時代的發展、學研的成果，學習障礙是否可治，漸見成疑[i]。

美國精神醫學學會發表的《精神疾病診斷與統計手冊(第五版)》(DSM-V)修訂了對「學習障礙」的定義，並把各種學習障礙[ii]，統一歸納於「特定學習障礙」的概念之下(American Psychiatric Association, 2013)。根據最新的「特殊學習障礙」

定義，學障不是因為內在因素，如智能不足、發展遲緩、聽力或視覺問題、神經學或動作疾患所造成，也不是因為外在因素，如經濟、環境、曠課、缺少教育所導致。學習障礙不是因為神經症狀所致，並可能只發生在單一的學習技巧上，如單一文字、數字概念等。

教育模式

有別於醫療模式，教育模式著重以教育的方式「介入」，用以「補救」殘疾帶來的差異。美國神經學科專家 Dr. Samuel Torrey Orton 的突破性研究，亦促成了學界轉移了研究方向：從「醫療模式」轉向「教育模式」。醫療模式的成功在於使學界明白讀障與腦部功能有關，但卻未有具體而可行的根治方針。有見及此，教育模式的出現，或彌補了醫療研究下治療方面的缺失。

早在 1801 年，法國物理學家 Jean Marc Gaspard Itard 把在森林長大的十二歲男孩 Victor 帶回家撫養並教育，這已是迄今公認「特殊教育」的搖籃。Itard 也因此成為特殊教育之父 (Lane, 1976)。時隔個半世紀，1948 年隨 Orton 之名而成立的「The Orton Society」致力於讀寫上的研究，並成為迄今著名的國際讀寫障礙協會(International dyslexia association)。此機構的目的在於協助讀障人士爭取教育服務、社會地位及法定權力上的利益(Guardiola, 2001; 柯華葳、方金雅, 2010)。教育模式下，有別於強調「疾患」，讀寫障礙為一種能透過「介入」(intervention)得到「補救」(remediated)效果的學習障礙。

針對讀寫困難的特徵[iii]，Anna Gillingham 及 Bessie Stillman 發展出一套重視多感觀、語音效果的教學方式[iv]，並命名為「Gillingham-Stillman 教學法」(Gillingham & Stillman, 1997; Lawrence, 2009; Shaw, 2008;)。無獨有偶，1968 年 Doman 及 Delacato 亦發展出強調「範式」(patterning)的教學法。基於神經系統發展的缺損，此種「範式」教育法強調當中的能「修補」功能，並大量加入肢體感統動作元素，如大小肌肉的運用等(Hines, 2001; Lawrence, 2009)。

此外，教育模式亦見於三層架構(3-tier)的「反應與介入」(Response to intervention) 概念。三層架構源於歐美，主要彌補傳統「智力差距模式」的不足及「等待至敗」[v]的流弊而來(Fletcher, Coulter, Reschly, & Vaughn, 2004; The National Research Center on Learning Disabilities, 2005)。簡言之，三層架構的概念大致是利用三個層面按不同程度的特教需要而設定教學方針及內容。目前為此，香港教育局自 2006 年起亦採用此種模式應用於本港的特教服務(余玉珍、尹弘飈, 2016；陸秀霞、鄭佩芸，2009)。

「醫療模式」與「教育模式」的不足

醫療模式與教育模式的研究成果豐碩，貢獻良多，然而隨著社會的發展亦漸漸顯得不太足夠。Riddick (1995), Macdonald (2009) 與 Snowling (2000)等學者皆提出批評，指醫療與教育模式已是不合時宜的理論，只適用於解釋上世紀的現象。

醫療模式視讀障為一神經官能的問題，並強調「病患」一詞，意味可循治癒方向解讀，而教育與社會性的參與亦多循醫學理解方向出發。換句話說，在醫療模式下，讀障的理解是受限於醫學的研究成果(Fawcett & Nicolson, 2004; Morton, 2004; Olson & Datta, 2002; Snowling, 2000; Stein & Talcott, 1999)。

不同於醫療模式，教育模式則集中在認知層面的失誤來理解讀障，故其發展的介入方式亦多在修復認知誤區，如語音認知教學、字型教學設計等。此外，教育模式亦涉及教師於三層架構中的角色，研究介入的密度與需要(Elliott, Jenkins, Snowling, & Thompson, 2005; Pumfrey, 2005; Richards & Berninger, 2006; Riddick, 1995; Snowling, 2000)。雖然教育模式揭示了學習上的障礙，但是仍未能正視生活及社會文化上的種種困境與窘態(Barton & Armstrong, 2001)。

過去十年，不少學者撰文批評本港融合教育的不善，如因師資配套不足，造成照顧不周等的嚴重流弊(Forlin, 2007；余玉珍、尹弘飈，2016)。更諷刺的是，「融合教育」的失敗一度造成「隔離教育」個案的上升(冼權鋒、許令嫻，2010)。

吾人無意否定醫療與教育模式的成果，相反頗肯定相關的篳路之功。然而筆者認為生活及社會文化上的學術研究缺塊，終究有賴「社會模式」的實踐與開拓。而要「融合教育」達至成功，亦不能忽略「社會模式」的重要元素。

社會模式

不同於醫療教育與教育模式，社會模式重在「移除」(Remove)社會上建構出來的種種設限(barriers)。2010、2012 年，平機會先後發佈新聞指融合教育推行逾十年，歧視個案卻日益嚴重。該調查指三成特教生曾被取笑，兩成六曾被欺凌，欺凌者甚至是老師，更甚者是特教生「內化」(internalize)了這種欺凌，視自己為蠢，能力不如人(Equal Opportunities Commission，2010)。筆者毋忘 2014 年特殊學校教師蓄意使用火酒面噴學生的醜聞[vi](明報，2016a)。再者，2013 年

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平機會就《殘疾歧視條例》收到大量投訴，歧視的行為大多在解僱、給予差劣的工作表現評核、限制培訓機會及拒絕加薪等(平等機會委員會，2013)。醫療模式、教育模式對於這類社會上不公的意識形態乏善足陳，對於殘疾人士的保障亦涉足有限。

與醫療模式、教育模式相仿，社會模式同樣存在已久，惟至近數十年才受到學界的重視。Mackelprang 與 Salsgiver (2015) 批評醫療模式側重於使殘疾人士接受治療，用以「正常化」 (normalization) 並符合社會意識形態中「正常人」的標準，這類思想促成了健全主義 (ableism) 的形成。值得注意「正常化程序」遏止了多元性的可能意涵，否定了殘疾人士自身可能具有的不同面貌與呈態。

社會模式重視多元，同時否定任何社會制度或權力建構而來的片面解讀[vii]。Reindal (1995) 重申殘疾人士應理解為個人在社會與文化之中互動的角色，而不該伏膺於只有單一的可能。Goldenberg (1978)更提出目前社會中常見的多種壓迫(oppressions)方式[viii]，其目的旨在使殘疾人士「矮化」自己的身份，終致拒絕承認自身的「殘疾」(Shakespeare, 2008)。

承認殘疾，並接納殘疾，以致擁抱殘疾，故其重點在移除社會上建構的障礙(removing barriers)。這是社會模式主導的思想，其不認為殘疾是種缺陷，只承認殘疾有別於其他人，並要求爭取同一平台上照顧不同差異(Riddick, 1995)。Reindal (2009) 以輪椅人士的情況判別醫療模式與社會模式之別。她指出設置電梯或行走輔助器材幫助輪椅人士是醫療模式，目的在使其能和「正常人」一般生活；而重置平坦地方或斜路以照顧所有人才是社會模式，受惠的不只是殘疾人士，而是所有人。此種概念與今日強調的融合教育[ix]宗旨相當脗合。此外，學者 Sullivan (2001)亦指出殘疾人士於職場上的種種限制和不公，與傳統教育上的結構不無關係，批評迄今存在的種種設限造成殘疾人士生活上的舉步為艱。吾人猶記得 2011 年特殊學校申請聘用外藉英語教師被拒一事，足見教育當局有意「剝削」特教生應有的權利，終訴諸社會法律方能得值[x](明報，2016b)。

正如容家駒先生[xi]引述的 Bronfenbrenner(1979)生態系統，殘疾與學障皆為系統中的一員，不可能不受周遭的環境左右[xii]。雖然容氏認為醫療、教育及社會模式三者可因對象不同而變易觀念待之，但是其析述生態理論時亦認同社會文化一面的影響。以此觀之，社會模式之考量，實不容小覷。有見及此，筆者認為要撼動政府落實照顧差異，訴諸社會力量是不二的做法。

社會關係模式

　　儘管社會模式解釋了不少現存的現象，理解到殘疾人士面對的種種問題，但是亦有自身的不足與偏狹。Reindal (2009)析述各種模式時，指出社會模式的過度發展，以致全盤否定醫療與教育模式的成果，這是不切實際的。社會模式的發展一度流於偏狹，終致強調否定殘疾的事實，甚至出現因為否定自身為殘疾，而不認同自己為殘疾的一員，拒絕參與相關的社會運動(Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 2015)。

　　修正社會模式，Reindal(2008)就醫療模式與教育模式之間，取得平衡，提出「社會關係模式」。「社會關係模式」認為醫療模式為一「需要條件」，是整個理論的前提，因為殘疾人士必先有殘疾的情況，方能算為殘疾，這是認同醫療模式論調的內容；有了基本的「需要條件」以後，提出社會模式作為「滿足條件」，因為不管殘疾人士自我認同與否，終不能置自身於社會之外，而置身社會其中，終不免受到社會上的種種平等不平等的待遇或壓迫。二者相加，構成今日殘疾人士面對的無奈困局。

　　社會關係模式重視殘疾人士與社會之間的互動。社會怎麼看待殘疾，以致學障，將會是殘疾人士需要面對的抗戰；而置身其中，殘疾人士怎樣回應社會，亦建構著他們自身的力量，用以凝聚改變社會。迄今殘疾團體、殘疾人士法團等的出現，凝聚著弱勢社群(minority group)，從而建構著自身獨有的文化(Disability culture)，便是他們成功的例子(Mackelprang & Salsgiver, 2015)。

　　本港殘疾人士的情況仍深受社會文化觀念的左右。舉例說中國傳統要求考生以筆卷評核，此等觀念在華文地區已歷史悠久。香港考評局迄今仍承襲此風，讀障學生若要等到「以口代筆」[xiii]的實施，恐怕仍需要引頸以待了[xiv](余玉珍、尹弘颷, 2016；The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2016)。另外，融合教育雖已推行逾十年，但學障生遭拒絕取錄的情況仍然存在。融合路上可見困難重重，問題叢生[xv](Forlin, 2007; Lo, Yeung, & Yuen, 2013)。如此種種，套用社會關係模式來說，都是種種觀念與執行上的設限(barriers)。殘疾人士在社會上遭受不同程度的歧視，仍是不爭的事實。

　　如果吾人只有賴醫療之力，教育之功，而未訴諸於社會現實推動共融，筆者認為實有只見樹木，未見森林之弊！換句話說，社會觀念一日不變，融合教育推行將會事倍功半，無以繼之；而醫療研究亦只屬一孔之見，囿於救人之軀，終未及文化社會之核心精神。惟有植根於社會中的殘疾觀念改變，態度方能轉變，共融之境方能始現。

　　本文囿於篇幅所限，未能詳論箇中細節，難免存在不足，惟所論大抵已能切要。醫療模式、教育模式及社會模式乃迄今對殘疾議題的三大主流模式，各有所

長，亦實有所短，彼此皆無以自足。而本文敘補了「社會關係模式」，似能彌補
當中不善之處，然而是否堅不可破，固若金湯之論，筆者亦未敢斷言。只是修為
有限，數年閱覽，研究筆致，謹略陳數語，聊表心中所取而已，並望能請益於眾。

餘論-------筆者的點滴心語

厠身香港教殊教育學會特殊教育需要統籌主任證書課程的種子一員，深明推
動社會風氣改變不易，亦可謂陳義過高，難以落實。猶記得容氏課中屢勸吾人必
須思之合宜，行之有方，循序漸進，方能累積成果[xvi]。學生衷心感激容氏的良言
雋語，用心叮嚀，並由衷認同，亦明白教改巨輪中「求變」的箇中黃蓮。

本文只在點出「社會風氣」轉變，才是根本，但撼動根本並非一日半天可成。
筆者認為著力之處，可考慮在「社會關係模式」(Reindal, 2009)、「生態系統」
(Bronfenbrenner, 1979)中的任一要處，如學術、家庭、學校、朋輩等一併出發，
積步而成，或終能達至。走筆至此，思之所及，想那「特殊教育需要統籌主任證
書課程」的成立，或已是一例。如今種子已經深植，望開花結果之時，蔚然成為
氣候。此等轉變，筆者拭目以待，或將來另文再述。

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作者簡介

施家祺，於香港教育大學完成教育輔導碩士課程，並持續於特殊教育上攻讀博士課程。他亦完成香港中文大學教育輔導證書。迄今擁有雙學位及雙碩士資格。2016年期間，施先生完成了基礎(30 小時)、進階(102 小時)、專題(120 小時)教師專業進修課程（照顧不同學習需要）課程，並於 2018 年成為首屆特殊教育需要統籌主任證書課程(180 小時)的畢業生。他於融合教育的三層支援模式上有豐富經驗。施先生現為一所本地中學任職的學生支援主任及資深教師，同時亦是一位香港專業輔導協會(HKPCA)的認可輔導員，輔導對象包括自閉症、專注力不足與過度活躍症、閱讀和學習困難、情緒及行為問題的青年。施先生心繫香港教育的發展，尤其關注本地的特殊教育議題。

附註：
i 詳見後文。目前並沒有任何藥物可根治學障。至於 DSM-V 所提出的醫學成果，後來由「教育模式」以各種「介入」學習手段與策略嘗試調適，促進學習。
ii 各種學習障礙，包括閱讀疾患（Reading disorder）、數學疾患（Mathematics disorder）、書寫表達疾患（Disorder of written expression），以及不特定的學習疾患（Learning disorder NOS）。
iii 英語及華語的文法不同，其讀寫困難的呈現亦有分別。學術研究指出英語的讀寫障礙主要在於語音上的困難，而中文則在快速命名及詞組概念上(Ho, Wong, Yueng, Chan, Chung, Lo, & Luan, 2012)。
iv 英語為 Phonetic-based, visual and auditory and kina esthetic approaches。
v 等待至敗，英文為 Wait to fail，是「智力差距模式」下造成的流弊。三層架構實施以前，大都採用智力差距模式來判定特殊學習需要，其方法為以智力水平與一般同齡學生作出的比較決定。相似的還有「學術表現差距模式」，即強調考核表現與一般同齡學生作出的比較。
vi 保良局特殊學校女教師被指 2013 至 2014 年間，用消毒火酒噴灑 7 名 6 至 7 歲智障學生臉部，經審訊後被裁定 11 項襲擊兒童罪成，判囚 10 個月。
vii Foucault (2006)研究「discourse」的論述，指出社會上許多對殘疾人士的負面印象皆來自主流建構出來的社會制度。
viii 多種壓迫方式，如 ableism, containment, expendability, compartmentalization, and blaming the victim 導致「拒絕認同自身的殘疾」(denial of disabilities)。
ix 「融合教育」inclusive education 是指改變課程以切合不同學習需要的學生。
x 特殊學校遭到不公平待遇。事件由一名家長代表向法庭申請覆核，終判得值。教育局需重新考慮特教生得外籍教師教授英語的權利。
xi 香港特殊教育學會 2016 年舉辦 SENCO 課程，容家駒先生以班主任身份介紹了 Bronfenbrenner (1979) 生態系統理論。
xii Bronfenbrenner (1979)生態系統以個人為單位分四層面向解釋現象。此系統從微觀到宏觀，兼顧了社區、家庭及文化的影響。
xiii 對於嚴重障礙而不能自行執筆考試的學童，香港考評局曾提供專人代筆作答。但評卷形式最終仍是以紙筆評分，而非口述答卷(明報, 2015)。
xiv 香港考評局直到 2016 年才在通識科引入語音轉換系統，但是距離「以口代筆」作答模式仍有一段距離(The Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2016)。
xv 學校港大同學會書院於 2008 年被披露該校拒收特教生，當然引起大眾對融合教育實施的關注(太陽報, 2008)。此外，Forlin(2007)亦曾指出本港融合教育因師資不足而不善，引起不少問題。
xvi 容氏在課程當中，不只一次提出要改變政策或政府定調方向，必須由小步子推動，諸如推掉「三層支援架構」等都是不切實際的想法。余玉珍、尹弘飈(2016)的論文指出要「改變教育政策系統」的論調，容氏回應是不夠務實(their recommendations and conclusions at the end of the paper is not practical enough as their key concern was to reform the education system as a whole)。

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攻略一‧二：推展融合教育全校參與的校本攻略
施家祺主任

　　教育局(2014)「融合教育運作指南」提及差異管理的內容，大抵分了四個範疇，而 2017 年香港特殊教育學會(SESHK)根據指南設計了一套七個面向的「差異管理系統」。本文主要探討這七個面向在本人任職學校的運作情況。

第一面向：「分析校內學生的差異」

　　大概五六年前，我校就有特殊教育主任(SENCo)了。那個時候，學校仍沒有關於任何特教的資料。當時，我要從學校的角落裡，找出久遺在一角的信函，然後一個一個地整理，最後完成了一個稍為整全的資料庫。早期是使用 Google 雲端儲存，現在則發展了學校自身的特教系統了。資料庫內會詳列特教學生每一項資料，包括：特教種類、校方支援紀錄、個人導師、班主任、訓育紀錄、過往紀錄、備註資料等，好讓相關的老師知道要怎樣去幫助他們。

　　基本的運作都是從這裡開始。接著，就是分班問題。通過統計，我們知道大概每一班有多少特教學生。除了精英班外，特教生會被平均分派到不同的班別。希望這樣的安排，可以方便老師在課堂任教時的班管處理。特教類別上，全香港學校都差不多，包括：讀寫障礙、專注力不足/過度活躍、自閉症等。近年，語言障礙亦是一個趨勢。我想我校現在主要就是這四類。

第二面向：「學校可以為他們做多少」

　　這牽涉到學校對特教生的重視程度、開放程度。我校把「學生支援組」放到一個很高的位置，直接隸屬管理層，我想算是很重視了。接著，就是找不同的方法去幫助他們，例如：座位安排、考試加時、卷別放大、小組活動、個人導師、個人學習計劃等。我想這些都是最基本的調適，很多學校都能做到，這裡我不大費周章了。第一面向提及的資料庫是很重要的。有了資料庫，我們才可以進一步處理「需要讓哪些相關老師知道」、「要按照學生不同的需要配對不同的個人導師」。有的同學會特別喜歡某一位老師，我們便能把相關老師配對成為他的個人導師，那就最好了。校方規定老師一年要與學生面談四次，可喜的是計劃開展以來，不少老師與學生的面談甚至多達十餘次，實在是貼身的關懷啊！

第三面向：「安排進修」

　　教學層面上，教育局對「學生支援」訂立了清晰的目標，要求全港學校於 2019 至 2020 年前要達到一定數目的培訓指標。目前來說，我校只能做到「基礎課程」及「進階課程」兩項上的達標，而第三項「專題研習」我們是做不到的。因為學校沒有肢體障礙學生，儘管同儕進修回來，也沒有大用，所以亦不打算要同事在這方面深造。加上是直資學校的關係，沒有額外代課人手資助，故此，現實條件下，也很難調配老師出去進修。很高興的是「基礎」與「進階」課程，我校很多同事都在夜間自發地修讀完成了。

學生層面上，學校舉辦了不同形式的「課後小組」，其中「精靈計劃」是針對專注力不足的學生、「悅讀樂」是針對讀寫障礙的學生等。我校特別強調要求老師加入課後小組作為觀察。透過觀察，把難能寶貴的經驗轉化成學校的教學資源，如此方能長久運用。不過，我發覺要做到這點，是相當困難的。老師們大都需要課後補課，要百忙之中抽出一位老師去做觀察，難度不小。

此外，就是「分層課業」。我自己任教的中文，比如一份工作紙，可以分為兩層，甚至三層。未來我會把這個概念，推展至其他科目。當中，我預期一定會有阻力，但是也要推行，因為要以「學生為本」，就必須以學生角度出發去做。說實話 SENCo 很多時候都要挑戰傳統的。傳統老師不喜歡的，你都要去做，因為你要推動「文化共融」。除了「分層」，推動「多元化教學」，希望同儕能夠多運用不同的技巧，使學生能在不同的模式下學習。比如 kahoot 這類比賽性質的電子工具，一般男生都比較喜歡競爭，就相當適合教學上運用了。既能吸引他們注意力，又能鞏固所學。

第四面向：「促進持份者管理學生差異之間的協作」

從前我覺得第三面向是最難做的，現在我覺得第四面向才是最難，也是最關鍵。要不同「持份者」共同參與，這是「全校參與」的課題。以下有三個個案，跟大家分享：

個案一：A 同學(A 仔)上課時，沒有聽從老師指示打開課本，結果被老師責罰留堂！下課鐘聲響起，A 同學未有站立敬禮，沒有理會老師，只管伏在桌上，不管任何人都喚叫不醒。直至和他關係較好的輔導老師到場，在耳邊輕喚一下，他便醒了。

個案二：S 同學 (SpLD)家長要求考試加時，但 S 同學因怕被標籤而不願加時，而班主任亦曾說過加時不好，沒必要不用加時。

個案三：C 同學(AD/HD)耐不住沉悶的課堂，跟老師說要求到洗手間洗臉，無奈被拒絕。後來，因與同學談話，被罰上訓導室，繼而留堂。家長表示孩子已經要求去洗臉提神，教師拒絕，才會出現違規，不應受罰。

作為支援主任，針對以上三個個案，我們應該怎麼做呢？個案一中，A 同學可能只是表達能力稍遜一些，他不是不聽指示，而是不知道要怎樣打開課本，又或許不知怎樣發問，這時候支援主任應該如何做呢？個案二中，S 同學是否得到加時，這就要看專家、支援主任和班主任如何溝通了。至於個案 C 的情況，家長介入以後，訓導主任與支援主任之間的協調，又該如何呢？學校溝通，又該怎麼辦？AD/HD 學生是否可以通融在課堂時間到洗手間洗臉呢？

我想說的是，一間學校的「融合」不是那麼容易的。以下還有個故事，說到教師的特質：

不知道那位學生，在教室裡丟了一張紙屑，老師看到了，大為火光。「這是誰丟的紙屑？說！」大家噤若寒蟬，竟沒有人出來承認。老師更生氣說：「沒有

人丟是嗎？好，大家都站起來，一直到有人承認才可以坐下來。」結果站了半小時沒有上課，還是不知道誰丟的紙屑。事後，老師想：「也許自己太暴躁，嚇著了學生！」這位老師還好是這樣想，如果是想著：「這群學生太壞了，不好好整治一下是不行的。」那其以後的管教方法當有很大的變化了！溫和的老師和嚴格的老師各有各的好處，關鍵在於如何根據具體情況去處理學生的各種行為才更恰當。

SENCo 需要和不同教師合作，也需要持份者的支持，尤其是上級的支持，這個很重要。不僅如此，我們也需要同儕，還有家長三方面的支持。這裡面要巧妙地處理學校與家長的關係，一點都不容易啊！

說到「融合教育」，普遍教育界都是支持的，根本沒有人會反對。但事實上又是否真的這樣呢？比如 SpLD 學生所有筆試卷都可以加時 25%、SpLD 學生課業可以比其他學生遲交、SpLD 學生默書範圍可以較少或不用默書、SpLD 學生豁免考核部分校本科目、SpLD 學生不用留班等等。說實話，很多老師是不喜歡這樣的。我們都說支持融合教育，但落實到行動上的時候，教師們又有多大程度上在支持呢？

第五面向：「累積知識」

那麼多年來，我發現只靠第二層支援(Tier 2)是不夠的。作為 SENCo，要想一下學校還有什麼資源可以利用，比如我校的「爬蟲學會」，AD/HD 的同學怕老師，但他們不怕昆蟲。我看到他們很專注地照顧爬蟲動物。畢竟，運用動物治療來改善專注力也是一個很好的方法。此外，我校還有鋼筆學會等。

第六面向：「上而下、下而上的流動」

我覺得融合教育最初的推動是艱難的，很多時候總是要靠從上而下來「硬推」，由上級帶領來做。但當它慢慢形成的時候，我希望最終可以是從下而上，每一位同事都樂意為共融付出行動。

第七面向：「行動研究」

作為一個 SENCo 自己都要反思一下自己的工作成效在哪裡，所以很多時候都會有行動研究。在 2016/2017 年的時候，我研究過校內 SEN 與其他學生中英文成績的分別、以及不同種類 SEN 之間的分別。簡單的總結是我校在中文科和英文科中，SEN 和非 SEN 的差異是最明顯的。英文科中，我發現高中差別不大，但在初中差異會明顯一點；中文科中，不管初中和高中的差異，都顯著地大於英文。根據這些研究結果，我就知道下一年要做些什麼了。我想因為資源有限，要把工作做得到位，研究是不可少的。

Constructing "Educational Diversity Management Model" (EDMM) for Managing Diversities within School Contexts

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Abstract

This paper aims to describe the process in proposing a generic model for guiding schools in Hong Kong to look at and manage learner diversity in their increasingly diverse classrooms. The "Educational Diversity Management Model" (EDMM) was originally derived from a set of exploratory questions that were constructed for examining the current practices of schools in handling student diversity and special needs. A pilot study to conduct a qualitative analysis of the original set of exploratory questions for the construction of a framework that can inform schools of the direction towards more inclusive pedagogy for all learners was later conducted and developed respectively. The paper begins with an overview of the development of Integrated Education (IE) in Hong Kong as well as the contextual opportunities and challenges for making education more inclusive locally. The attempt to explore the key questions and factors that could give rise to good diversity management (DM) practices generated the urge for a less complicated model with a pilot study to propose the contents of the model was discussed. Four in-depth interviews were conducted as the pilot study using the initial set of exploratory questions with three school principals and an experienced educational psychologist for yielding further insights on how an initial EDMM can be enriched to promote understanding of strategies that schools can adopt for managing and embracing learner diversity within their contexts. The paper ends with some reflections and recommendations for further investigatory work.

本文旨在描述建構一個通用模型的過程，指導香港的學校在日益多樣化的教室中管理學習者多樣性的能力。 "教育差異管理模型" (EDMM) 最初是從一系列探索性問題中衍生出來，而這些問題正是為了檢視學校在處理學生多樣性和特殊需要的當前做法而設計的。後來進行了一項試驗研究，以對最初的探索性問題進行定性分析，並構建一個框架，這框架能給予學校尋求對所有學習者更具包容性的實踐方案。本文首先概述了香港融合教育的發展，以及使教育在本地更具包容性的機遇和挑戰。從嘗試探索可引致良好差異管理的做法的關鍵問題中激發了要建構簡化模型的渴求，故通過試驗研究提出了這個模型的內容。我們使用了最初的探索性問題進行了四次深度訪談，當中包括三位校長和一位經驗豐富的教育心理學家，進一步了解如何豐富初始的 EDMM，以增進學校可以採用管理和擁抱學習者多樣性策略的理解。本文最後會提出一些反思和進一步的建議。

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Brief History of Development of Integrated Education in Hong Kong

Similar to other countries in starting and developing special education and equal opportunities policies, the process usually begins with a medical and welfare inclination transit to a more educationally oriented approach (Yung, 1997). Hong Kong began this transitional journey in 1977 by introducing educationally oriented rehabilitation policies which attempted to integrate the disabled into the community when schooling was treated as the basic needs of the disabled population (Hong Kong Government, 1977). More concrete and comprehensive plans like preventive programs on early screening of school children suspected to be with special needs were introduced by the Government as general education policy within the Hong Kong Education System (Hong Kong Government, 1981). One of the objectives set within the 1981 paper was to target the education for the less disabled children through integrated settings in ordinary schools in which special education support services were formally introduced and developed for Hong Kong.

The adoption of a specific term Integrated Education (IE) instead of inclusive education across the Government policy papers (The Education Commission, 2000; Education Bureau, 2010; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2012) may give a glimpse of how the Government views IE, which is rather different from the more ideal inclusive practices within the international context. The latter usually includes direct legislation to support special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities in mainstream education, proper professional / academic qualifications and recognition for teachers specializing in offering SEN support and the commitment to promote the full inclusion of all students. Instead of facilitating a fundamental change of the education system to address the needs of all learners, the IE policy of Hong Kong emphasizes on how to integrate students with SEN into the existing system by providing additional resources and support while placing the more disabled students within special school settings, an arrangement unique to the densely populated local situation of Hong Kong. The IE in Hong Kong could be interpreted as a more localized and water-downed version of the inclusive systems being promoted overseas.

Other International Inclusive Practices and Their Implications for Hong Kong

In the more recent discussions amongst the international communities to further the development of inclusion (World Education Forum, 2015; United Nations, 2017; Council of the European Union, 2018), two distinctive features stand out: The first focus is on improving and developing quality education for all and the second focus for making all these efforts sustainable in their development. The main aims for achieving these two goals are basically to provide educational systems that can look after "ALL" students irrespective of ability and race which should bring about "quality and equity" (Council of the European Union, 2018) for all students by creating a basic system to satisfy most if not all needs. Again the basic tone is to "fostering inclusion and respect for diversity" (Council of the European Union, 2018). The ultimate outcome is to look after the needs of all learners and making sure of their participation within the system.

Addressing the needs of all learners in an inclusive school system is challenging, especially in Hong Kong where the 3-Tier support system advocated by the Government (Education Bureau, 2009) as a key support model for students with SEN. The 3-Tier system has been in practice since 2010 (Education Bureau, 2010) for implementing Integrated Education (IE) and the term IE has been adopted locally as a synonym for inclusive education or practices. However, the efficacy of the model is yet to be evaluated within the very broad goals it originally set out. Majority of schools are not equipped with both the knowledge and staffing expertise to carry out many of the complicated intervention strategies designed for the Tier 2 (support for students with persistent learning difficulties) and Tier 3 support (intensive individualized support for students with severe learning difficulties) within the 3-Tier system. While the more differentiated teaching approaches and curriculum materials are expected to be developed at Tier 1 (support in regular classroom) have not been effectively developed according to the system design due to the lack of a centrally coordinated and well conceptualized policy framework to guide school development work to support SEN (Chiu & Ho, 2009; Yu & Yin, 2016). Given the very competitive nature of the Hong Kong education system being driven by examination-oriented practices (Education Bureau, 2019; Forlin, Sin & Maclean, 2013) to target at academic excellence at all levels, the climate to promote IE within schools is not as prevailing as the Government claims. Hence a more realistic solution will be to generate a positive culture within schools is for promoting good practices and school cultures within Tier 1 to embrace student diversity as a fundamental philosophy for learning and teaching to be effectively conducted. Of course the assumption that having a good Tier 1 ground work should enrich the capacities of schools in supporting students with varying needs with the presence of a very dynamic and accommodating environment.

In Need and in Search of an Alternative Model / Framework for Diversity Management for Hong Kong

Currently the only local literature developed in Hong Kong for helping schools to conduct full analysis of their inclusive practices for supporting extreme diversities especially students with SEN is the Indicators for Inclusion (IIs) being developed by the Education Bureau (Education Bureau, 2008). The Indicators are constructed in accordance with the quality assurance process under School Development and Accountability (SDA) Framework that Hong Kong has developed as a central and core education policy since 2003 for guiding school development work (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003). The SDA Framework emphasizes school self-evaluation (SSE) and External School Review (ESR) for quality assurance, promote schools' sustained development, accountability and improvement of students' learning. The Framework with well-articulated Performance Indicators (PIs) demands all schools under public and private funding to adhere to these guidelines closely as outcome measures for conducting self-evaluation and external school reviews (Quality Assurance & School-based Support Division Education Bureau, 2016). This SDA Framework also guides both the day-to-day administration and development of schools within the 4 Domains of (I) Management and Organization, (II) Learning and Teaching, (III) Student Support and School Ethos (IV) Student Performance. Domain III elements can be counted as work

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directly related with the support measures for handling students' general difficulties in coping at school.

The design of IIs in 2008 is based upon the PIs within the 4 Domains for school to develop IE practices in Hong Kong. Two overseas consultants Booth and Ainscow (Education Bureau, 2008) with renowned international background on inclusion were the masterminds behind the design of IIs. The IIs are built upon very factual elements that schools can identify for evaluating their inclusive practices in accordance with their school plans for development under the PIs. Not only schools are expected to see whether such inclusive practices exists within their current work, schools are encouraged to set policies on these IIs for developing true inclusive practices in Hong Kong.

The IIs are thus supposed to be ideal for helping schools to develop their inclusive policies alongside with their school development plans. However, literature to indicate the pedagogical application of these IIs for inclusion were scarce with some of the following considerations being part of the reasons to explain its scarcity:

1) Exemplary application of these conceptions for illustrating successful IE practices will require full and thorough understanding of both the PIs and IIs. The complexity of both the PIs and IIs might require very intensive studying to get acquainted let alone its applications in teaching.
2) Feedback from frontline teachers and administrators reflected that practitioners might have difficulties in applying these conceptions due to the very broad range of issues to be considered if they were to be executed.
3) A full matching of the IIs not only requires a school to have all rounded knowledge to evaluate its practices, but also requires participating teachers to be very reflective while taking actions to experiment with the conceptions.

Thus, frontline experience reflected that the application of IIs will require very strong professional knowledge as well as background on both the SDA Framework and IIs for teachers of a school to be able to make full analysis of the school on the design of its support system to students with diverse or special needs to arrive at a comprehensive school support plan to cater for diverse needs within a school.

Hence in reality, the IIs having strong linkages with school development factors posed a very complicated framework that might both be difficult to understand and to apply in schools. With the intention of reducing these indicators to a tool that is compact enough to be manageable by an average school teacher, a simpler set of questions extracting some of the key elements of the IIs needs to be developed. The start of this pragmatic discussion began during a Training Course for Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo) jointly organized by the Special Education Society of Hong Kong and the Centre for Special Educational Needs and Inclusive Education of The Education University of Hong Kong in 2017 (SESHK, 2017). Both the IIs and the initial checklist were introduced to the participants of the Course as tools for reflecting upon at their SEN support practices. The IIs were felt to be too complicated and clumsy for analysis amongst their busy schedule while the initial

checklist was well received by the participants as a simple checklist to stock-take their work as well as for indicating areas for concern that worth further exploration and development.

The checklist in the form of questions grouped under 7 SEN support related factors was piloted in the form of a more systematic interview with school personnel having been known to be displaying exemplary practices on diversity management (DM) in Hong Kong on a trial basis. The purpose was to see how the practices within these schools might perform within the set questions and to shed light on how the initial questions can be enriched to form a more comprehensive framework with relevant contents to launch a massive project on the subject of DM.

The checklist being constructed under 7 key support related factors, were the prototype questions for looking at pedagogical arrangements within the schools of Hong Kong to cater for varying learning needs arising from a diverse student population with and without SEN. It was expected that the responses and data from some exemplary schools with outstanding DM practices on these basic questions should be rich enough to generate the initial components of the "Educational Diversity Management Model" (EDMM) to be proposed for the future project on DM. The Model if well integrated into the goals and objectives of a larger scale project targeting at making initiating changes within school management domains of these participating schools should have direct impacts on the teaching and learning for all students and teachers.

Methodology

Locating Key Common Factors in IIs, PIs and Exemplary Practices

Appreciative inquiry is adopted as the methodology to understand, capture and develop good practices related to diversity management practices in schools (Watkins, Mohr & Kelly, 2011; Whitney & Trosten-Bloom 2010). This is done by fostering individual and whole-system change by focusing on strengths and what's going well rather than on dwelling on problems, gaps, or discrepancies. There are three features:

Firstly, as the IIs were carefully evolved from the existing SDA framework, common structural and basic factors for looking at support work for student diversity like building up of basic student profiles, capacity building of teachers for guiding learning and teaching design were extracted and identified from the IIs. A preliminary analysis was made on some of the exemplary school practices to verify the existence of these elements and whether these factors are really common amongst the two schools under the initial exploratory study on the two schools. The factors formed the backbone of the checklist for conducting the qualitative interviews with more exemplary schools. The initial set of questions was posed to the participants of the training for their feedback on whether such framework and practice can support their review and planning of SENCo support work within their schools. With the feedback obtained on the initial set of questions, the contents of the original checklist were

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modified for the pilot interviews with 4 target schools. The target schools were all demonstrating strong beliefs on support for student diversity with exemplary practices hence data for generating a rich picture being outlined by the questions of the checklist. The intention was to make use of the good practices found within the exemplary schools as the basic building blocks or common elements to construct an EDMM framework within which the elements will match well with the existing good practices found in these Hong Kong schools. The effort was to identify good pedagogical local illustrations from these extracted factors that can be found within the school development work amongst these pioneering schools. These common factors can be labelled as good structural element that can be shared with the whole school sector of Hong Kong for developing positive DM strategies from mainstream to special schools.

Second, the strength-based orientation of the school, the teachers, the students and their parents would be another special feature of this approach. Against the traditional deficit approach that schools, teachers, students and their parent are often blamed on while given advice on what they are not good at, this EDDM approach will focus on capacity building on strengths of the stakeholders rather than just focusing on its weaknesses alone. With this more positive approach to learning and teaching, it will be easier for both practitioners to realize what they are doing well already in handling diversities and how they can make further development on these existing practices. The simplicity of the framework will be easier for operators of all levels to see how they can build on their own strengths for reaching more practical and realistic goals in their next phase of work or school development in making future work plans.

Third, the other beauty of the approach is the universal nature of the identified domains and elements being subsumed normally under the current SDA Framework for a broad application across all student population irrespective of abilities, achievements, interests, culture and even race. Its application can thus cover both mainstream and special school settings when diversity is being considered in its broad sense within the characteristics and attributes of all students.

The seven common factors in DM

The 7 original common factors identified from IIs, PIs, exemplary practices and their related questions are as follows:

1. Profiling diversities within school (From school perspective)
   • What are the obstacles to understanding individual student's needs in HK schools?
   • How can we remove those obstacles and help schools understand the diverse needs of their students?
2. Maximizing choices for students (From student perspective)
   • In face of increasing learner diversity, are our schools providing more choices to students in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, extracurricular activities, support services, pathways and aspirations, etc.?
   • How can we maximize choices available for students at system level, school

level, classroom level and individual level?

3. Building capacity of teachers (From teacher perspective)
   - What are the new professional competencies needed for teachers to change from curriculum-centred to student-centred practices in terms of knowledge, skills and attitude?
   - How can we nurture these competencies at policy level, university level, school level, collegial level and individual level?

4. Facilitating collaboration between stakeholders (From stakeholder perspective)
   - Who are the stakeholders / partners collaborating with us to make schooling more accessible to all? Are there any new partners besides the usual "parents, teachers, students" tripartite model?
   - How can we build stronger trust and a better foundation for communication and collaboration between different stakeholders such as parents, students, policy makers, government officials, school sponsoring bodies, other professionals, paraprofessionals, etc.?

5. Accumulating knowledge from practices (From a practical perspective)
   - Do we have well-proven, evidence-based and well-articulated practices to support the learning and growth of students with diverse needs in Hong Kong?
   - How can we nurture, capture, structure and picture good practices and who should be responsible for that? What is stopping us from doing it?

6. Driving changes in school (From a management perspective)
   - What makes school management resistant / reluctant to making their schools more inclusive?
   - How can we drive genuine changes through school management?

7. Evaluating feedback for development (From an evaluation perspective)
   - How can we evaluate the effectiveness of inclusive practices in schools? What should be the indicators of success? What counts as useful evidence for meaningful evaluation?
   - How can we facilitate effective evaluations which drive the whole education system and schools to become more equitable and just for all at policy level, system level, school level, classroom level and individual level?

<u>Pilot Study</u>

A pilot study by conducting preliminary interviews with 2 exemplary schools for seeing whether the checklist covers well most aspects of such school-based DM development items and issues on diversity handling. The Exploratory Study indicated that with minor modification the draft checklist was sufficient for interviewing the 4 targeted participating schools in the Main Study of the project. It was expected that through the structured interviews, the interviewee while discussing with the interviewers their work on the 7 factors within the checklist, will be able to realize the best domains they are performing and domains where the school's situation might need further review for improvement within the domain. Findings from the interviews using the checklist to record the current status of the DM work of the school will be recorded for further qualitative analysis to generate commonalities amongst the 4 targets schools for construction of the EDMM. The interviewees were mainly the school principals, school administrators and professional workers like educational

psychologist of the school and usually the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo) or the School Support Team (SST) Leader who should be more knowledgeable than the rest of school on the formulation of the future plans for DM. All of the personnel being interviewed in the Exploratory Study turned out to have very positive conceptions of the IE practices or DM approaches of the schools they are serving.

<u>The Main Interview</u>

With the minor revision of the original checklist, four more in-depth interviews with three school principals and an experienced educational psychologist were conducted with the view to generate the data for the qualitative analysis on the DM work conducted by the 4 schools having mostly over 10 years of developing exemplary practices. The sets of revised open-ended questions were used as the lead questions for the 4 interviews in order to identify the common beliefs, core values, key tools, and administrative alignment with PIs of SDA, data management issues, school / teacher development, team building and predicament in managing diversity in Hong Kong Schools. The openness of the interview process and the questions definitely solicited a large number of less expressed good practices within the interactive process that worth further exploration where necessary. This might be because the interviewers had gone through these processes themselves. Their deep understanding could direct the discussion to draw in other related issues for highlighting the connection between these intervening factors for these support systems to sustain. The collected data reflect how extensive the schools under study has developed its unique systems and approaches for managing and addressing student diversity. And the interlocking factors usually unique to each school can only be identified by systemic qualitative analysis of the whole school operating system.

One of the core issues being common across the 4 schools is the universal thumb of rule to understand the basic needs of each student especially those with SEN being admitted into these schools. One principal had emphasized that this very in-depth understanding of the students should not be just confined to those with formal assessment reports. He and his colleagues would try to make use of various school activities to understand better each student through activities like orientation for newcomers, parent talks and regular teachers' meetings as well as student self-organized activities. All students' data ranging from their family background, previous assessment records, parent and student interview notes and teachers' observations were summarized into a brief student profile as a conveniently retrievable data system to be shared amongst teachers concerned. Such availability of the profile of a student not only facilitates various planning of teaching and learning, the ease of communication amongst staff members obviously speeds up processing of information and a lot of times meetings and their durations were reduced to make room for other more functional discussions. The education psychologist also stressed that the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for students requiring intensive support would contain details of students' needs as well as the finely graded teaching objectives to be used as teaching targets for level appropriate learning to take place. IEP to the schools concerned is a natural product of the individual profiling of the

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students rather than a deliberated product that has to be labored. Profiling students' diverse needs seems to be the first key factor for any effective intervention to take place.

Identifying Common Elements and Procedural Issues for Establishing Durable DEMM and School Development Practices

The data collected from the 4 interviews on the 7 factors were given further qualitative analysis on the procedural elements and possible product outcomes or indicators leading to the proof of the existence of good DM processes, e.g. grouping of students with clear student profile to structure teaching and learning within a class for developing learning strategies and material geared towards the characteristics of the grouping and progression of the students. Some common elements are being identified within the scripts of interviews with different schools:

1. Strong adherence to and application of the central common core curriculum of Hong Kong for both primary and secondary schools. Some of the schools has worked out specific adaptive curriculum deriving from the common core being developed by either the sponsoring body or the curriculum development team of the school.
2. The central curriculum being viewed as being within a continuum being applicable for ALL students. The basic belief being that some students will be able to progress well on the expectations of the central curriculum while others will be progressing less well might need adaptation to be made on the curriculum to be presented. The understanding of the current level of achievement by assessment or profiling will definitely help the teachers in understanding the needs of the students and on how the adaptation can be made or pace of progression being adjusted.
3. The focus on school-based curriculum adaptation often led to the development of an internal assessment systems to take care of the progression of each and every student within the school. Thus progression made by each student is closely monitored with designated review periods or key stages for making regular reviews on the progress of all students to make sure that teaching contents are being planned and selected according to the identified individual needs which formed the basis of the individualized educational plan (IEP) for some of the students.
4. Strong and basic beliefs of these schools on the need to engage ALL students within all the activities of the school. With the genuine understanding of the needs of the students, education programs were planned to allow choices for maximizing genuine student engagement and participation. A true execution of "no one being left behind or being left out" in the education programs being planned for the students.
5. Strong engagement and feeling of identity with the school by the students is being maintained to allow full student participation in programs. Thus students are fully engaged throughout their primary or secondary key stages with strong commitment to learning and identification with the schools.

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6. The individualized approach with regular reviews will make the progression of the students traceable and provided further evidence for good practices to sustain.

7. Schools going through definite school development stages: from focus in one domain / key learning areas/ key-stage and gradually extending the conceptions to other domains / key learning areas/ key-stages. Progression of the students, teachers and the school were fully reflected in the developmental process.

8. Some of these schools might be facing transient crisis for a while and the threat provided an opportunity in making the school team more united and cohesive in developing specific strategies and programs to look after the very specific nature of the students being admitted to the school. The crisis then became an opportunity to work out the more long term and specific vision of the school for its future development.

9. The individualized approach attracts strong involvement of parents in all aspects from intake to school leaving. Such positive participation of parents will definitely be beneficial to the development of both the students and the school.

10. Strong support and specific attention at transitional stages at all levels e.g. admission, crisis events and school-leaving would be enhanced due to the awareness and experience gained from the more individualized approaches. Often, the schools would be offering post-school placement follow up for 2-3 years to make sure smooth transition being made by graduates to ensure their smooth transition into a new stage.

11. With more in-depth discussions with the leaders of these pilot schools on their philosophy behind for shaping up their basic school elements to contribute to the 7 key Domains? Factors, they came to the conclusions that strong devotion and believes on these elements as the core values to what they were planning and doing is a vital driving force to the running and development of these schools.

12. Key development in one special area e.g. differential teaching material to suit varying achievement levels, student as well as administrative data-base management alongside with strong professional teacher development framework being set up are the common characteristics of these schools. The individualized approach with clear indicators of the progression made by students thus generated strong school culture on IEP and intimate strong parental involvement. All these aspects can contribute to general professional sharing and collaboration thus adding values to different aspects of school development.

13. The rich wealth of knowledge often leads to initial ideas for internal as well as external school networking to further enhance DM work in breath and in depth at the same time.

14. Attempts to knowledge management (KM) activities very obvious e.g. good documentation of the developmental processes of the school, evidenced-based practices in the form of case illustrations and professional development by individual staffs. The capturing of activities for "professional story-telling" for further professional sharing activities possible.

15. As a result of the school development process for DM, clear staff development process initially by making use of case presentations for illustrating DM approaches mostly on annual basis as good practices within school and then later extending them to outside school sharing.

16. Professional / staff development clearly focused on case management and

pedagogical issues will bring refinement on these try runs and a lot of times created more opportunities for team collaboration. This will in the long run brings about a more natural team building process as a common language will be generated by these good practices being unique to the school culture.

17. Existence of a school-based database system to record and track progress over time will often be the byproduct of such DM process as the amount of data collected will be beyond the management of hand-written records. The database might also be the tool for monitoring student and work progression and eventually a tool for the evaluation of the impact of programs on students and teachers.

18. All the schools interviewed adopted the 4 school development domains for planning and evaluating their school development work. Thus linking the contents of the DM framework with SDA domains and PIs should allow follow up work e.g. planning, implementation and evaluation to be done more consistently and conveniently. The school need not take much stock taking work when the school was being under the SDA process. Moreover, such a student and school administration database being constructed on the basis of 4 school development domains and DM Factors, student profiles can be constructed easily and the impacts of teaching and programs implementation can be tracked systematically. This should be in the long run generates more evidence and knowledge as evaluative data for making changes to teaching and program planning.

With the qualitative conclusions alongside with other observations from the data being derived from the interview scripts of the 4 exemplary schools, a revised version of the Educational Diversity Management Model (EDMM) was introduced by Poon and Yung to the participants at the Annual Conference of The Special Education Society of Hong Kong (SESHK) in 2017 (Editorial Board of Hong Kong Journal of Special Education, 2017). The new EDMM was proposed in replacement of the original 7 key factors for schools to explore when making their schooling having proper acknowledgement of the diversity of their students and in the end more inclusive in their practices towards the support for SEN.

Revision of the EDMM to Reflect Key Procedural Elements

From the data collected and the process of the interview during the main study, it is obvious that even the original 7 factors might be too broad in coverage and could even be reduced to really key elements that can help schools to be more focused upon. And the interviews also reflected that procedural issues or the process on how these elements are being defined and introduced to schools in accordance to its current culture and school development would be as important as making the key elements explicit. Hence instead of posing the questions in the form of a checklist, the 7 original key factors are being reduced to 4 key elements forming the headings of the columns of a 6 rows x 4 columns matrix (Appendix 1). The 4 key elements are:

- Profiling Diversities
- Maximizing Choices for Learners

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- Building Capacity and Facilitating Collaboration
- Driving, Capturing and Evaluating Change

While the procedural issues or the process of planning and development will form the row heading of the matrix for schools to examine how far they have been achieving along this journey of DM. These procedural issues include:

- Background,
- Elements / Content,
- Implementation Strategies
- Expected Outcomes
- Knowledge Management
- Action Points

Reflections and Suggestions

Some of the schools having very positive experience on their DM processes were further interviewed to explore how their school policies might reflect good practices within these designated processes for collection of good and concrete exemplars on model practices. The interviews turned out to be very fruitful for making a listing on the positive elements of a school when using the EDMM for looking at their work on DM. Not only that the analysis might provide the school with a profile on which they are functioning well within the 7 Factors, the discussion will bring about insights on which strength they are having and how they can make use of these strengths as their next stage of development.

Limitations

It is obvious that the current study is only limited to the data being collected from 4 exemplary schools which cannot be claimed as a perfect representative sample size. It is however a fact that the practice of DM is still not a fashionable pedagogical choice for schools unless their student intake is of such a nature that DM has to be make a school policy. With the handful of school cases in Hong Kong, kicking off the formal discussion on DM with a small sample size might already be good enough as a start. The opportunity for the 4 schools to be willing to disclose both good practices and limitations at the same time was a rather rare one.

Due to the uniqueness of the culture of a school including the intake of students and the history that each of the 4 schools went through in the past, there are obvious precipitating factors that leaded to the current stage of development of the school and these factors cannot be replicated for creating such a unique background and culture. That is the reason why only key components and procedural issues for DM can be identified for mapping out the possible roads to lead to the development of such school systems for DM. It might hence be useful to locate or creating schools with rich contents exemplifying the components of the new EDMM for further analysis of the

more effective elements pertaining to positive outcomes and changes on all of its stakeholders. Such an attempt should bring about further refinement of the EDMM and its components.

It is the key purpose of this paper on the description of the initial attempt to construct a locally developed model for promoting good practices with DM practices in Hong Kong for bringing about further DM development amongst local education practitioners.

Conclusion

These findings were rather exciting as the new model or framework not only provides a simpler framework for analysis, it also provides school with a strength-based model to guide their good practices and future development in handling diversities within their school. It might therefore be possible to apply the matrix as the basic DM analytical tool of a school for making recommendations to schools as their school strength-based improvement measures for both stock-taking and formulation of their follow up plans on DM. The matrix and the planned measures will provide the baseline data for the progress made by the school to be reviewed again after a cycle of implementation. Schools in this way will be able to celebrate more on their handling of diversities rather than witnessing failures of all parties in coping with these genuine diversities already existing in schools. It must be stressed that the matrix can be applied to schools with different nature of intake of students cutting across all ability ranges.

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<u>**Planning Matrix for Promoting Diversity Management within Schools of Hong Kong (Poon & Yung)**</u>

	Profiling Diversities	**Maximizing Choices for Learners**	**Building Capacity and Facilitating Collaboration**	**Driving, Capturing and Evaluating Change**
Background	To construct the profiles of the essential elements within a school serving as basic data for planning. School activities will be planned according to the needs being generated from various profiles.	Planning decisions on Teaching & Learning (T & L) will be based on the data obtained from the profile. Differentiated approaches designed to maximize choices to cater for diversity according to the abilities of the learners. Individual needs and interests will be met thus ensuring continuous engagement and positive attitude to learning.	Strengthening the understanding of teachers on student needs in terms of diversity. Changing teacher attitude and perception towards learner differences by showcasing practical and effective strategies to foster positive learning outcomes of all learners. Shared knowledge can create common language as well as understanding amongst teachers. These should act as the basic building blocks to the professional team work facilitating professional collaboration.	Clear and concise documentation of the generated knowledge and work processes will in the long run accumulate knowledge within the school on diversity management. Formal and informal sharing of this knowledge within and outside of the school will generate more ideas for tryout, which is supported by a platform for all stakeholders to organize and present their knowledge as one of the reflective processes for generating better model of work. This should lead to a clearer direction for further development in the future.
Elements / Content	**Student–** achievement, attainment, interests, social skills, emotional profile, career aspiration, … **Parent –** SES, linkages with school involvement, … **Teacher –** Professionalism, expertise and training, …	Sharing of data from profiling for needs-based T & L planning. Differentiated approaches to curriculum, assessment, worksheets, teaching strategies. More diversified curriculum to cater for wide range of interests and readiness levels.	Needs-based professional development work. Deliberate opportunities for facilitating consensus on pedagogical knowledge. Providing chances of internal and unthreatening collaboration between teachers.	Simple outcome measures for indicating program impacts. Simple inferential statistical analysis of data on profiling and program outcomes. Documentation of effective and efficient good practices.

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	Profiling Diversities	**Maximizing Choices for Learners**	**Building Capacity and Facilitating Collaboration**	**Driving, Capturing and Evaluating Change**
	Resources– public funding, human and physical resources supporting profiling, …	Remedial teaching and SEN support methods. Needs oriented ECA and related education programs. Differentiated school leavers programs with multiple exit pathways.	Emphasis on on-the-job training and reflection to generate effective school-based practices. Opportunities for internal and external sharing of good practices.	Data management methods including use of IT hardware and software applications.
Implementation Strategies	Application of profiling tools like attainment tests / BCA, questionnaires, self-reporting inventories, … Selective internal sharing of confidential data for case management.	Designing and providing choices for T & L, ECA, support programs to maximize engagement and achievement of students. Appropriate utilization of available resources in maximizing choices and achievement for students, teachers and parents.	Usage of internal staff development programs to disseminate profiling and approaches in managing diversity. Case study methods to study processes and impact. Team building activities to facilitate sharing of core values in diversity management. Internal and external staff development programs to share as well as gain experience from other schools.	Quality pedagogy becoming clearer within T & L, easier refinement due to holistic understanding and mapping. External projects to encourage sharing / networking amongst schools to facilitate further territory-wide exchange and accumulation of knowledge. Outside school training opportunities for teachers on profiling and diversity management issues for new input to system.
Expected Outcome	Selection and accumulation of profiling tools. Data generated from profiling process for elements.	Needs-based T & L material and approaches. Engagement and satisfaction from T & L process by both students and teachers.	Good school ethos and team work built up as diversity management is treated as a normal practice. Further initiatives from team to	Diversity as being seen by ALL stakeholders to be a standard and good practice in school, celebration of successful experiences in T & L, accepting and embracing diversity.

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	Profiling Diversities	Maximizing Choices for Learners	Building Capacity and Facilitating Collaboration	Driving, Capturing and Evaluating Change
	Basic descriptive statistic sufficient for planning usage. Basic database structure to store data for further analysis.	Strong indication of positive T & L experiences.	refine or develop more strategies on teaching being developed.	Case study and story-telling as a method to accumulate local experience and literature generating. More good practices to inform policy to set evidence-based policy.
Knowledge Management	Simple evaluation of the tools for profiling usage especially on data usage to ensure effectiveness. Longitudinal and data collection allowing easy comparison to generate progression analysis and data for long and short term planning. Sharing more confined to internal usage.	Evaluation and refinement of T & L material and approaches for continuous development. Case or in-depth study on difficult to handle issues as a problem-solving approach to deal with core or common difficulties.	Stocking up of good practices for internal as well as external references. Refinement of good practices. Procedural issues and characteristics to be evaluated for obtaining more soft data on how and why differential approaches works and fails. Generalization of common practices to theories for sharing.	Wealth of data to indicate positive experience on scope and sequencing to allow further development in terms of depth or refinement of knowledge, both student and teacher to become life-long learner to acquire as well as to generate knowledge. Longitudinal data collection indicating trends to generate progression analysis and data for long term planning. Learning Circle to be set up for sharing of problems and knowledge to generate whole-community approach to DM.

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	Profiling Diversities	Maximizing Choices for Learners	Building Capacity and Facilitating Collaboration	Driving, Capturing and Evaluating Change
Action Points	To develop tools / e-platforms for collecting, analyzing and sharing profiles of students to different stakeholders. To sponsor research on developing tools for DM.	To promote further diversification and differentiation of the central curriculum for all students. To review and revamp school curriculum significantly in light of increasing learner diversity, changing societal expectation and the increased accessibility of post-secondary education.	To equip teachers with professional knowledge, attitude and skills to support diverse needs through internal and external Professional Development activities. To promote action research as well as conceptualization and dissemination of good school-based inclusive practices within and among schools.	To enhance the training of curriculum leaders so that they can become the catalysts of effective pedagogical changes at school level. To build learning community specifically on DM for developing, sharing and consolidating good practices at the territory-wide level.

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