MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN HONG KONG PRIMARY SCHOOLS: PROMOTING EQUITABLE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

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Doctor of Education

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Certificate of Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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List of Abbreviations

AO	Activity Officer
CO	Curriculum Officer
ME Project	Multicultural Education Project
ME	Multicultural Education
P	Principal
O	Observation
R	Researcher
S	Supervisor
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SI	Semi-structured interview
SP	Special School (school for visually impaired students)
SPCO	Special School Curriculum Officer
SPP	Special School Principal
SPSs	Special School Students
SPSW	Special School Social Worker
SPT	Special School Teacher
SPVP	Special School Vice-Principal
Ss	Students
SST	Student Support Team
SW	Social Worker
VP	Vice-Principal

Notational Conventions

Symbol	Meaning
Underlined	Highlights the key points of the comments or discussions
CAPITAL LETTERS	Words emphasized by speakers
[...]	Pause
[text]	Information added by researcher
(text)	- Implied by participants during conversations or - Providing further background information
1, 2, 3, ...	Sequence of data collection, e.g. "O-3" = data collected during third observation

Note: All names of schools and individuals (office bearers at schools, teachers, students) are pseudonyms.

Abstract

The thesis investigates how one local mainstream primary school in Hong Kong is making multicultural education possible. Learner and learning diversity is an increasingly complex issue in schools world-wide. In Hong Kong, the current education policy has as a core value that all students have the right to learn. Yet finding effective ways to manage students with diverse educational needs is problematic for local schools. This research is a case study of one primary school that is trying to implement multicultural education to improve equitable learning opportunities for all their students. The current research topic emerged following findings from a previous project in which one hundred local Hong Kong teachers were found to have negative perceptions regarding catering for student diversity in their teaching (Yeung, 2005, 2006). The teachers' perceptions of students' abilities were influenced by students' test scores or socio-cultural backgrounds. The local teachers are trained to work effectively with only one dominant culture and they are unprepared to acknowledge the cultural differences in schools. Teaching students from a range of backgrounds with diverse needs brings about feelings of anxiety in schools.

In the current study, I employ a constructivist approach, that is, I discuss how teachers re-shaped their perceptions, beliefs and behaviours as they developed and implemented a school-based multicultural education project. I sought to understand and examine how multicultural education was socially constructed and enacted by teachers in one school. The two major research questions are: Firstly, how is multicultural education socially constructed and enacted by teachers in a mainstream school through the integration of organizational, collegial and student-teacher factors? Secondly, if there are any barriers, what are appropriate strategies or supportive measures that foster implementation of multicultural education in a local school?

This is a qualitative study that uses ethnographically-oriented methods comprising document analysis, observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group meetings. I examine Hong Kong education policies and multicultural education theories and develop a transformative and holistic approach to achieving multicultural change in a whole school.

In conclusion, it is expected that the study findings will assist educators in Hong Kong to further understand present challenges in the school system regarding managing

diversity and attaining multicultural education goals. In particular, the study provides positive teaching and learning strategies that could be implemented to address problems of diverse learning needs, and to promote or develop equitable opportunities for all students.