

Backgrounds and efforts in enhancing inclusive education in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States

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Abstract

Children in today's school settings are learning in a diverse environment, including unique cultural and linguistic backgrounds and various levels of learning abilities and difficulties. During the past 3 to 4 decades, there has been a steady trend of exploring, forming concepts, and trying out applicable strategies among practitioners and researchers in an attempt to enhance inclusive education for students with special educational needs (SEN). The policy makers as well as frontline professionals have greatly increased their awareness of the requirements to fulfill individualized needs of all learners, whether disabled or no-disabled in the pro-inclusive education programmes. This session will share information regarding major backgrounds and influence in concept and theory development, and effective engagements and practices in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States that can be implemented for better success of inclusive education for all students through the mutual and collaborative teamwork of the governmental agencies, school personnel, and other advocacy and volunteer groups.

Introduction

In the field of special needs education, there has been a major trend, with its unique historical backgrounds and conceptualization development that eventually led to today's accomplishment in inclusive education. Since the 1790s, there had been what Wolfensberger (1972) observed - the chronological stages that evolved from "making the deviant un-deviant," "protecting the deviant from the society," "protecting the society from the deviant," onto the stage of "loss of rationale," which particularly explained why and how persons with disabilities were first included but, later on, segregated until, still later on, when they were placed back in the community through the major movements of deinstitutionalization, zero rejection, mainstreaming, regular education initiative, integration and today's inclusion.

Background Study

Historical Development in the United States

The original special education programs and related services in the U.S. were mostly brought in by pioneers who acquired early-year experiences in Europe, based on which a number of self-contained special schools were established, including the Perkins School for the Blind (1829) and the Kendall School for the Deaf (1856), while another pioneer, Thomas Hopkins Gallaudet, established the American Asylum for the Education of the Deaf and Dumb in 1871 (Poon-McBrayer & Lian, 2002).

In 1900, 2 physicians, Dr. Winthrops Phelps (who proved physical therapy to be effective and helpful in supporting special education programs) and Dr. While Carlson (who himself had cerebral palsy) established the first classroom for children with physical disabilities in a

public school in Chicago. One to 2 decades later, there were the first 3 states that passed a law to provide public education to students with mental retardation: New Jersey (1911), New York (1917), and Massachusetts (1920) (Lian, 2000a). Since then, there had been increasing number of programs for pupils who had sensory, physical, mental, and multiple impairments--mainly in isolated residential or self-contained school or classroom settings. This created a dual system of co-existing but separated general and special education programs (Lian, 2005a), which had been challenged since the early 1900s because it increased the possibility of isolating children with disabilities (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, 1995; Lipsky & Gartner, 1990). Table 1 includes landmark court cases that are related to appealing for inclusive education, which reflected a trend of opposing segregation, although not being successful during the first half of the past century.

Table 1. Landmark Court Cases Relating to Inclusive Education in the United States

Beatti vs. Board of Education of the City of Antigo, 1919: the court ruled that the right of a school-age child to attend public school should not be insisted if his appearance is "harmful" to the best interest of the school.

State vs. Christ, 1936: the court ruled that a child with polio had to stay in a special school because his ability did not meet the learning standards set for all pupils in the ordinary school.

State Board of Education vs. Petty, 1950: the court decided that a deaf child should attend the special school, because of his physical defects and need to receive "a different format of instruction."

The Brown vs. Board of Education of 1954: the federal court ruled that, if the state provided educational opportunities to some school-aged children, it should provide the same opportunities to all students, based on the equal opportunity mandate of the U.S. Constitution. Department of Public Welfare vs. Haas, 1958: the judge started a court law, that only those with "capacity to learn" got to receive mainstream school education--general education schools had no responsibility to provide learning opportunities to students with disabilities.

Hobson vs. Hansen, 1967: the court ruled that the tracking system in school was unconstitutional and should be prohibited.

The PARC vs. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania of 1971: the court ruled that children with mental retardation had a right to public education.

Mills vs. Board of Education, 1972: the court continued to protect the rights of children with mental retardation plus all other disabilities for enrolling in general education schools.

Source: Lian, M-G. J. (2000a). *Getting to know individuals with physical disabilities and/or health impairments*. Normal, IL: Communication Service, Illinois State University, pp. 22-26.

By the 1950s-1960s, there was the major human rights movement in the U.S. Although the Brown vs. Board of Education court case of 1954 (see Table 1) was not related to children with disabilities (it was about right to inclusive education for racially and culturally minority students, i.e., learners from Black, Latino, and Asian backgrounds), but the court decision was later frequently cited in other court actions and due process hearings for equal opportunity in

inclusion of students with SEN in the mainstream education system (Mackenzie, 2005).

The 1967 court ruling in *Hobson vs. Hansen* helped to avoid isolation of children with disabilities as well. The tracking system in school, i.e., to group children based on their level of abilities, academic performance, or simply IQ scores, caused a lot of problems. Because of the tracking system, the high academic performing students did not have an opportunity to learn how to get along and interact with their peers who had lower learning abilities, while children with disabilities, being grouped homogeneously in the tracking system, tended to have lower teacher and parental expectations on them, and lack of appropriate curriculum and challenge and there were no higher academic achieving and more appropriately behaving peers around to serve as their role models, ending up with low self-esteem and lack of achievement in most areas of schoolwork and, later, in most perspectives of life-long planning and involvement in home and community living.

Around 1964, the family of President John F. Kennedy had a member with an intellectual disability. President Kennedy tried not to hide this existing fact. Instead, he made it known to the public, and then he appointed a Whitehouse Committee on Mental Retardation, for it to do related studies and submit annual reports to the president (Lian, 2000a, 2005a). Since then, there have been valuable findings and timely suggestions given by this committee, among which there was the famous 1969 report on "*The Six-hour Retardates*." This report had major long-lasting influence; it pointed out that, due to racial and cultural/linguistic differences and low social-economic status in the families, many Mexican-, African-, and Asian-American pupils were misdiagnosed with mental retardation and, as a result, were placed in self-contained special education classrooms. These mislabeled and over-identified minority children in the special education system were treated as mentally incapable during the 6 hours of each school day. Before and after school, they were actually non-disabled. Due to lack of information, parents of these children had no disagreement against segregated special education; they were even appreciative, until the President's Committee discovered and made known to the public the situation and helped to remove the stigma (de-labeling) in more active, anti-segregation and anti-isolation efforts (Lian, 2000a).

The 1971-1972 court actions of *PARC vs. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* and *Mills vs. Board of Education* (see Table 1) led to the triumph of protecting rights of students with cognitive and other disabling conditions to inclusive public education (Mackenzie, 2005), which later led to the major legislation of 1973 and 1975 with a mandate of educating children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment (LRE). Table 2 shows major federal legislation that reflects the U.S. government's commitments in serving persons with disabilities in a more inclusive school and community.

Table 2 Landmark Legislation Relating to Inclusive Education in the United States

The American National Standards Institute Act of 1973, which mandated that accommodations should be made, i.e., ramps, elevators, wide doorways, accessible bathrooms, and Braille letters for persons with physical and/or visual impairments.

P.L. 93-112, the 1973 Amendments to the Vocational Rehabilitation Act, which included Section 501, to assure employment of persons with disabilities; Sec. 502, to remove architectural and transportation barriers; Sec. 503, to mandate affirmative action, including private business to receive USD\$2,500 or more in federal fund if it searched out and employed persons with disabilities; and Sec. 504, to protect persons with disabilities from being discriminated in, or excluded from, any program receiving federal funds. The law also

assured right to rehabilitation programs and services, including free, appropriate, public education in the least restrictive environment for 3 to 21-year-old children with disabilities.

P.L. 93-380, the 1974 Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which mandated to include students with disabilities in school education and protected their right through due process hearings.

P.L. 93-644, the 1974 Amendments to the Head Start Legislation, which required that at least 10% of enrollment in the early childhood Head Start program be reserved for preschoolers with disabilities.

P.L. 94-142, the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, which continued to mandate free, appropriate, public education for children with disabilities, aged 3 to 21, with nondiscriminatory assessment and IEP to be implemented in the LRE, due process, parent involvement, and periodic evaluation.

P.L. 101-336, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, which provided operational definitions of physical, mental, emotional/behavioral, and learning disabilities, including AIDS, and protected the 43 million persons with such disabling conditions in the U.S. from education-, employment-, and other public services-oriented discriminations.

P.L. 101-476, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990, which gave amendments to P.L. 94-142 to revise the title of the law from the "Education of All Handicapped Children Act" to the "IDEA" and added autism and traumatic brain injury as two new categories of disabling conditions, and rehabilitation counseling and social work services to the list of related services.

P.L. 105-17, the Reauthorization of IDEA of 1997, which continued to protect disabled students' right to education in the LRE, and made it more clearly defined as the neighborhood school programs a learner with disabilities, would attend as if he/she were not disabled.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2004, which included all learners with special needs as well as other disadvantaged conditions for them to have appropriate and supported educational programs and related services.

Source: Lian, M-G. J. (2005a). *Enhancing inclusive education for learners with special education needs in Hong Kong*. Paper submitted to Korea Institute for Special Education, Ansan City, Korea, p. 11.

From the 1970s to mid-1980s, there was the major debate on what should be the LRE for learners with special education needs. While at the same time, there appeared the accountability issue--who should be responsible for educating students with SEN? To cope with the trends of zero rejection and mainstreaming, the frontline mainstream school practitioners along with higher education professionals started the concept and efforts of the regular education initiative (REI), in an attempt to take accountability and assume the role as key players in providing educational programs and services to students with disabilities (Well, 1986). This led to the beginning merger of the two systems, which had moved closer and closer toward the contemporary form of inclusive education (Stainback & Stainback, 1990, 1992, 1996).

Historical Development in Taiwan

The special education schools for students with sensory disabilities were established as early as in the mid-19th century. The Tainan School for the Deaf, for example, started its program in 1856. A great number of self-contained as well as resource programs were introduced for learners with physical, mental, emotional/behavioral, and learning disabilities in the past 30 to 40 years.

It was around the late 1940s when the government in Taiwan started compulsory education at primary school level. By 1968, the 6-year compulsory education was further extended to 9 years for all students (Chan, 1998; Lian, 2005b). Because of the field practitioners' effective efforts, the 6-year and, then, 9-year compulsory education law and its successful implementation in Taiwan had achieved a high percentage of school enrollment with populated pupils in schools for so-called "*guo min jiao yu*" (i.e., citizen education); among the students recruited and encouraged to attend school there were learners with disabilities. Since then, students with diverse learning abilities and/or difficulties have been increasingly served in the mainstream education systems during the past three decades.

Along with humanistic and normalization-related development, plus the government's supporting policy through the recent waves of educational reform and corresponding movements, including the efforts of the 9-year compulsory education plus the 3-year upward (i.e., senior high school level) and 3-year downward (i.e., preschool level) age extension of special education programs, more students with SEN are provided with effective and outcome-assured instruction in the natural environments (Wu, W. T., 2004a, 2004b).

In addition to the resource programs mentioned above, there were self-contained classroom programs for primary and junior high school students with intellectual disabilities as well as the "commuting" programs for students with visual or hearing impairments (VI/HI), who started to "walk" daily from home or the residential school for the blind or deaf over to the general education (i.e., mainstream) schools, around the late 1960s and early 1970s, to attend and receive integrated education with on-site support (e.g., hearing aids facilitating services and auditory training, as well as orientation and mobility, O&M, support) (Lian, 2004a). While happening about the same time, students with intellectual disabilities also were arranged to go to self-contained classrooms in the mainstream schools. These self-contained classrooms at primary level were first called the "jung-sun bans" (i.e., the "Sun Yat-San classrooms"), which were later re-named as the "chi-ji bans" (i.e., the "classrooms for opening children's minds"). At junior high school level, similar self-contained classrooms for students with intellectual disabilities were named the "yi-ji bans" (i.e., the "classrooms for enriching the youth's minds"), as to differentiate the two major stages of compulsory education in the life span of childhood age level for elementary and fundamental education (i.e., 6 to 12 years old), up to beginning teenage and adolescent level (i.e., 13-15 years old) for juvenile and pre-young adult education (Lian, 2005a, 2005b).

About the same time in the mid-1980s, the government in Taiwan made an effort to establish public special ("chi-ji") schools in major cities. However, parents of children with intellectual disabilities in Taipei rejected the plan. The city's Bureau of Education had the intention to provide the students with intensive vocational development curriculum and simulated job training programs, but the parents preferred that their children go to the mainstream schools. Much debate took place in the assembly hall of the city. At the end, this Taipei Chi Ji School was built, but parents had the choice to decide whether their children should attend special or general education schools and programs (Lian, 2004a, 2004b).

Historical Development in Hong Kong

Self-contained special schools in Hong Kong became available since the turn of the past century, mostly provided by church or other charity groups. The Ebenezer School for the Visually Impaired was established in 1897, while most other schools for children with sensory, physical, mental, and multiple disabilities, mainly with residential facilities, were built in the past 30-50 years, by the Hong Kong Red Cross, Caritas church group, Spastics Association, Po Leung Kok, Heep Hong Association, Hong Chi Association, and other parent groups or non-profit organizations.

The trend of inclusive education in Hong Kong can be traced back to the 1970s, when there was increase of awareness regarding the rights of learners with disabilities to public education, an initial stage to explore the possibility of mainstreaming. At that time, the Education Department set the policy and guide for trying, as much as possible, to integrate students with special education needs into ordinary schools for them to receive appropriate education together with their age peers (Poon-McBrayer & Lian, 2002).

In 1995, the Hong Kong government presented its *Equal Opportunity Rehabilitation and Service White Paper*, calling for all efforts to make it possible for all children to have an opportunity to achieve their maximum potential, and for each one of them to become a positive and responsible contributing member of the society. In the following year, the *Disability Discrimination Ordinance* (DDO) was introduced, and the corresponding rules and regulations regarding inclusive school education were formed in 2001, to mandate that all mainstream schools should accept students with disabilities unless there are un-conquered difficulties. This is to stay consistent with the worldwide trends of the *Salamanca Declaration* of the UNESCO and the *Green Paper on Excellence for All Children* of the United Kingdom, that is, to protect “human rights, social justice and anti-discrimination” (Yeung & Lian, 2005, p. 3).

In 1997, the Education Department called for schools to participate in pilot projects of integrated education through whole-school approaches. These projects were funded and facilitated, in an attempt to explore and find the most effective ways to help students with SEN attend mainstream schools. As of today, there are 80 primary schools and 37 secondary schools, a total of 117, that participated in this whole-school approach project (EMB, 2005a), for which the government has provided a series of in-service and support programs, such as the 30-hour introductory course on integrated education (Lian, Poon-McBrayer, & Tam, 2001) and related seminars and workshops with school-based support and management.

In 1999, the Committee for Special Education Needs disseminated its motion on “*Towards the 21st Century: The Direction of Special Education Curriculum*,” which asked for mainstream school practitioners to take in and work with children who had giftedness and talent as well as learners who had learning difficulties due to cognitive, learning, physical, and emotional limitations. The committee also suggested that special education curriculum should be built on the foundation of mainstream curriculum so that later efforts for enhancing inclusive education can be more smooth and successful (Education Department, 2000).

In 2000, the Education Department disseminated the *Inclusive Education Implementation Guide* to continue enforce the government’s policy for implementation, which moved the language from “integrated education” to “inclusive education” and suggested a definition of inclusion as “providing opportunities to persons with [special education needs] for them to fully participate in the community, including education, work, consume, recreate, and other

community and home activities” (p. 1).

During the time of 2000-2004, because of the switching of resources from special education programs (e.g., additional increments for special education teachers) over to general education programs (e.g., the increase of pre-service and in-service financial supports), plus various other factors, including the need for teacher empowerment in mainstream schools, lack of effective school and classroom management, and existence of unsuccessful cases, there appeared to be resistance in the inclusive education movement in Hong Kong (Michael, 2004; Ng, 2004; Poon-McBrayer, 2005). Efforts have been made to solve the problems and seek agreements among theorists and practitioners via the activities held by the Education and Manpower Bureau, the Professional Teachers Union, and the Special Education Society of Hong Kong. An education researcher and leader, Lo (2004), for example, pinpointed that “We need to try to search for man-made consensus from among congenital differences” (p. 97).

Progressive Inclusion

Looking at Hong Kong as well as the global historical development relating to inclusive education, we greatly appreciate the frontline practitioners’ and advocates’ dedicated efforts to fulfill educational needs of exceptional learners, through which it can be foreseen that the trend for persons with disabilities to return to, and stay in, mainstream schools and society will continue and progress steadily. This is what the leading special education theorist Maynard C. Reynolds and his associates (Wang, Reynolds, & Schwartz, 1988; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986, 1989) described as “*progressive inclusion*” in the historical development relating to disabling conditions, that is evolutionary, rather than revolutionary (Lian, 2000a). This is also consistent with what the Hong Kong Education Department (2000) described that the “quantity” perspective of education by far has achieved the goal, but the “quality” perspective (e.g., full participation of students with special education needs in mainstream schools) still has room for improvement.

Related Concepts

For years, the general and special education branches have caused to form a continuum of service delivery model, in which persons with more severe disabilities and lower functioning abilities tended to be placed in, and expected to start from, the more segregated and medically-oriented environments, e.g., the hospital and residential schools. Once they have made progress toward certain mastery criteria, they would be transferred onto the next less segregated and higher functioning-level placement. The cascades of Deno in late 1960s and Lloyd Dunn of 1973 in the United States had similar illustration and description.

Those who supported this continuum model believed that it may let children and youth with disabilities have an alternative to stay in where they belonged to and receive curriculum and instructional strategies specifically tailored or adapted to match their learning abilities and special education needs (Lian, 2004a). In addition, there would be specially trained and experienced professionals available, and related adaptive equipment or assistive technology devices that were not generally available in the mainstream schools and programs. Besides, there would be smaller size of classes or even 1-to-1 ratio of teaching or training based on the individualized pace of the program and service recipients; they were expected to be free from pressure of examination and competition against each other among age peers.

Those who disagreed to the continuum model contented that all the adaptive curriculum and instructional strategies, more flexible and appropriate assessment approaches, along with

related services and facilities and devices, should be available in wherever the learners with disabilities are at. They worried that once the program recipients were placed in a segregated setting, it is difficult for them to be moving up to the next higher functioning-level and less segregated environment, ending up with a high percentage of learners staying in one designated setting or facility for a prolonged period of time, with inclusion as an ideal option too far to reach.

With this concern, practitioners and researchers proposed the child-centered model, for the program and related services to fit each learner's need in the natural environment, instead of for the learner to fit the available programs and services. In this model, the school does not require strict prerequisite learning abilities and qualifications; instead, the school cares about the personal eligibility and individualized learning needs. The child-centered model makes inclusive education possible and can be implemented instantly (without the need to first build or develop readiness, i.e., the minimum requirement of prerequisites for qualification--in general, within two academic grades such as a child functioning at primary 3 level to join his/her age peers in 5th grade). It is regarding structural change for the education system to be more sensitive and flexible (Aloia, 2001; Budzisz, 2004; Budzisz & Lee, 2004; Stainback & Stainback, 1990, 1992, 1996; Stainback, Stainback, & Stefanich, 1996; To, 2002). This is a critical consideration for policy makers and practitioners to work on, especially during the era of paradigm shifts and fundamental changes in Hong Kong, such as the academic structure to be changed to the 3 plus 3 plus 4 format (i.e., 3-year junior high school, 3-year senior high school, and 4-year college/university) with corresponding controversial issues in curriculum development and norm- or criterion-referenced assessment and exit evaluation (Curriculum Development Council and Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority, 2004; Education and Manpower Bureau, 2004a, 2004c, 2005b), which need to be more inclusive and flexible so it would not lead to another wave of anti-inclusive education (Association for Support of Inclusive Education, 2004; Chan, 2004; Lian, 2005b; Michael, 2004; Ng, 2004; Poon-McBrayer, 2005).

About the concepts and practices of "integrated education" versus "inclusive education," in general, integration is to place a child with special education needs in a general education classroom. It is much like the practice of "*suiban jiudu*" in Mainland China (McCabe, 2002). There are co-existing but separate ordinary and special education schools and programs. The integrated students need to be functioning at a high enough academic ability and performance level so they can work up to the expected standards in the same learning environment with their non-disabled peers. In contrast, inclusive education should start from the very beginning of schooling of each child and, therefore, there is no need for an arrangement of putting the already segregated student "back" in the general education system (i.e., returning to mainstream school and classroom). There is no requirement of meeting specific academic and behavioral prerequisite standards and it is more on changing the school system and program (Lian & Henning, 2000). Policy makers and professionals may pinpoint that there have been more implementation and practices of integrated education in Hong Kong, but the efforts of whole-school approach may gradually and eventually lead to the vision and accomplishment of inclusive education. The practitioners may start to realize that special education is not necessarily always being provided in a segregated or isolated environment; it can exist and be carried out in the mainstream and general education environments as well. As To (2002) indicated, "Inclusion is not simply placing children with special educational needs into the mainstream schools . . . It is about changing schools for them to be more responsive to the needs of all children" (p. 2).

Enhancing Inclusive Education

Efforts in the United States

The belief, principles, and general guide for more smooth and successful implementation suggested by Lian and Hemenway (1994) as “*The ABC of Inclusive Education*” may generally described as what is existing in the United States, i.e., a-accessibility and accountability; b-belonging and bias-free; c-commitment and connection; d-diversity; e-equal opportunity; f-friendship; g-goal; h-home school; i-inclusion; j-justice; k-kids belong to kids; l-least restriction; m-mainstreaming; n-nondiscrimination; o-open door/open mind; p-practice/partnership; q-quality of life; r-relationship; s-shared partnership; t-teamwork; u-unification; v-vision and value; w-work hand-in-hand and whole-school approach; x-x mark the opportunity for all children; y-“you belong to us”; and z-zero rejection.

An investigation conducted by Clasberry and Lian (1997) among 210 field practitioners plus an extensive review and data analysis of samples from these survey respondents’ individualized education plans (IEPs) further found implementation and perceived effectiveness of strategies for an inclusive school, which included, in rank order, use of teaching assistants, instructional adaptation, material adaptation, cooperative learning, team teaching, assistive technology, consultant services, itinerant teaching, peer tutoring, multi-level curriculum, peer physical assistants, curriculum overlapping, cross-age tutoring, and alternative curriculum. For these strategies to be effective and successful, a list of general recommendations was presented (Clasberry & Lian, 1998), which came from first-hand experiences of frontline practitioners: thorough preparation; all children are unique with strengths and weaknesses; available resources for smooth system change; IEP and services for each student with and without disabilities as a consumer; promoting active interaction among all children; teaching all students to appreciate various perspectives of diversity; encouraging parents as the stakeholders and team partners; encouraging teamwork among students, parents, and school personnel; providing continuous information and maintaining ongoing communication between inclusion team members; providing ongoing administrative and technological support; adopting flexible and appropriate evaluation procedures; enhancing preservice and inservice personnel development; and utilizing research-based investigation and program evaluation (pp. 23-24). Agreeing to these recommendations, Mackenzie (2005) and a group of frontline practitioners at a “Promising Practices” seminar in Springfield, Illinois (Lian & Henning, 2000) confirmed and added: strong belief in children; emphasis on sameness among children and for them to learn and grow together; enhancement of state, district, and school implementation plans; funding from the government; proper teacher training; parental involvement; attitudinal shift; use of IEPs; least restrictive environment; legal protection; appropriate assessment (i.e., authentic and alternative assessment, and portfolio assessment); arrangement of modifications/adaptations and diversified instruction in classroom and school activities; recognizing and developing multiple intelligence; periodic evaluation; real life experiences; appropriate transitioning plans; and a vision for community beyond school.

Efforts in Taiwan

In order to achieve more successful inclusive schooling for students with disabilities in Taiwan, the government worked together with the frontline practitioners to find effective approaches (Tsai, 2001; Wu, W. T., 2004b). The Ministry of Education proposed and tried to help carry out the policies and strategies of sound administrative measures: flexible schooling system--realizing life long learning; balancing teacher supply and demand--upgrading quality of personnel; improving assessment and evaluation; flexible curriculum; priority on technical and vocational skills; special physical education for physical and mental health; parent-teacher

collaboration; strengthening support system; and special education networking. While at the

same time, the frontline workers engaged their efforts of classroom arrangements, e.g., 3:1 ratio and team teaching; non-academic or functional academic curriculum; individualized educational planning (IEP) and effective instructional strategies, e.g., computer-assisted learning (CAL); environmental arrangement (i.e., ecological approach); supporting services,

e.g., music therapy and social work; assistive technology, e.g., alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) devices and techniques; flexible assessment and evaluation system; parental involvement; administrative support; and the necessary staff development (Wu, S. M., 2002).

Efforts in Hong Kong

During the past 10 years, practitioners in Hong Kong explored and tried various approaches for enhancing inclusive education. For example, funded by the Education and Manpower Bureau the major concepts and strategies included in the 30-hour Introductory Course for Integrated Education were presented to participating school administrators (i.e., principals and assistant principals) and frontline practitioners (teachers and directors of school-based curriculum and counseling services) (Lian, Poon-McBrayer, & Tam, 2001). Table 3 summarizes these major concepts and strategies.

Table 3 The 30-hour Introductory Course for Integrated Education: Program Outline

Week	Contents	Hour
1	Principles and philosophy of integration and inclusion; development of integrated education in Hong Kong and the world; managing change: development of a whole school approach to integration.	3
2-4	Planning for inclusive schooling: understanding the diverse needs of pupils; how to mobilize staff in adopting the whole-school approach.	9
5	Basic principles and strategies; grouping for students with diverse abilities; effective instructional strategies.	3
6	Curriculum adaptations; assessment adaptations.	3
7	Applied behavioral analysis and classroom management.	3
8	Inclusive activities for all students.	3
9	Working with parents; assistive technology.	3
10	Assignment report (survey and case study) sharing.	3

From: Lian, M-G. J., Poon-McBrayer, K. F., & Tam, K. Y. B. (2001). *Introductory course on integrated education*. [Tender proposal] Education and Manpower Bureau, Hong Kong.

The successful experiences in Taiwan also were introduced to the practitioners in various seminars and staff development workshops in Hong Kong, including the barrier-free environments, flexible curriculum, classroom management, ecological instructional planning and design, parental involvement, assistive technology, and teacher preparation with generic competencies preparation in Taiwan (Wu, W. T., 2004a, 2004b). This, along with Wu, S. M.'s (1998, 1999, 2002) enhancement of human, teaching, and administrative resources, can be put together with the three major approaches proposed by Hong Kong professionals (e.g., Sin & To, 2001), i.e., building culture and climate of acceptance,

setting inclusion policy, and implementing inclusive education, which also are closely connected with the suggestions proposed by the European and U.S. leading professionals (e.g., Dopp & Block, 2004; Downing, 2002; Ludlum, 2002; Lynch, 2000; Mackenzie, 2005; Magiers, Smith, Zigmond, & Gebauer, 2005; Ryndak, 2001; Salend, 2004; Sobel, 2004; Sparzo & Poteet, 1997), including building bridge for networking and collaboration, and using the indicators of a successful inclusive school to monitor and evaluate level of accomplishment (Forlin & Forlin, 2002; Ho & Lee, 2004).

In terms of daily practices, there have been an extensive list of recommendations in Hong Kong, such as whole-school approach; administrative support; personnel arrangement (e.g., collaborative teaching, co-teaching and team-teaching, and teaching assistants, etc.); improvement in communication, school organization and management; technical assistance; use of available resources including special education resource centers and itinerant teachers, facilitators, and related consultant service providers); use of IEPs, counseling and rehabilitation services, and more flexible definitions of special education needs and disabilities and related appropriate curriculum, teaching materials, adapted assessment and evaluation contents and procedures, effective instructional strategies (e.g., direct teaching, diagnostic and precision teaching, multisensory approach, collaborative teaching, conductive education, cooperative learning, behavioral sciences, task analysis, and play-based teaching and intervention, etc.), peer support and counseling, and supportive social interaction, in order to increase sense of belonging and establish learning and problem-solving task forces, and encourage parent participation and home-school partnership, and the use of assistive technology (Chan, 2004; Chi, 2001; Ching-Wan & Mak, 2004; Dowson, Heung, Chuen, Hon, Hui, Luk, Sin, Yip, Yuen, Liu, & Chan, 2004; Education and Manpower Bureau, 2003a, 2003b, 2004b, 2004c, 2004d; Education Department, 2001, 2002; Ho & Lee, 2004; Lian, 2004b; Office for Integrated Education, 2003; Pong, Chan, Lau, & Li, 2003; Shu & Shieh, 2000; Sin & To, 2001). All of these practical suggestions need extensive teamwork and whole-school efforts to carry out.

Conclusion

The efforts to fulfill educational needs of children with learning difficulties in inclusive programs in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States have come from similar historical backgrounds and major zero rejection, mainstreaming, regular education initiative, and integration movements and related activities. It took time and persistent team collaboration among policy makers, practitioners, as well as higher education professionals and researchers to make better achievement. Regional and international network, support, and sharing of successful experience are needed so further progress can be made. Future tasks for the better benefits of learners with special education needs include more flexibility and creativity in the service delivery system with more appropriate and effective curriculum, assessment of educational needs and individualized planning, instructional strategies, and evaluation of progress and program effectiveness. This can be periodically re-visited via ongoing research data collection and analysis via outcome-based and standard- and indicator-oriented checkup when stepping into the second half of the current decade. More inclusion efforts in the natural environments for all children with will become routine practices.

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