

## **Students' attitudes toward including students with disabilities in regular PE settings in Hong Kong and Taiwan**

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### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study was to compare attitudes of final year students in teacher preparation programs in Hong Kong and Taiwan toward including students with disabilities in regular settings, and to further examine the influences of attitudes on the development of adapted physical education programs. A 15-item questionnaire was used to investigate students' attitudes and concerns toward inclusion. 77 students from Hong Kong and Taiwan participated in this study. The results of survey indicated that students in Hong Kong and Taiwan philosophically support inclusion, although there were many concerns and different opinions regarding inclusion. The survey indicated that students from both locations thought special school and teachers with special training would provide better education for students with disabilities than general teachers, and indicated the needs for more academic preparation for inclusion. The findings also implied that without well prepared support services and other accommodations, students with disabilities will not benefit from inclusive educational environments.*

Many legislation and policies concerning individuals with disabilities in Hong Kong and Taiwan follow international practices (Block, 1994; Crawford et al., 1999; Dowson, 2000; Federal Registration, 1977; Council for Exceptional Children, 1975). A literature review of the development of special education in Hong Kong and Taiwan indicated that Hong Kong and Taiwan Governments realize the importance of special education for individuals with disabilities, and the implementation of inclusion in Hong Kong and Taiwan has led to many children with disabilities being moved from special education schools into regular school settings (Education Department, 1996; Forlin, et al, 1996, WRRC, 1998). However the Hong Kong Government did not take full action in terms of including students with disabilities into regular school settings until 1997. A two-year pilot project was launched by the Hong Kong government in 1997, and included nine schools, and 49 students with five types of disabilities (Crawford et al., 1999).

Today, the main objective of special education in both locations is to enable children with special education needs to fully develop their individual potential. Many integrated schools in Hong Kong are now adopting a whole school approach so that students with special needs can receive education in ordinary schools alongside their peers without disabilities. As a result, many general PE teachers in Hong Kong and Taiwan are now facing classes containing students with disabilities, and many perceive themselves as being unprepared. They also have different concerns about and attitudes toward inclusion (Zhang, et al., 2000). In order to understand pre-service teachers' concerns and attitudes toward inclusion, this study surveyed and compared the attitudes of final-year students in teacher preparation programs toward including students with disabilities into regular settings in Hong Kong and Taiwan. It also examined the influence of attitudes on the development of special education programs.

## Method

A 15 item (plus five open-ended questions) questionnaire was used to collect information regarding students' attitudes, opinions, and concerns toward inclusion in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Seventy-seven pre-service teachers participated in this study, and a t-test was used to compare different attitudes between the two locations. Data analyses focused on: 1) position on inclusion issue between Hong Kong and Taiwan, 2) severe levels of disability related to Inclusion in Hong Kong and Taiwan, 3) types of disability that teachers feel more comfortable to teach, and 4) issues related to teacher preparation for inclusion.

## Results and Discussions

### *Approaches of Integration in Hong Kong and Taiwan*

The development of special education services in Hong Kong and Taiwan has followed a model similar to that of North America and Europe. Children with special needs in Hong Kong and Taiwan are currently educated in three different settings: separated special schools; special classes in regular schools without integration, and regular school with integration (Chen, 2004). These three major types of education approaches in special education are presented below (*Figure 1*).

Since 1984, children with disabilities or those with other health problems in Taiwan were allowed to receive education at home. In 2003, home study services were provided to 2,414 special students by 78 schools. Special education in Taiwan also provides programs for gifted children as well as those with special needs due to handicaps or learning disabilities. There are special schools in the latter category for blind, deaf, physically handicapped, and mentally challenged students. Generally, these schools are operated by the government and run parallel to the mainstream educational system, extending from preschool through to senior vocational school. In 2003, there were 5,921 students in 24 such schools. A total of 1,759 mainstream schools offered classes for 95,801 special students (disabled or gifted) in 2002 (Society and Culture, 2005).

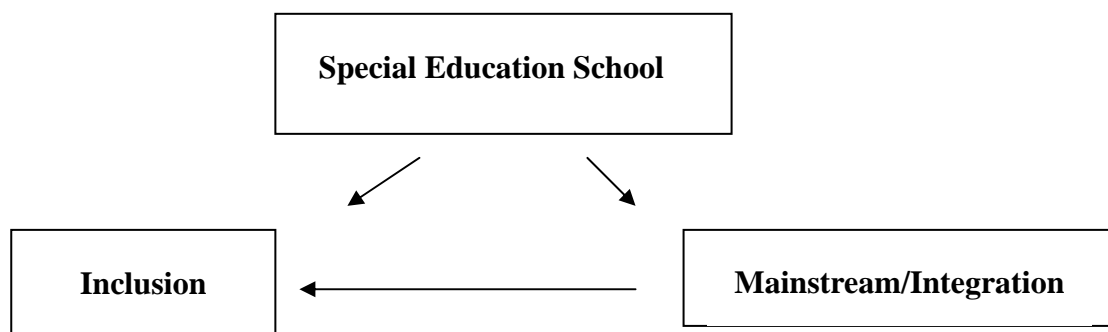


Figure 1: *Three types of special education approaches in Hong Kong and Taiwan*

### *Pre-service PE Teacher's Attitude toward Inclusion*

The results of the survey indicated that students in Hong Kong and Taiwan philosophically support including students with disabilities into regular school settings (Table 1). There were, however, many concerns and different opinions regarding inclusion between Hong Kong and Taiwan when they answered open-ended questions. There were significant differences on attitudes toward inclusion on survey items #1 and #17 (Table 1).

Table 1: *Pre-service PE Teacher's Attitude toward Inclusion*

Region	Disagree	Theoretically Agree	Strongly Agree
HK(post)	29.2	54.2	16.7
Taiwan	18.8	41.7	39.6

These attitudes can also be seen in responses to item # 2 which stated “*Inclusion is an Idealistic Philosophy that will not work in regular PE classes*”. There were 62.5% of students from Hong Kong, and 34% of students from Taiwan who agree or strong agree with this statement. The survey indicated that many pre-service teachers in Hong Kong (54.2%) and Taiwan (41.7%) thought that inclusion was just an ideal philosophy, and they believed that there was a long way to go to reach this philosophy in reality.

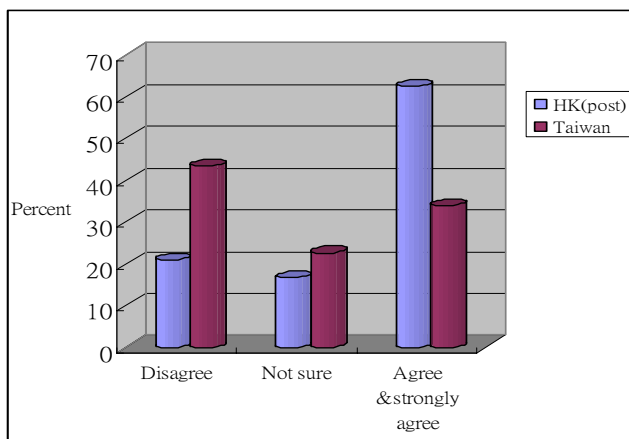


Figure 2: *Inclusion is an Idealistic Philosophy*

### ***Significant differences in attitudes toward inclusion between Hong Kong and Taiwan***

There is a significant difference in attitudes on item #1 (stated as: “*all students with disabilities should be taught in regular PE classes*”) between the two locations ( $P < .05$ ). It was found that Taiwan rated significantly higher on item #1 than Hong Kong (Figure 3) which demonstrated that students in Taiwan are more confident in terms of teaching students with disabilities in physical education settings.

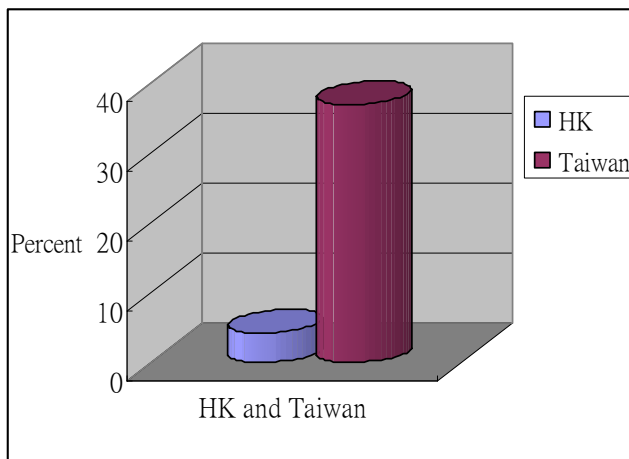


Figure 3: *Students with disabilities should be taught in regular PE classes*

There is also a significant difference on item #17 which stated as ***“What is your position on the inclusion issue”*** between Hong Kong and Taiwan ( $P < .05$ ). It was found that Taiwan rated significantly higher on the item #17 with a stronger “agree” level than Hong Kong.

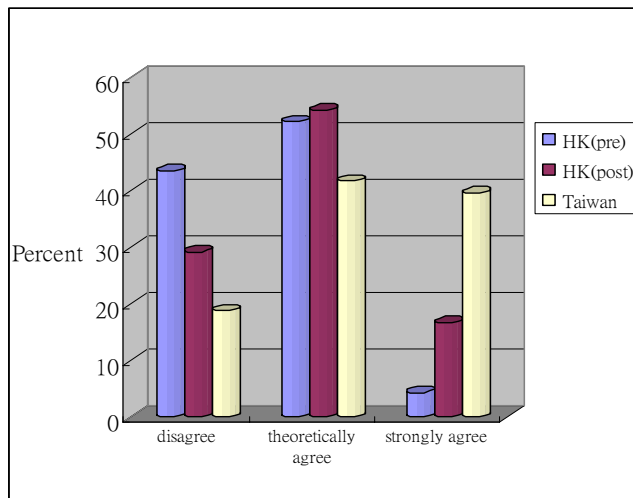


Figure 4: *What is your position on the inclusion issue*

#### ***Attitudes on Appropriate Settings for Severe Disability in Hong Kong and Taiwan***

Many pre-service teachers in Hong Kong and Taiwan believed that students with severe disabilities should be taught in separate classes (Special Ed or APE). More than 90% of Hong Kong pre-service teachers and nearly 90% of Taiwan pre-service teachers believed that students with severe disabilities should be separated from mainstream society. More than 60% of pre-service teachers in both locations thought that it was unrealistic to expect regular PE teachers to teach all students who have disabilities in their class. They also believed that teachers may not be capable of teaching students with all types or levels disabilities because some disabilities may lead to serious management difficulties for teachers.

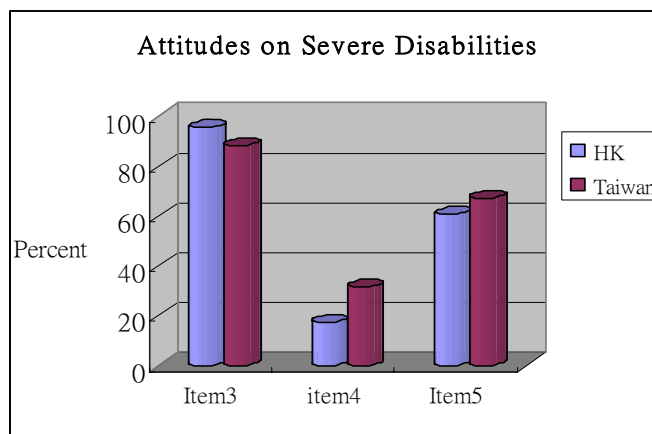


Figure 4: *Attitudes on Teaching Students with Severe Disabilities*

#### ***Need More Academic Preparations***

Pre-service teachers in Hong Kong and Taiwan believe that special schools and teachers with special training will provide better education for students with disabilities than general teachers. Survey results also indicated from the item: *“It is important that I receive training on activities that includes ideas on lesson planning for a variety of abilities levels”*, that 90% of students from both locations agreed and strong agreed on “need more academic

preparation” for inclusion (Table 2).

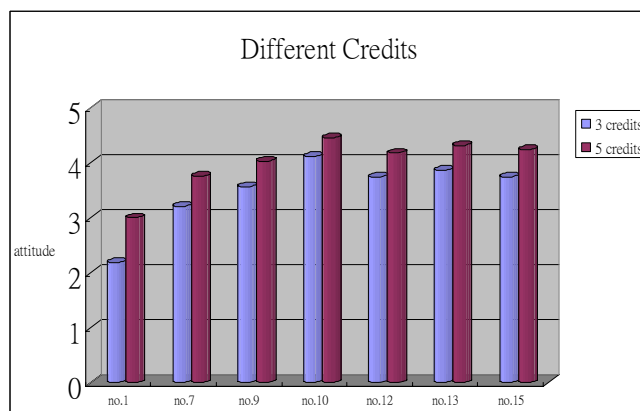
**Table 2: Students’ Attitudes on Special Training in Hong Kong and Taiwan**

	item10	item11	item12	item13	item14	item15
<b>HK</b>	<b>91.3</b>	<b>82.6</b>	<b>69.5</b>	<b>78.3</b>	<b>95.7</b>	<b>73.9</b>
<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>96.3</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>94.4</b>	<b>94.5</b>	<b>86.8</b>

(item 10: need course work; item 11: need more direct contact experiences; item 12: need more direct contact experiences in severe disabilities; item 13: more training on lesson planning; item 14: need more training on behavioral management strategies; item 15: need more teaching practice.)

#### *Attitudes toward inclusion based on Credit Hours taken in Hong Kong and Taiwan*

There are significant different attitudes toward inclusion based on credit hours taken in special education modules between students in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The average credit hours study in special education related modules was 5 credits in Taiwan and 3 credits in Hong Kong. The results of survey showed that students who take more credit hours in special education module had more positive attitudes toward inclusion on selected survey questions (Figure 5). The results also indicated that the more knowledge in special education, the more confident they are about teaching students with various disabilities. Table 3 showed that students in Taiwan were more confident about teaching the selected four types of disabilities, and students in Hong Kong felt more confident to teach the select four types of disabilities after completing the APE module (Table 3).



**Figure 5: Different Credits Taken Related to Attitudes toward Inclusion**

**Table 3: Preference to Include the Type of Disabilities in RPE Settings**

	HI	VI	LD	PD
<b>Taiwan</b>	<b>73.6</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>72.2</b>	<b>79.2</b>
<b>HK(post)</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>63.5</b>	<b>95.8</b>	<b>79.2</b>
<b>HK(pre)</b>	<b>65.2</b>	<b>44.4</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>69.6</b>

\*\*HK (pre—before taking APE module) and HK (post—after completing an APE module)

### Pre-service Teachers' Great Concerns Regarding Inclusion

As the survey indicated at the beginning that students in both locations philosophically support inclusion. However, there were many concerns regarding inclusion. From the survey, we selected seven major concerns regarding the implementation of inclusion in regular settings, and Table 4 listed these concerns, and Figure 6 illustrated the rate of the importance of these concerns.

Table 4: *Pre-service Teachers' Great Concerns Regarding Inclusion*

What are the greatest concerns pre-service teachers have regarding inclusion?	
1	Can students with disability perform well in inclusion setting? Or would they like to be included?
2	Students without disabilities might discriminate against students with disabilities.
3	Whether inclusion will affect performance of other students without disability.
4	Are parents of students with disabilities willing to choose inclusion?
5	Worry about lack of professional knowledge for inclusion and lack of the government support
6	Safety issues
7	Other concerns

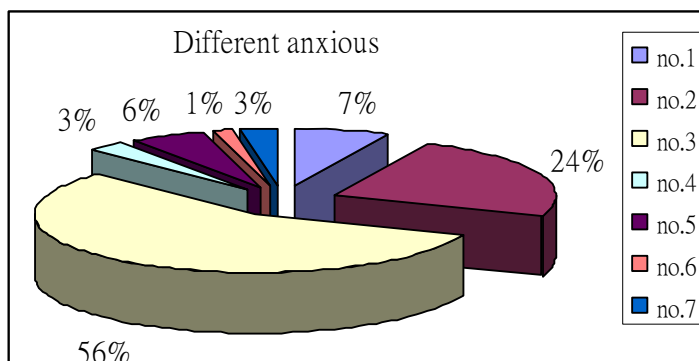


Figure 6: *Illustration of the rate of the importance of students' concerns*

### APE Teacher Preparation

As a result of inclusion, many pre-service general PE teachers in Hong Kong and Taiwan are going to face classes with students with disabilities. However, many of them, according to the survey, perceived themselves as being unprepared, and lacking the confidence to teach students with disabilities in their class together with peers without disabilities. Therefore, the provision of sufficient knowledge and practical training in adapted physical education is imperative. The following four areas are considered important elements to enable pre-service teachers to perform well in their services: 1) develop positive attitudes toward teaching students with disabilities in regular settings; 2) understand different disabilities to determine students' special needs; 3) select appropriate teaching strategies to meet those students with unique needs; and 4) modify regular sports games and physical activities to accommodate

students' needs. In addition, environment and support services must be prepared before integrating students with special needs into the settings. Without well prepared support

services (e.g., teaching assistants or other assistive technologies), students with disabilities will not benefit from these educational environments.

### **Conclusion**

Hong Kong and Taiwan are closely following international trends in developing special education program for students with special needs. Pre-service teachers in Hong Kong and Taiwan understand inclusion but share many concerns in terms of its implementation. All pre-service teachers must have a good attitude toward educating students with disabilities in regular settings, and general teachers must prepare themselves to be ready to accommodate the special needs of students with disabilities in regular PE settings.

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