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

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Doctor of Education

2009

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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Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Associate Professor Hermine Scheeres and Professor Diana Slade, whose expertise, understanding and patience added considerably to my graduate experience.

A very special thanks goes out to the school staff of the research site and the school of the students with visual impairment for their provision of resourceful information to be evaluated in this study. Without their enthusiasm, understanding and kindness, I would not have had the chance to conduct a successful study and produce meaningful findings. I doubt that I will ever be able to convey my appreciation fully, but I owe him my eternal gratitude.

Most importantly, I would like to thank all my best friends who helped me get through the various stages of the study. We have gone through exchanges of knowledge and skills, and the venting of frustration during my graduate program, and without whose love, encouragement and assistance, I would not have finished this study.

Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Guenter Plum for taking time out from his busy schedule to serve as my external reader of the thesis. He provided me with direction and technical support and became more of a mentor and friend than an editor.

Table of Contents

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY II
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS III
TABLE OF CONTENTS IV
LIST OF FIGURES VI
LIST OF TABLES VI
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS VII
NOTATIONAL CONVENTIONS VIII
ABSTRACT IX
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY 1
1.1 Hong Kong Mainstream Education 2
1.1.1 Basic Principles of Education Policy 3
1.1.2 School Admission Systems 5
1.1.3 High Risk Examination System 6
1.2 Education Policies for Diverse Needs 8
1.3 Criticisms of Current Policies 13
1.3.1 Teachers' Readiness for an Increasingly Diverse Students Population 14
1.3.2 Developing Teaching Methodologies and Assessments for Diverse Students 16
1.3.3 Standardization Hampers Learning Equity 16
1.4 Promoting Multicultural Education 19
1.5 Significance of the Study 20
1.5.1 What Multicultural Education Means in this Study 22
1.5.2 Multicultural Education at the Research Site 23
1.5.3 Delimitations of the Study 25
1.6 Chapter Summary 26
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW 27
2.1 Culture 29
2.1.1 Definitions 29
2.1.2 Culture and Possibilities of Change 31
2.2 Multicultural Education 34
2.2.1 Basic Definitions of Multicultural Education 35
2.3 Philosophical Approaches to Multicultural Education 35
2.3.1 Conservative Approach to Multicultural Education 36
2.3.2 Critical Approach to Multicultural Education 37
2.3.3 Critical Reflection 38
2.4 Multicultural Education for the Diversity of Learners and Learning 39
2.4.1 A Holistic Organizational Change to Multicultural Education 41
2.5 Critical Issues for Organizational Change 48
2.5.1 Teachers' Initial Resistance 49
2.5.2 A Cost-Benefit Comparison 50
2.5.3 A 'Worst-Case Scenario' 51
2.5.4 Inflexible Curriculum and Exam-driven System Intensifies Segregation 51
2.6 Chapter Summary 53
CHAPTER 3 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK 55
3.1 Multicultural Education in Practice 55
3.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study 56
3.2.1 A Constructivist Perspective on Multicultural Education 58
3.2.2 Four Working Principles for Multicultural Education 59
3.3 Chapter Summary 73
CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH 77
4.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study 77
4.2 Qualitative Case Study 79
4.2.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Research 80
4.2.2 Case Study Strategies of this Study 83
4.3 Data Management and Analysis 91
4.3.1 Data Collection and Management 92
4.3.2 Data Gatherings, Transcriptions and Translations 100
4.3.3 Data Analysis 101
4.3.4 Validity and Reliability 102
4.4 Chapter Summary 104
CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH SITE AND ITS CHALLENGES 106

5.1 Research Site *107*
5.1.1 General Background of the School 108
5.1.2 Diversified Learning and Learning Diversity 114
5.1.3 The Pathway to Change 121
5.1.4 The Multicultural Education Project and School Mission 126
5.1.5 Summary Description of the Research Site 128
5.2 Research Design *130*
5.3 Study Process *131*
5.4 Field Work and Data Handling *131*
5.4.1 Field Notes 132
5.4.2 Collection of Archival Documents 133
5.4.3 On-site Observations 134
5.4.4 Semi-structured Interviews 135
5.4.5 Further Observations 137
5.4.6 Data Transcription and Analysis 137
5.4.7 Research Process Summary 138
5.5 Chapter Summary *138*
CHAPTER 6 – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 140
6.1 Analysis of Findings *143*
6.1.1 School Leadership and Policy 144
6.1.2 Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning 160
6.1.3 Professional Development 167
6.1.4 Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning 174
6.2 Major Findings *183*
6.3 Chapter Summary *184*
CHAPTER 7 – BARRIERS AND OPPORTUNITIES 186
7.1 Tensions Arising from Government Policy *186*
7.1.1 Initial Concerns of the School 187
7.1.2 External Pressures on School Decisions 187
7.2 Positive Discrimination vs. Education for All *190*
7.2.1 Worst Case Scenarios 190
7.2.2 Teachers' Inability to Implement Integrated Strategies 192
7.2.3 Perceptions of the Visually Impaired Students 193
7.2.4 Incorrect Judgments by the St. John's Students 194
7.3 Turning Barriers into Opportunities *196*
7.3.1 Reconstructing the Concept of Students' Abilities 196
7.3.2 Awareness of the Meanings of Multicultural Education 199
7.4 Chapter Summary *200*
CHAPTER 8 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 201
8.1 Contributions of the Study *201*
8.1.1 Contribution Towards Implementing Multicultural Education: Taking Up Educational Reforms 203
8.1.2 Contribution Towards Implementing Multicultural Education: Bringing Together Theory and Practice of a Whole School Approach 203
8.1.3 Contribution Towards Implementing Multicultural Education: Beyond the ME Project 204
8.1.4 Contribution Towards Understanding Multicultural Education: What Multicultural Education Is 206
8.1.5 Summary of Contributions 206
8.2 Recommendations for Future Development *207*
8.2.1 Granting Autonomy to Schools in Curriculum Development 208
8.2.2 Multicultural Leadership 209
8.2.3 Systematic and Continuing Teacher Development Programs 210
8.2.4 Mutual Trust Mediates Change 210
8.2.5 Networking with Like-minded Schools 211
8.2.6 Curriculum Adaptation 212
8.2.7 Fostering Positive Student Learning 213
8.2.8 Encouraging Parental Involvement 215
8.2.9 Attainment for All 215
8.2.10 Summary of Recommendations for Future Development 216
8.3 Conclusion *216*
APPENDICES 220
Appendix I – Participant Observation Guide *220*
Appendix II – Lists of Interview Questions *221*
Appendix III – Coding Guide for the Study *224*
Appendix IV – Research Schedules and Findings *225*

REFERENCES 227

List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Principles underlying policy making to address cultural diversity in Hong Kong 14
Figure 1.2 Proposed restructuring of current policies to embrace idea of multicultural education 20
Figure 5.1 Overview of developing multicultural education at research site 129
Figure 8.1 Momentum of multicultural education 208
Figure 8.2 A transformative process of multicultural education at St. John's 217

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Dimensions of organizational school change in different multicultural education models 47
Table 3.1 Dimensions and key principles of multicultural education 75
Table 4.1 Participants and role perspectives of the study 90
Table 4.2 Planning of data collection 100
Table 5.1 Participant information 113
Table 5.2 Selected survey findings of attitudes towards multicultural education by St. John's Primary School teachers in 2005 117
Table 5.3 APASO findings concerning school students in 2005 120
Table 6.1 Questions about the learning of Edith's students prepared for O-7 (October 2006) 151

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.

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the Study

This thesis is the report of a case study of the implementation of multicultural education in a government funded mainstream primary school in Hong Kong. Rather than exploring multicultural education from a policy perspective, I will look into the issue at the school level. In the other words, the focus of my study is a school's special multicultural project that succeeded in getting a group of mainstream primary school teachers involved and engaged in promoting multicultural education to their students, and in motivating their students to integrate with students with a disability. This case study is based primarily on the observations of a group of teachers and the school heads who are the core members of their school's Student Support Team (SST). The study describes how one school tried to develop strategies to implement multicultural education and to promote equitable outcomes for students in its normal school setting. It explores how organizational, individual teacher and student factors interact to socially construct and shape the teachers' own multicultural curriculum at the research site.

With the objective of investigating how multicultural education was implemented to produce equitable opportunities, a qualitative case study employing observational methods and semi-structured interviews was undertaken in this study. In order to discern the multicultural practices in the local mainstream classrooms, two major research questions and three sub-questions were posed:

1. How is multicultural education organized and implemented in the local school to improve equitable opportunities for all students?
    - 1.1 How do the participants or school staff construct shared understandings through their interactions?
    - 1.2 How do these understandings lead to collaborative action?
2. What are the barriers, if any, to implementing multicultural education strategies?
    - 2.1 What kinds of changes did school staff go through during the development and implementation of multicultural education in the school?

In this chapter, before going on to review the multicultural literature or the findings from the school, I will outline the mainstream education system and the policies of

catering for diversity which can be seen as prototypes of local multicultural education. This will show that local education mainly serves a dominant culture and that the government emphases on a standardized curriculum and high-risk school assessments have hampered the development of multicultural education. Further, in this chapter, I will explain that as there is no fixed and authorized definition of terms such as 'diversity', 'diverse educational needs', 'special education needs', 'learning differences' and 'multicultural' in Hong Kong, these terms are adopted as comprehensive terms to encompass all kinds of difference discussed in this thesis. Following this, I will identify the problems of the study, describe the significance of the research and present an overview of the methodology used. Lastly, the chapter concludes by noting the limitations of the study.

1.1 Hong Kong Mainstream Education

In mainstream primary schools, student diversity is a highly complicated issue with multi-faceted definitions, related to and affecting ability, motivation, learning environment, curriculum choices and so on (EMB, 2002a). In 2007, more than 10,000 newly admitted students from the Mainland were recorded in local primary schools (EDB, 2007i). At the same time, the local primary class size in Hong Kong was 32.2, an official figure which includes local and international schools (EDB, 2007i). This is well above the average class sizes at primary level in Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, where it is 21.4. It was anticipated that starting with the 2001-02 school year, local schools would be admitting students with a range of abilities, thus putting more pressure on teaching and student support (EMB, 2002b). However, the mainstream curriculum is designed to deal with students who are assumed to have a common point of entry of knowledge and skill levels, which are set according to the dominant culture. All these factors give rise to a big question for teachers: how are they to cater for individual learning differences when following a curriculum set for mainstream education?

1.1.1 Basic Principles of Education Policy

In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau (EDB) is responsible for the formulation and implementation of policies, and the introduction of legislation to ensure that quality education is being provided for Hong Kong's young people (EDB, 2008c). Prior to 2007, the Bureau was named Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB), and before 2003, it was called Education Department (ED). No matter what this government authority is called, the EDB is responsible for education policies in Hong Kong. Before I go on to introduce Hong Kong's education policies, I would like to make it clear that as this thesis is written about the development of local multicultural education through a case study of a special multicultural education school project carried out in 2006 and 2007, I will use the abbreviations ED, EMB and EDB to refer to the same education authority when quoting or referring to publications.

With regard to the mission and vision of local education, the government has two major basic principles for education policy making and implementation. First of all, "One curriculum framework for all" is one of the basic principles of Hong Kong education policy, which means students with diverse learning needs should not be deprived of their learning rights to study with "mainstream" (or ordinary) students and are strongly recommended to be placed in mainstream schools (EDB, 2007q). Thus, for example, since 2001 the impetus for this kind of integrated education has gained further momentum with the introduction of the Code of Practice on Education under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2001). The Code of Practice states that, unless it can be shown to cause unjustifiable hardships, it is unlawful for an educational establishment to refuse admission, expel or discriminate against students with a disability. Schools then must take steps to identify and carefully consider the diverse learning needs of the student(s) and the accommodation required. It is therefore an obligation for mainstream schools to accommodate and teach students with disabilities – these students being one group of students with diverse learning needs. I will give the following examples to demonstrate the basic principles for local education policy making and implementation.

1.1.1.1 Developing Performance Indicators for One Curriculum Framework

First of all, the Hong Kong education authority tries to understand the impact of standardized education on the students and there are different measures to help schools identify and provide follow-up catering for those students with diverse learning needs. For instance, in January 2000 the former Education Department (ED) obtained support from the Quality Education Fund (QEF) to commission the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd) to conduct a large scale research project aimed at developing performance indicators for measuring students' affective and social outcomes. The final product is the "Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes" (APASO), which comprises eight sets of questionnaires for primary students (P3-P6), and eleven sets of questionnaires for secondary students (EDB, 2007b; EMB, 2001a). APASO is an official school self-evaluation instrument for gathering data on students' performance in the affective and social domains. A set of school norms is obtained from the APASO; these findings are "soft" indicators which means that they help schools to identify the students' learning strengths and affective needs. However, the schools have full autonomy to follow up or not.

In 2003 the government borrowed the "Index for Inclusion: Developing Learning and Participation in Schools (2000)" from the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE), U.K. (Booth and Ainscow, 2000). This is a major reference for local integrated education to prepare for the Hong Kong version of "Catering for Student Differences – Indicators for Inclusion", which is also a school development instrument for catering for learning differences (in short, the Indicator) (EDB, 2004). The indicator is concerned with improving educational attainments through developing a supportive school ethos for staff and students. It assists schools in a detailed examination of the possibilities for increasing learning and participation in all aspects of the school for all students. This is a systematic way of school development planning, setting priorities for change, implementing developments and reviewing progress. The Indicator is developed along three inter-connected dimensions of school life, through creating inclusive cultures, producing inclusive / integrated policies and evolving inclusive / integrated practices. All these are forms of support which are targeted for the development and performances of all students. On the whole, the local indicators of inclusion have paved the way for developing multicultural education in a whole-school approach.

1.1.1.2 Effective Schools Are Educationally Inclusive Schools

Another major principle held by the government is that "Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools", which means schools are effective because they are inclusive schools, demonstrating a willingness to offer opportunities to students who may have experienced difficulties (EDB, 2007i, 2008b). This principle is also focused on the student's individual learning needs. In a government report (EMB, 2002a), different kinds of student diverse learning needs are listed to help teachers spot children's learning needs for early intervention and to help indicate the follow-up support services provided by the government. These diverse needs pertain to students with learning difficulties, emotional disorders, behavioural problems, speech problems, and so forth, and to students who are mentally handicapped, hearing impaired, visually impaired, physically handicapped, and so forth. In a recent government press release (HKSAR, 2007), all students with any of the listed problems are identified as "intellectually disabled students". Since September 2004, the government has developed an Observation Checklist for Teachers (OCT) for primary one students. Schools and teachers are thus playing an important role in identifying students with different learning needs. This identification of students' diverse learning needs is conducted by a process of "Assessment through Teaching" and is followed up by early intervention with the students so as to keep them studying in mainstream schools (EDB, 2007u).

The government is committed to implementing a single curriculum framework for students with diverse learning needs who can benefit from education in ordinary schools. In the next section, I will discuss the situations of schools that have to cope with the official directives.

1.1.2 School Admission Systems

The problem of student diversity is severe in local mainstream schools, the reason being, in principle, that if a student and his/her family do not care much about school location or performance, studying in a local mainstream school is easy. This is because Hong Kong has a policy of 9-year compulsory education, with a final aim to achieve free and compulsory education for every child with the best education he or she is capable of absorbing, and at a cost parents and community can afford (EDB, 2007c). In Hong Kong there are two ways of admission from kindergarten to primary one and from

primary six to secondary one: via centralized allocation, with admission depending on the student's family (e.g. one of the family members is on the school's teaching staff or an alumni), and via a religious connection to the school.

Another admission channel is the implementation of the "through-train" system, where students can be directly promoted from their own primary school to their linked secondary school without going through the central allocation of places. The government hopes that through this new system, it can strengthen the collaboration between primary and secondary schools, so that students may enjoy greater continuity with respect to curriculum design, and a more coherent teaching and learning experience in school (EDB, 2007h; EMB, 2006a).

The centralized allocation procedure purportedly aims to reduce the pressure of children striving to enter the elite schools, and thus offers an equal opportunity for all to enter local public schools. However, in reality, a student's examination scores at primary level are the dominant factor for admission to the secondary level. Wealthy parents whose children cannot get into the elite mainstream schools would rather pay a large amount to enrol their children in private, international or overseas schools. Thus the local public schools have become a learning area for students of low-middle to low socio-economic status or for those with diverse learning needs.

1.1.3 High Risk Examination System

The role of "school-as-a-selection-device" has been particularly evident in the Hong Kong educational system (Biggs, 1993). Assessment in Hong Kong is still geared towards providing data for selecting students not only for the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) at the end of secondary five and for the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKAL) at the end of secondary seven for tertiary selection, but also in primary schools, to provide the data for banding (i.e. student ability grouping of a school) in the Secondary School Places Allocation exercise. The Hong Kong educational system has been characterised as an examination-led system where what goes on in the classroom is largely dictated by what happens in the public examination halls (Fullilove, 1992). The emphasis on an examination-led system has produced an intensive washback effect in Hong Kong schools, particularly with regard to teaching mainstream curriculum content in mainstream schools. Certain washback

effects on teachers' attitudes and behaviours have also been observed in school visits and classroom observations as the teachers use examination scores to judge a student's capability (Cheng, 1997).

1.1.4 Language Policy

Language always poses an obstacle to multicultural education in the learning of students with diverse needs (Banks, 2002b; Pearson, 2001). In Hong Kong, eligible children between the ages of six and fifteen, irrespective of sex, ethnic origin, religion or ethical belief, family status and physical or mental ability, have the right to enjoy basic education, i.e. primary one to secondary three, in public mainstream schools. The government has also set up a language policy for mainstream schools which aims to enable students to be biliterate (to master written Chinese and English) and trilingual (to speak fluent Cantonese, Putonghua and English) [1] (EDB, 2007k; Education Commission, 2006). Chinese is the medium of instruction in most primary and secondary schools, with English taught as a core subject from primary one (EDB, 2007c). The language policy sounds as if it were equal for all students but it creates different learning obstacles for students with diverse learning needs in actual mainstream schools. Besides, with increasing linguistic diversity in mainstream schools, there are added burdens on schools to provide equitable opportunities.

In sum, the examples above demonstrate that the current education system is striving to assure the rights of all students to be educated in mainstream schools. The claim that "Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools" (EDB, 2007p, 2008b) has given recognition to schools' acceptance of having to teach every kind of student,

[1] Since the political handover in 1997, the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) has adopted a "biliterate and trilingual" policy. Under this policy, Chinese and English must both be acknowledged as official languages, with Cantonese being acknowledged as the de facto official spoken variety of Chinese in Hong Kong, while also accepting the use of Putonghua. Cantonese is the Guangzhou dialect, which is widely spoken in Hong Kong and Macau. On the other hand, Putonghua is known as Mandarin, the official modern Chinese spoken language used in Mainland China and Taiwan, and one of the four official languages of Singapore. The phonology of Putonghua is based on the Beijing dialect of the Mandarin language, a large and diverse group of Chinese dialects spoken across northern and southwestern China. In addition to spoken Chinese, there are two systems of written Chinese (for details, see footnote[ii]).

regardless of the ability and training of its teachers. However, this task has become a problem for teachers since they must assess and identify students' diverse needs through teaching. It has also been widely criticized by teachers, parents and the general public. At the time of writing, a report from the Hong Kong Office of the Ombudsman, an official government "watchdog", has been published which criticizes the assessment of students with special learning needs and the lack of support services for them (Ombudsman, 2007). The problems are caused by the lack of professional training of teachers, and hence many teachers are ignorant of their students' learning problems (Ombudsman, 2007).

1.2 Education Policies for Diverse Needs

In the previous section, I have outlined the major basic education principles and the general background of the local mainstream education system. The current education policy of catering for students with diverse education needs is basically in line with that providing a standardized / mainstream education for ordinary students (EMB, 2005). In one government policy document (EDB, 2007p; EMB, 2004), it is clearly stated that, "on the principle of 'one curriculum framework for all'", generally the mainstream school curriculum framework will guide curriculum development in special schools (EDB, 2007r). In the following section, I will introduce different policies that aim at providing equal learning opportunities for all students, such as the "integrated education policy" which aims to fully develop the potential of students with diverse learning needs in local mainstream schools (EMB, 2006c), and the government's definition of special education. It is noteworthy that government policies focus on two major areas of multicultural education, namely, ethnic inclusion and special education. Policies related to these areas are outlined below.

1.2.1 Policies for Ethnic Inclusion

As mentioned above, the government funded mainstream schools that were willing to take up the care of students with diverse needs, but this situation did not eventuate suddenly. Actually, local mainstream primary (including the research site of my study) and secondary schools are suffering from a tremendous drop in student population

because of the falling birth rate and ageing of the population of Hong Kong. This is bringing about two changes to Hong Kong public education. First, government schools with an inadequate number of students are closing down (SCMP, 2007); second, in order not to be closed down, mainstream schools try to absorb new immigrants and students with diverse learning needs. Consequently, the Hong Kong student population is becoming diverse.

I will now introduce the policy of ethnic inclusion as there are different races in local mainstream schools. Many of the newer students are from South Asian countries, e.g. India, Nepal and Pakistan, and these students and/or their parents are mainly new immigrants. They use different dialects and writing systems, and follow different living patterns, cultural practices and/or religious beliefs from local Hong Kong people. To cope with their learning needs, the policy of "Education for Non-Chinese Speaking Children" (EDB, 2007e) encourages the non-Chinese speaking children to study in public sector schools so that they can integrate into the community as early as possible. The government also provides support services, including an Initiation and Induction Programme for newly arrived non-Chinese speaking children to help them adjust to the local education system, and all public sector schools can admit eligible non-Chinese speaking children.

On the other hand, newly arrived Chinese students have been posing another problem regarding their learning needs in the mainstream schools since the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997. Students from China generally receive foreign language education later (Yuen, 2001, 2003), which makes it difficult to match them up with the local students as for as their initial English proficiency is concerned. Furthermore, the Chinese script used in Hong Kong is different from that used in China (traditional versus simplified version).[2] These differences create a double language barrier in

[2] "Traditional Chinese Character" and "Simplified Chinese Character" are two standard sets of Chinese characters of the contemporary Chinese written language: "Traditional Chinese" is currently used in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau; it first appeared in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 BC). Traditional Chinese is complicated. With the rise of the People's Republic of China (PRC), a process of character simplification began in 1956; the PRC government has promoted simplified Chinese characters for use in printing in an attempt to increase literacy. The simplified Chinese character was created by decreasing the number of strokes and simplifying the forms of a sizeable proportion of traditional Chinese characters; they are officially used in Mainland China, Singapore, Malaysia and at the United Nations.

reading and writing for many Mainland students. There is no specific policy provided by the government to resolve the special needs problems of these students.

In brief, in order to maintain a standardized education, the government simply formulated "policies", but they are all similar to commercial goods in window displays that have beautiful packaging for the dominant culture. In fact, the government has made limited efforts to resolve the problem of inequitable resources, such as the limited measures taken in special education to address students' diverse learning needs. I will explain this further in the following sections.

1.2.2 Special Education Policy

In Hong Kong, a special school has its admission of students based on professional diagnosis or assessment of the severity of a student's Special Educational Needs (SEN), e.g. visual or physical impairment. However, "One curriculum framework for all" is the major guiding principle for the local education system, i.e. we have only a mainstream curriculum but not a concrete special education policy in Hong Kong. In other words, though there is an item "Special Education" on the government's web site, it has only a brief description introducing the government's perspective on special education:

> *"The general aim of special education is to provide children having special needs with education necessary to help them develop their potential to the full, achieve as much independence as they are capable of, and become well-adjusted individuals in the community.*
>
> *Under the existing special education policy, students with special educational needs (SEN) are encouraged to study in ordinary schools if they can benefit from the ordinary school setting so that they receive the fullest benefit of education from mixing and interacting with ordinary children in an ordinary environment. Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools." (EDB, 2007p)*

This presents education for students with special educational needs (SEN) as basically in line with the curriculum that is provided for ordinary students, whether in special or in mainstream schools. The government strongly holds the view that while

the means (e.g. special provision, techniques and facilities) of teaching will differ, the educational goals are the same (EDB, 2007p).

In order to provide a better introduction to local special education policy, I will describe some of the main ideas from an official keynote speech by the former Deputy Secretary of the education authority at an international conference on special education needs (Ip, 2006). The former Deputy Secretary stated that the objective of "special education" in Hong Kong was generally to enable students with SEN to maximize their potential to the fullest possible extent, to achieve as much independence as they can, and to become well-adjusted individuals and contributing members of the community. She further explained that special education needs refers to students with speech and language impairment, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, intellectual disability, autism spectrum disorder and other problems that cause learning difficulties (Ip, 2006). It should be noted that "students' learning needs" are not clearly defined as they may refer to ethnicity, language, religion or the socio-economic status of their families and so on that create learning obstacles for a student in mainstream education (Ip, 2006, p.26). Overall, students with SEN are encouraged to study in ordinary schools. Only students with severe SEN or multiple disabilities are to be placed in special schools for intensive support services. In sum, the education of local students with diverse needs, whether in special or in ordinary schools, is basically in line with that provided for ordinary children (EDB, 2007j).

1.2.3 Integrated Education Policies

Since the mid-1990s, a rapid and relentless spread of standardization in educational reform has been advocated in many countries under the impact of the "No Child Left Behind" legislation in the United States (Carlson and Levin, 2005; Peterson and West, 2003). In 1997, the former Hong Kong Education Department launched the Integrated Education Pilot Project in attempting to enhance equal opportunities and social interactions of students with and without disabilities in mainstream schools. Later on, as the mainstream curriculum became the framework for local education, the Hong Kong government was inclined to construct education policies with a "whole-school" approach. The government in fact introduced two whole-school approach policies, known as "Whole School Approach to Cater for Students' Diverse Learning Needs"

(EDB, 2007u) and "Whole School Approach to Integrated Education" (EDB, 2007x), which aimed at building up a whole-school a pproach of integration to replace the previous "pull-out" model (which allowed systematic training for a homogeneous group of students outside the regular classroom) to support children with diverse learning needs in mainstream schools. These policies could be seen as a twin-policy, for both of them have as their common objective the adoption of a whole-school approach to address students' SEN by implementing the Integrated Education Programme in local mainstream secondary and primary schools. The government strongly advises schools to make flexible use of existing resources to effect the two whole-school approach policies, which implies that schools are given the autonomy to provide an effective practice to cater for students' diverse needs within their own school setting. The policy "Whole School Approach to Cater for Students' Diverse Learning Needs" (EDB, 2007u) identifies eight types of SEN, which refers to either students with special learning difficulties or with dyslexia, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical disability, autistic disorders, intellectual disability, attentive disorder or hyperactivity disorder, and speech and language impairment.

Meanwhile, the second policy, "Whole-school Approach to Integrated Education" (EDB, 2007x), aims at applying multiple and directional means, namely, a whole-school approach; collaborative teaching; curriculum, teaching and assessment adaptation; assistive technology; peer support and parent participation to help schools accommodate diversity. One significant point is that, unlike the six types of SEN listed in the "Whole School Approach to Cater for Students' Diverse Learning Needs", SEN in the "Whole-school Approach to Integrated Education" refers to all students' learning needs. Hence, students with SEN here may include students from different cultures, social classes or religious backgrounds.

By the school year 2001-2002, 66 schools had adopted what had come to be known as a whole-school approach to integration (Wong, 2004). From 2003-04 onwards the government implemented a pilot scheme of a New Funding Mode (NFM) for some schools. These schools are offered an Intensive Learning Support Grant according to the number of students in need. The schools participating in this pilot scheme were provided greater autonomy and flexibility in resource deployment. In the spirit of the whole-school approach, schools set up SSTs and coordinated teaching staff and parents to provide the students with systematic and appropriate school-based support services.

In 2006-07, there were 292 schools participating in the NFM pilot scheme and the research site of this study is one of them (EDB, 2007u; EMB, 2006b). Furthermore, as mentioned above, the government strongly holds to the view that "Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools" (EDB, 2007p, 2008b), thus the schools that are willing to teach students with diverse needs in the whole-school approach are seen as effective schools.

1.3 Criticisms of Current Policies

The two whole-school policies addressing learner diversity are two independent policies without any interconnectivity. The two policies are merely a vision of how to provide as many learning opportunities as possible for all students. These two policies illustrate clearly that the local education reforms are often action oriented and that both teachers and students get caught up in a "ready, aim, fire" mentality (Senge, 2001), with policies scattered, loosely designed and without a clear link to the direction of development. They may reflect that our policy makers read about some innovation and conclude that it could be the answer for the schools. However, such an approach to policy making leads to cynicism and the "we tried that" syndrome (Ellis and Fouts, 1997). In Figure 1.1, I have drawn up a chart to illustrate the "ready, aim, fire" mentality of the local education policies of providing equitable learning opportunities to all students. According to the curriculum setting principles of "One curriculum framework for all" and "Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools" (EDB, 2007j, 2007q), the so called whole-school approach policies (EDB, 2007v, 2007w) and the Policy for Non-Chinese Speaking Children (EDB, 2007e). Local policies of catering for diversity in mainstream schools were designed independently and implemented without a clear and coherent direction or road map for further development.

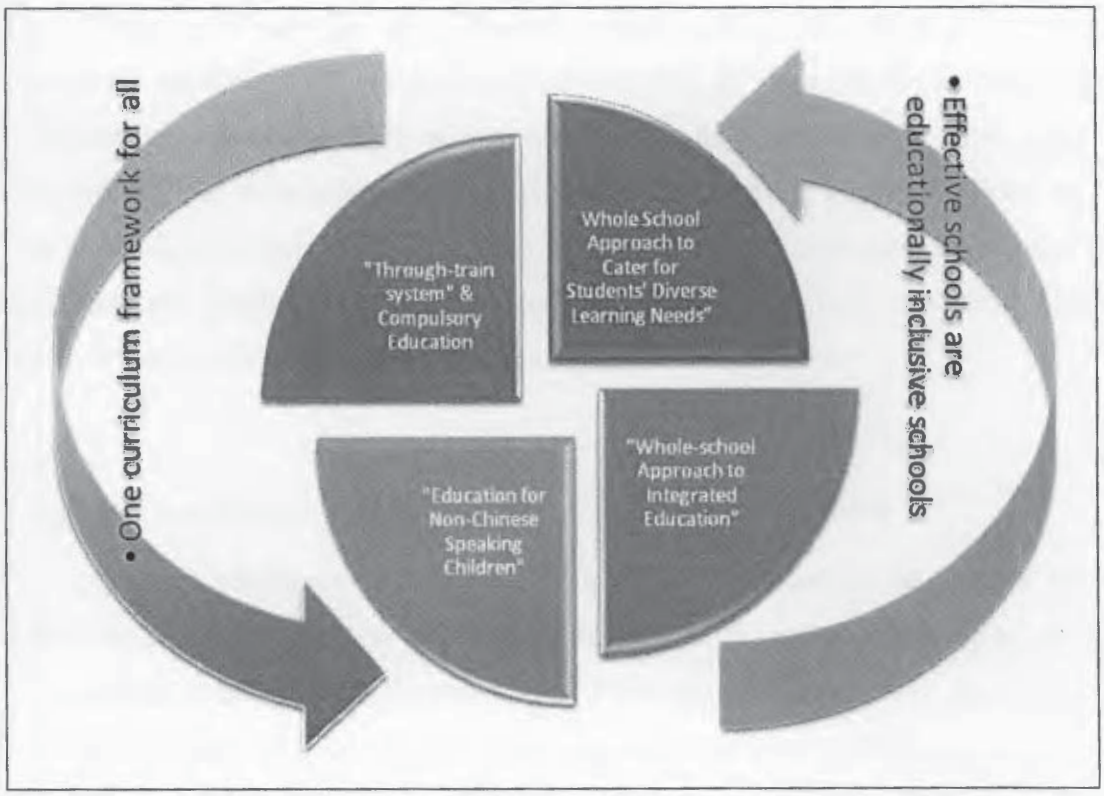

Figure 1.1 Principles underlying policy making to address cultural diversity in Hong Kong

Under the current education system, every school teacher and school student is assumed to be making an effort to build an effective learning environment.

1.3.1 Teachers' Readiness for an Increasingly Diverse Students Population

In a sense, the whole-school approach to an integrated education policy connects with the advocators of multicultural education who claim that a shift in the culture of schools around a multicultural model that embraces diversity is an asset not a liability (Clem and Forestier, 2006; Lam, 2006). The whole-school approach policies imply a change of school culture to ensure equitable outcomes for all students. However, as mentioned, owing to the constraints on local education, e.g. having to serve a large student population and learning being dominated by memorization, the local curriculum serves one dominant culture. In addition, the teachers have inadequate training in multicultural knowledge, so the issue of the ways or directions a school should take to start to be multicultural is still problematic. Some schools began including children with special needs in mainstream classes from 1999. It was reported that the teachers were supportive but apprehensive about how they would cope, for they had to learn to deal with children with a range of extra needs, from students with autism to those who were

hearing-impaired and physically disabled (Gooch, 2007). The teachers were not well prepared psychologically and more overwhelmed by their perceived inadequacy in dealing with students with serious disabilities than by worries about their own performance or the academic achievement of the students or the school. With their lack of experience, knowledge and skills in managing students with diverse learning needs, the prospect of including them in regular classrooms appeared more frightening and their concerns about adequate resources became more pertinent.

1.3.1.1 Insufficient Multicultural Training of Local Teachers

Teacher reluctance was also shown in a local survey of student teachers' knowledge of, attitudes towards and confidence about inclusion (Chong *et al.*, 2007). According to government figures, in the 2006-2007 academic year there were about 10,000 students with special learning needs attending mainstream schools, but only seven per cent of primary teachers and five per cent of secondary teachers at the mainstream schools which accepted children with special needs had received special education training (Forlin, 2007). The vast majority of mainstream teachers have received no relevant training. It is clear that the attitudes of the teachers are influential in determining the outcomes of change, for example, to achieve integrated or multicultural education. It is generally believed that teacher attitudes can change with the right kind of training (Gooch, 2007). The main work needed is to change teachers' attitudes towards students with diverse needs; this was also seen as the key to achieving integrated or multicultural education (Forlin and Hopewell, 2006).

Moreover, the local education system is based on a standardized education policy that primarily serves the dominant culture; this ultimately poses a major obstacle to the development of multicultural education. The teachers' reluctance to implement integrated education has been found to be due to their misunderstandings and confusion regarding the ever-changing education policies. Local teachers are short of training to engage in activities with students with diverse learning needs; they lack the experience to modify the regular class curriculum and differentiate between different needs students to engage all learners (Tong, 2007). Moreover, the implementation of the current policy on diversity in the standardized and exam-oriented education system increases the educators' job stress and hampers students' self-confidence in learning,

especially of low achievers. As a result, principals and teachers question whether they have been given the necessary resources and training to handle the complex situation in the classroom brought about by the policy of integration. Parents also complain about the lack of support both for identifying and supporting students with diverse needs. The Professional Teachers' Union (PTU) had even organized a rally to protest against the government after two teachers had committed suicide and increasing numbers of teachers suffered from depression because of heavy workloads resulting from the vigorous educational reforms (Tong, 2006b). Simultaneously, a recent local survey by the Education Policy Concern Organization (EPCO) and the Association of Hong Kong Student Guidance Professionals (Primary School) found that poor academic performance, heavy workload and intensive training for students to maintain the good reputation of schools, but which neglected the learning needs of the students, are causing distress among the majority of senior primary pupils (Clem, 2006).

1.3.2 Developing Teaching Methodologies and Assessments for Diverse Students

With an increasing number of diverse needs students requiring to be integrated in mainstream classrooms, teachers have to acquire the skills needed for assessing individual needs. Teachers need to adapt their instructional methods and materials to meet the specific needs of all students, recognizing their strengths and weaknesses. Specifically, they need to apply a repertoire of assessment measures which will help them ascertain students' individual needs, coordinate assessment results with appropriate teaching strategies, monitor the success of remedial interventions and modify instructional procedures, as needed. It is suggested that teachers have to equip themselves with the knowledge of evaluative methods that are multi-sensory, individualized, pragmatic and relevant to common practice or real-life situations, specifically activities which have direct meaning and can be incorporated into daily living experiences (Spinelli, 1998).

1.3.3 Standardization Hampers Learning Equity

Local mainstream education which aims at standardization limits schools in their ability to connect learning to their diverse students' needs, which narrows the curriculum and destroys classroom creativity, with the result that the learning gap

between ordinary and diverse students is widened. Similarly, there is a problem between the elite schools and schools with normal standard because the current subject standards are designed in favour of the advantaged (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). For example, the policy of "Education for Non-Chinese Speaking Children" has received a lot of criticism, including by members of the legislature. They criticized the local education authority for having made little progress to develop a Chinese curriculum for second-language learners which addresses the issue that non-Chinese students could only select low-banding schools or schools that are facing closure due to falling enrolments, both of which have lower academic requirements.

On the other hand, there is a policy in place that has students attending a local school, that is, a school in the vicinity of their home, and legislators raised the concern that ethnic minority students' ability to gain equal access to education is hindered by this policy. Since there are only three schools that have traditionally accepted non-Chinese students but which are not evenly distributed around Hong Kong, students often have to travel long distances (Hui, 2006). Moreover, as reported by the director of a local rights group, because of language barriers some ethnic minority students were turned down for further study or failed to find a programme that suited them. As a result, many ethnic minority girls are stuck at home, with no school to go to after completing Form Five, and many of the males end up doing manual work (Yeung, 2007).

Success in the public examination system is generally recognized as a ladder to upward mobility (Hui, 2006); unfortunately, it has also attracted negative comments from the public. This is because the students are mostly trained to participate in public examinations while proper communications skills and language proficiency are ignored in local education. For instance, in a Hong Kong's Future Workforce seminar, the speakers from different international corporations commented that most Hong Kong students lacked confidence and could not articulate their views, and that as many as 95% of local university graduates failed their firms' oral and written tests (Leung, 2003). As a whole, due to prejudice, ignorance and a lack of empathy, many students with special needs are buried in mainstream schools, where they have to sit and learn in a common classroom and wait for assimilation into the mainstream curriculum (Tong, 2007).

1.3.4 Struggles of the Current Education System

Defining the ultimate goal of education is a long-term struggle among government, educators, teachers, learners and other stakeholders. There are different stand-alone policies, i.e. policies without consistency and clear goals for further development to cater for students' diverse educational needs. These policies are designed according to the principle of Hong Kong mainstream education "One curriculum framework for all", which implies a common goal of providing a fair education opportunity to all students. Unfortunately, there is a lack of connection between the policies and most of the teachers are trained to serve the dominant culture. Furthermore, the current general education system appears to focus heavily on training for examination achievements, and so the stakeholders put great emphasis on students' academic learning and tend to ignore the development of the individual (SOCO, 2001a). There is a washback effect in most schools, as their curriculum and the assessment system appear too rigid. All these cause a lot of confusion for the teachers when teaching for diversity in schools.

Fairclough (2001) points out that a framework of one local curriculum for all, or standardized education, creates a struggle around discourse and power, suggesting that standardization helps the establishment of a standard language in society, including the construction of a shared discourse and shared practices. Actually, struggles emerge from those diverse groups who have demanded rights for their own languages or discourses in various institutional spheres, including education (p.61). Local evidence also supports Fairclough's idea of a discourse and power struggle in relation to standardized education. For instance, the Society for Community Organization (SoCO), which is a local non-governmental organization (NGO) providing supporting services for minority and grassroots people, reveals in its study reported in the (Apple Daily, 2005) that family poverty problems are an inter-generational problem and that children's self-image is seriously affected by poverty, resulting in unsuccessful learning experiences or lack of education due to a low academic self-image (HKCSS, 2003b; SOCO, 2001a). As a result, students of diverse backgrounds that are educationally significant will be inclined to stick with the same group or with those who speak the same dialect or behave in a similar pattern and exhibit inappropriate behaviours or a low self-concept (Yuen, 2003). Tension among teachers, students and parents over academic or behavioural standards of students with diverse educational is then intensified (Gilbert and Gay, 1985; Sleeter and Grant, 1986). All of these barriers may result in the students

with diverse needs underachieving, so there is a need for a flexible curriculum and assessments to accommodate children of various backgrounds and abilities (Education Commission, 1999)[3]. Furthermore, it is suggested that students be provided with a comprehensive and diversified learning experience in schools (Sleeter, 2005). All these imply a demand for multicultural education to be provided by the education system.

1.4 Promoting Multicultural Education

The current one-size-fits-all policy arouses dissatisfaction from both the general public and the teachers. Recently, a case has been put for individualism (Bank, 2002a) or "un-standardizing the curriculum" (Sleeter, 2005), which focused on equity and diversity in the curriculum, and argued that students be provided with "un-standardized" knowledge but with high performance standards in learning (Banks, 2002a, 2004a). According to these scholars, schools should try to satisfy the diverse learning needs of students. To achieve this, educators will have to change teaching and learning approaches so that students of both genders and from diverse groups will have equal opportunities to learn in educational institutions. Educational programs must change to be culturally sensitive, which means changes in organization, pedagogies and educational approaches (Law, 2005).

Regarding the situation in Hong Kong, the then Permanent Secretary of the former Education and Manpower Bureau, Ms. Fanny Law, who stepped down from this position in early 2007, gave a speech on "Nurturing the Global Citizen" to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in October, 2005. She stated that it is appropriate for Hong Kong to have an education reform to prepare its younger generation to cope with the challenges of globalization and the knowledge-based economy. She said, "...we [the government] expect students to increase their awareness of issues that affect the human race, sharpen their sensitivity to human plight, and develop a more caring attitude towards the poor and disadvantaged... [to appreciate different] cultures around the world" (Banks, 2004d). To summarise her speech, she argued that the aims of education reform are to help students develop a global outlook and appreciate diversity and

[3] The Education Commission (EC) was the most important advisory body on education; it was set up in February 1984 as a non-statutory body to advise the government on the overall development of educational objectives and policies in light of the community's needs.

cultural differences, and foreshadowed the promotion of multicultural education in Hong Kong.

The current policies of catering for diversity embrace an idea of multicultural education which aims to change teaching and learning approaches so that students from diverse cultural groups will have equal opportunities to learn (EMB and SEKPS, 2002). I have tried to connect the current stand-alone policies of catering for student learning diversity in a "frame" of multicultural education; see Figure 1.2.

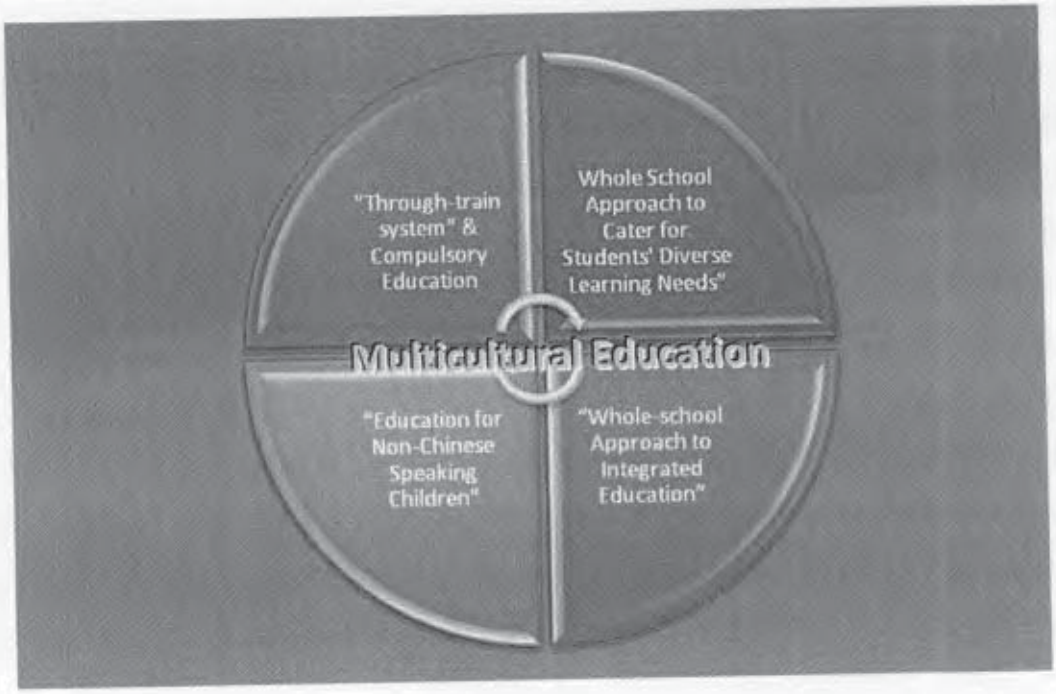

Figure 1.2 Proposed restructuring of current policies to embrace idea of multicultural education

Yet, as stated in the literature of many Western studies, implementing multicultural education is a complex task, involving recommendations that are both needed and efficacious. To initiate change and to sustain its beneficial effects, these are considerable challenges to multicultural education and I will discuss these matters in Chapter 2.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The government has spent considerable resources on the various scattered policies but without a clear direction or roadmap for further development of multicultural education. There has been no independent study of effective practices catering for students with diverse needs. It is expected that the findings from this study will assist

teacher educators in Hong Kong to understand the nature of the present challenges to promote change in the existing school system, for instance, through multicultural education, and indicate positive teaching and learning strategies that could be implemented to overcome the problems being experienced due to student diversity.

Local research into identifying effective teaching practices for multicultural education or teaching students with diverse backgrounds in mainstream schools is lacking. No study has been carried out into what teachers can do to effectively cater for students with diverse learning needs in mainstream schools. Local research into teaching practices in mainstream schools with diversity or multicultural education is lacking. No study has been carried out into what teachers can do to effectively cater for students with diverse educational needs in mainstream schools. Most of the studies of educational problems of students who are not Cantonese have focused on limited areas such as the adaptation of new Chinese immigrants, their general living conditions, provisions made by government or the kinds of services they need (HKSAR, 2005). There are still many gaps in our knowledge that actual observation and documentation of effective teaching practices may illuminate. As the economy of Hong Kong has been undergoing structural changes, shifting to a knowledge-based economy and focusing on high value-added and service-oriented tertiary industry, social class has become an inter-generational problem of student disadvantage and educability (SOCO, 2001a, 2001b). This has meant that new immigrants, people living in poverty, people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups continue to be alienated from mainstream society and keep facing challenges regarding language, ethnicity and transferability of their low qualifications to schools and society at large. Similar to children of recent South Asian and Mainland Chinese immigrants, the students with diverse learning needs mostly belong to lower socio-economic groups. Referring to ecological education perspectives, these children are mainly engaged in solitary activities that limit their social development and their self-esteem might be adversely affected. These children are deprived of having computers and extra-curriculum activities that could facilitate their learning, and they might be more vulnerable to psychological and behavioural problems. All these factors directly affect the education opportunities offered to students who are different from the dominant student population and thus their performance (SOCO, 2001a, 2001b, 2004a, 2004b; Yuen, 2003).

In addition to filling a gap in current research, there are personal and professional reasons for me to undertake this study. From my perspective as a professional teacher-trainer in Hong Kong, the tension between teaching goals and assessment requirements is a serious problem. Although teachers are concerned to try out innovative practices in their teaching in order to enhance students' learning, the results are discouraging. Similar to some other teacher education programs elsewhere, teachers are trained to work effectively with one socioeconomic group and one dominant culture. Teachers are then unprepared to acknowledge the cultural differences and educational inequalities that schools often perpetuate. Some teachers find it difficult to understand that students with diverse learning needs have the potential to be successful; they often are not given the opportunity to develop their academic and social skills. All of these barriers may result in those students' underachievement.

In sum, regardless of the existing policies, school is a place of social construction (Brown, 2004). I hold the belief that a school plays a prominent role in structuring its own practices to cater for students with diverse needs, and so a school could be a test-bed for promoting multicultural education in Hong Kong. The need to prepare future teachers to work well with an increasingly diverse student population has led me to investigate what multicultural education practices will actually be developed in local mainstream curricula, and to identify exemplary practices for teachers' future participation in our heterogeneous world.

1.5.1 What Multicultural Education Means in this Study

As I have outlined in the previous paragraphs, government policies focus on two major areas of multicultural education, ethnic inclusion and special education. To address the student learning problems found in these two major areas, the government devised the two whole-school approach policies to cater for learner diversity. The whole-school approach policies imply a change of school culture to ensure equitable outcomes for all students. However, as mentioned, these government policies are to serve a large student population in the schools that are adopting standardized education, and eventually the current policies will not help much in the development of multicultural education. The government strongly advises schools to make flexible use of existing resources, and encourages them to formulate policies and measures based on

the whole-school approach to cater for students' diverse learning needs in a more effective manner (EDB, 2007v). Referring to the above government advice, my study investigates how a mainstream school promotes learning equity in the local school context.

I would like to repeat that, strictly speaking, the Hong Kong education system does not have a concrete definition of any of the following terms: "multicultural education", "special education", "integrated education", "catering for diversity" or "catering for students' diverse learning needs". In addition, in a study of a local primary school which participated in the policy of "Whole School Approach to Cater for Students' Diverse Learning Needs", I could see that this school used the term "multicultural education" to refer to its inclusion of South Asian students with the local Chinese students (including those students with SEN) in the school. The words "multicultural education", "special needs", "special learning needs", "students' diversity", "diverse needs" or "diverse educational needs" seem to be used interchangeably. In sum, as these terms are used very loosely in the Hong Kong education system, I use the terms "multicultural education", "diversity", "diverse needs", "disadvantaged" or "cultural diversity" throughout the thesis as terms to encompass all kinds of difference discussed in this thesis.

1.5.2 Multicultural Education at the Research Site

This case study specifically focuses on a special project that sought to implement multicultural education to improve equitable learning opportunities. The research site, St. John's Primary School (pseudonym, St. John's for short), is a government funded mainstream Catholic primary school in the Western district of Hong Kong. It is an educationally inclusive school, based on the government's advocating the idea that "*Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools*" under its special education policy (EDB, 2007u). St. John's claims to be on of these "effective schools". The students of St. John's have numerous problems associated with student diversity, such as low self-image, emotional disorders and academic underachievement as a result of having a physical or mental disability, being the child of a single parent, living in poverty, belonging to an ethnic minority, religious and gender difference, and so on. Together with a strong school vision to maximize individual students' potential for

excellence, St. John's launched a joint school project to cultivate in the students the idea of equity and respect for diversity, in school and also in society. This special project was to work collaboratively with a school for the visually impaired, the Edith's School (pseudonym, Edith's for short). Edith's is also a government funded Christian school and it caters for visually impaired students. It aims to provide comprehensive educational and rehabilitation services for visually impaired students to enable them to fully develop their potential and be able to participate in and contribute to society with confidence and independence. Including the school principal, Edith's has 36 teaching staff, all of whom have had formal training in special education. Edith's operates six classes, three secondary and three primary, with a total of 54 students, aged between 6 and 18 years of age. With the growing demand for inclusive education, Edith's began to integrate blind and low-vision primary and secondary students in mainstream schools in 1970. At that stage, the visually impaired students normally studied at Edith's but would also attend one to two school days at mainstream schools.

St. John's has two major, concurrent, school development focuses to promote civic responsibilities and value education of the students. By promoting the ME Project at St. John's, the school aligned itself with the major school development focuses. The head of the school believes that its students would learn to be positive and affective after they had worked with the visually impaired students. Further, the supervisor[4] believes that multicultural education is the best way to eliminate social exclusion, and that by collaborating with a special school the teachers would learn skills to manage and accept students with disabilities and other SENs in common classrooms. Once the outcome of the project is well received by students and teachers, the supervisor hopes that the teachers will be ready for further changes at the school and reforms in the future.

For the above reasons, St. John's had the idea that their special project was a scheme to promote multicultural education, in which a group of mainstream school students (about 69 students in total) with a variety of problems caused by their diversity started learning with a group of visually impaired students (about 37 students in total) from Edith's.

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[4] In Hong Kong, a supervisor is a director of the school who is appointed by the school board or sponsoring body. On behalf of the school sponsoring body, the supervisor takes a managerial role to provide leadership and collaborative directions to the school staff. In addition, the supervisor has the power to recommend a person selected by the selection committee to the government as the principal of the school.

The ME Project of this study was aiming to offer equitable learning opportunities and extra support to the students with diverse learning needs under the mainstream curriculum. Several activities were organized collaboratively by the two schools to facilitate equitable learning and positive social interaction among students. This joint school project aimed to recognize and respect the presence of all diverse groups in the schools. Of utmost importance is that the school leaders of St. John's believe that every student can learn and excel if he/she is helped to develop the potential or multiple intelligence. This belief and respect for individual differences are the essential driving force of the ME project. The term multicultural education was adopted by the schools to refer to socio-cultural differences or differences in ability between the students, and to encourage and enable all students to continue making contributions within society. Detailed information about St. John's will be presented in Chapter 5.

1.5.3 Delimitations of the Study

The study reported here is self-funded research conducted at one school, adopting a case study design. Its aim was not to arrive at generalizable conclusions. However, it should be noted that despite this seeming limitation, a single-case study may be used to confirm or challenge a theory, or to represent a unique or extreme case (Yin, 2003, 2009). Single-case studies are also ideal for revelatory cases where an observer may have access to a phenomenon that was previously inaccessible (Tellis, 1997). Qualitative research is not done for the purpose of arriving at generalizations but rather to produce evidence based on the exploration of specific contexts and particular individuals. It is expected that readers may see similarities to their own situations and judge the relevance of the information produced to their own circumstances and/or to further their own interests. In this study, the findings capture the perspectives of the people involved and these add to our understanding of discourses that shape social life in schools and society. I make no claims that I can create universal and essential knowledge for policy-making or offer universal prescriptions for practice. Instead, the findings of this study describe a school's attempts to be multicultural and to show how the results can inform policymakers and education practitioners.

1.6 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have introduced the current government policies of standardized education that serve the maintenance and reproduction of the dominant culture of Hong Kong in schools. These policies ignore the development of multicultural education although there are also policies in place that are meant to cater for learning diversity. In this study, I do not investigate the possibility of developing multicultural education at the policy level; however, I wanted to study how a local primary mainstream school promoted multicultural education as its own school-based special project. Further, to this end I adopted a constructivist perspective in the investigation of how a mainstream primary school puts multicultural education into practice.

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 is a brief introductory chapter providing the background and the basic principles of education policy-making and implementation in Hong Kong. It shows that the current whole-school approach policies of catering for students' diverse needs can be seen as a prototype of multicultural education as they encourage the school to provide an equal learning environment for students with diverse needs. In the same chapter, the rationale and significance of the present study are explained. Chapter 2 provides a review of the local and international literature. In addition, some of the conceptual issues of previous studies are examined. Chapter 3 presents a synthesis of major theoretical positions that serve as the conceptual framework for the present study. This framework is a combination of four key principles and attempts to explain the similarities in contemporary views of multicultural educators and local policies. Chapter 4 presents the justifications for and descriptions of the research methodology, while Chapter 5 presents a detailed account of the study design and process. Chapters 6 and 7 present a discussion of the qualitative findings, organized and examined as an observational case study, and the results of the data analysis. These discussion chapters also report the possible strategies for multicultural education in a mainstream school by revisiting the theoretical framework so as to examine whether the local ME Project of St. John's provided desirable conditions for multicultural education. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the study with highlights of the practice of multicultural education as well as policy recommendations.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

In Chapter 1, Hong Kong's increasingly diverse student population and the lack of a systematic policy to cater for them were discussed, implying a greater need to promote multicultural education. Though there are whole-school approach policies catering for learner differences, the current Hong Kong education system neglects preparing teachers for promoting equity in education. It has been found that a person's outlook, appearance, language style, performance, learning ability and classroom behaviours will influence a teacher's judgment of a student's school achievement with reference to the dominant norm (Banks, 2004d). Moreover, since most of the teachers (in Hong Kong at least) are trained for one dominant culture, it is not unusual to find that teachers often have difficulties handling students from a different culture or with diverse learning needs in schools.

Chapter 1 outlined the different policies that play a key role in catering for students' diverse educational needs. These policies are designed with reference to the principle of Hong Kong mainstream education "one curriculum framework for all", meaning that teachers and students should be aware of student diverse educational needs. Furthermore, there is a common goal to provide educational opportunities to all students by means of catering for their diverse learning needs, but the current policies are designed to run in different directions. As well as there being no connection among these policies, the teachers are trained for the dominant culture, so when these policies are implemented in schools, they cause a lot of confusion and ambivalence among the teachers, who are at the front-line of teaching. Thus, although an idea of "one curriculum framework for all" prevails in the Hong Kong education system, there seems to be a shortage of recommendations as to how to improve our schools to deal with the idea of education for all.

Furthermore, the current policies of catering for diversity embrace the idea of promoting multicultural education, which aims to change teaching and learning approaches so that students from diverse cultural groups will have equal opportunities to learn (Banks, 2006) (see Figure 1.1, Chapter 1). Due to this increasing diversity that is taking place in our society and schools, school teachers play a central role in initiating and infusing multicultural concepts and ideas into school cultures because teachers help create a cultural climate for the school (Freilich, 1989). Yet, as will be shown in the

next section in a discussion of culture, "culture" implies values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are socially constructed by affiliations of different groups and discourse communities. Hence, implementing multicultural education is a complex task, that is, it is challenging to motivate school staff to select recommendations that are both needed and efficacious, to initiate change and to sustain its beneficial effects.

This chapter is organised as follows: Firstly, an overview of the notion of culture is presented. In this study, the term "culture" is a comprehensive term to encompass all kinds of difference, yet it also refers to a diverse pool of shared understandings and clustered norms that constitute the learned systems of meanings, that means patterns of behaviour that are shared by a group of people and transmitted from one generation to the next in a particular society. Within these learned systems, meanings are shared and transmitted through daily discourses and interactions among members of the cultural group and from one generation to the next. Culture also facilitates the capacity of members to survive and adapt to their external environment. Though differences of ethnicity are not so marked in local mainstream schools, there is still a diversity of students, in terms of age, gender, abilities, academic performance, and socio-economic background of the students – and all these form cultural differences in schools. Secondly, the philosophical approaches of several prominent advocates of multicultural education are discussed. Finally, an examination of a holistic organizational change of the school teaching and learning practices in the development of multicultural education will be provided. At the end of this chapter, through a review of some critical issues that teachers may encounter in multicultural education, it is found that a critical / transformative approach which argues that an organizational change of school system is essential to overcome these obstacles or challenges. This information regarding multicultural education reviewed from a range of multicultural education and catering for diversity studies provides the grounding of the theoretical framework of this study, which will be outlined in Chapter 3. Overall, the current chapter, through a review of a variety of multicultural studies, seeks to illustrate how multicultural education strategies are socially constructed and enacted by teachers in an ordinary school setting.

2.1 Culture

In this section, the concept of diversity is presented as natural to every society including schools. However, the outcome of diversity is complex depending on the ways we choose to deal with it, i.e. either to refuse or to manage diversity, and that may either result in inclusion or alienation of students from diverse groups. In order to elucidate this idea, I start by introducing the concept of culture. After this, I will explain how multiculturalism entails diverse values of multiple cultures the may bring about power and struggle among cultures. In this section, I will show that apart from racial composition, the term culture has various implications and meanings. Furthermore, multicultural education is a way to teach people the valuing of diversity in schools and approaches to educational equity.

2.1.1 Definitions

The term "culture" originates from the Latin word "cultura" or "culturus" as in "agricultura", the cultivation of soil. Other meanings were attached to the word later, and culture became transformed into a condition, a state of being cultivated (Garibaldi, 1991). Culture is not limited to racial composition, as Aragon (1973) points out, explicating that culture may not only denote ethnicity or gender but also the social class of a group of people. According to Aragon (1973), culture encompasses five areas: value and beliefs; communication; social relationships; basic diet and food preparation; common customs and dress. Garibaldi (1991) has similar views, observing that changing family composition, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion and the varied abilities of children also have an effect on society's expectation of what should be included in the school experience (D'Andrade, 1984).

D'Andrade (1984) defines culture as learned systems of meaning, communicated by means of nature, language and other symbol systems; culture provides capabilities of creating cultural entities and particular senses of ownership. Through these systems of meaning, groups of people adapt to their environments and structure interpersonal activities. Cultural meaning systems can be treated as a very large diverse pool of knowledge, or partially shared cluster of norms, or as inter-subjectively shared, symbolically created realities (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.10). Ting-Toomey (1999) defines culture as a complex frame of reference that consists of patterns or traditions, beliefs,

values, norms and meanings that are shared in varying degrees by interacting members of a community (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003; Joshi *et al.*, 2005).

Instead of the definitions of culture becoming broader, the meanings of culture have deepened over time. Gutierrez and Rogoff's (2003) definition of culture as a dynamic, situational and historic construct stresses that a person's culture is not solely influenced by their ethnicity or race, but rather by a number of additional variables as well, that is, historical context, geographic location, gender, generation, age, religion, group membership and level of education (Gutierrez and Rogoff, 2003). There is also an iceberg analogy found in the literature to describe culture (Nasir and Hand, 2006; Suarez-Orozco, 2004), which says that above the surface of the iceberg are cultural artefacts, such as slang, music, fashion and art. However, what is beneath the surface is termed "invisible culture" or "deep culture", with deep culture including traditions, beliefs, values, norms, cultural behaviours, symbolic meanings and others such as friendships, relationships, roles, jokes, etc. So, human acts, beliefs, rituals and so on are influenced by a set of fundamental conceptions shared by a group, also known as cultural values or cultural norms (Ford *et al.*, 2005, p.98).

In recent years, a more social, dynamic perspective and the concept of identity have been applied to the definition of culture. Culture is said to provide a mechanism for understanding socially shared and constructed experiences; it is said to influence how people act or think; it is said to be about behaviours, attitudes, values and beliefs and how these show themselves in the way people act (Nasir and Hand, 2006). Culture is further seen as a social process that is always in development and that finds meaning in social relationships and practices (Killoran, 2004; Nasir and Saxe, 2003). Nasir and Hand (2006) employ a socio-cultural definition to elaborate the meaning of culture, saying that "culture is both carried by individuals and created in the moment-to-moment interactions with one another as they participate in (and reconstruct) cultural practices" (p.458). From this practice-based perspective, socially patterned activities influenced by community norms and values are important contexts through which identity is enacted (Rogers *et al.*, 2007). This perspective allows us to examine the fluidity of culture and the tensions between and within groups; it also implies that cultural belief can be co-constructed. On the ground that culture is constructed in a dynamic process, Rogers (2007) brings out two issues that relate to culture awareness in school education, namely, (a) teaching and learning expectations, and (b) differences in the use of

language and symbols (Rogers *et al.*, 2007). Rogers (2007) explains that perceptions about teaching and learning are influenced deeply by culture, that is, culture can influence a teacher's expectations of a learner and vice versa, for example, at schools cultural expectations concerning the teacher-student relationship and roles, such as varying needs for face-to-face interaction and types of activities for students to engage in. All these instances require the teachers and students to become aware and sensitive to cultural difference.

Secondly, language structures can actually influence the way in which people think and symbols are used and interpreted differently in different cultures. As one of the most complex and meaningful symbolic systems, language takes a prominent role in people's thinking, and understanding differences in language and symbols as important (Clark and Flores, 2007).

To sum up the above definitions of culture, four points are worth noting. First, culture refers to a diverse pool of knowledge, shared realities and clustered norms that constitute the learned systems of meanings in a particular society. Second, these learned systems of meanings are shared and transmitted through daily interactions between members of a cultural group and from one generation to the next. Third, culture facilitates the capacity of group members to survive and adapt to their external environment (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.9). Last but not least, education is an important channel for building up teachers' and students' cultural awareness.

2.1.2 Culture and Possibilities of Change

It is important to understand the functions of culture. On the one hand, culture provides a frame of reference, for example, cultural beliefs, norms and values, for each person's identity (Ting-Toomey, 1999). On the other hand, language use over time construes cultural differences between groups of individuals. By cultural differences I mean the differences in social or cultural beliefs that are shared and internalized by members of a particular social group culture versus those held by another group, reflecting a sense of exclusivity relative to other groups that have different beliefs and engage in different discourses. This explains how the idea of cultural differences naturally means exclusion for other cultures, which in turn creates a concept of social class or social group. Language and discourse are fundamental components of culture.

Kramsch (1998), discussing the relationship of language and culture, cites three ways in which they are connected. First, language expresses culture, that is, people use language to refer to common experiences and ideas that can be communicated to those who speak the same language and share a similar cultural background. Second, language embodies culture, making language an influential medium in the process of cultural change. Language can be in the form of a casual conversation, a business-like email, a telephone call to a parent, an official school memorandum – each of these is a cultural activity created through the medium of language. Rosemary and Gilberto (2006) argue that language is a medium for mobilizing culture change. In other words, language does not simply reflect or express what is already there in terms of cultural categories. For example, teachers and school administrators as speakers also create new words, new relationships, new meanings and new patterns for changes through language (Fullan, 1993; Rosemary and Gilberto, 2006). Third, language symbolizes culture, with (social) dialects representing social identities. That is why conflicts arise over the use of different languages or dialects, for example, when one group prohibits another from using its native language (Rosemary and Gilberto, 2006).

Obviously, language and discourse play significant roles in the process of changing school culture, which entails the actual beliefs and behaviours of individuals and groups being challenged and transformed (Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz, 1982; Quinn and Holland, 1987), for instance, changing structures and addressing practices related to both the content and the delivery of curriculum and the ways teachers and administrators work. The processes of conceiving, developing and implementing educational reforms are all phases of a social process materialized and negotiated through language (Banks, 2006; Fairclough, 1999; Sleeter and Grant, 2007). Rosemary and Gilberto (2006) assert that teachers accomplish much of their work through discourse, both spoken and written. For example, they use discourses to negotiate reforms, develop and implement policies, address conflicts or promote a particular school vision. In Rosemary and Gilberto's (2006) words, discourse mirrors teachers' practices (p.164).

Fairclough (2001) further points out that discourse may simultaneously be a part of struggles; since members of a discourse community have established their knowledge of language, representations of the social worlds they inhabit through values and beliefs, a mishandling of cultural matters may bring about issues of power and struggle in society

(p.20-21). Educational studies have demonstrated that struggles over power and discourses are commonplace; for example, one study reported that low socio-economic family background status was "negatively associated" with students' academic unpreparedness (Warburton *et al.*, 2001, p.6). Another study showed that students from low-income families and of traditional minority status are destined to be disadvantaged; when attending schools, these students face multiple problems that may not confront middle class students (York-Anderson and Bowman, 1992). All in all, the studies of York-Anderson and Bowman (1992) and Warburton (2001) have demonstrated that culture constructs relationships; relationships entail values, affect or feelings in discourse; and discourse also entails power as well as values and struggles (Fairclough, 1992, 1993; Gee, 2005).

As mentioned above, members of a given discourse community deploy a certain language that is unique to them to shape actions, and discourses bring about cultural differences. Sometimes, our ignorance of different traditions, beliefs, values and norms can produce unintentional clashes among people or groups with different traditions, beliefs, values and norms or rules (Ford *et al.*, 2005). An example demonstrating the struggle between discourses and norms is provided by the fact that many school boards have adopted inclusive mission statements or have written equity statements, yet instructional practices, textbooks for use, and assignment or examination settings are in favour of the dominant groups. Discourses in the classroom cheat and damage diverse learning needs (Kramsch, 1998). The educational situation becomes ever more complicated due to modern societies becoming increasingly socially diverse societies. People need education about a range of resources for living within socially and culturally diverse societies and for avoiding exclusion, discrimination or racism, and so education has a role in promoting a critical awareness of discourse to learners (Fairclough, 1999, p.77).

To summarize the literature on cultural change in discourse communities such as schools, all educational leaders and teachers express and construct the culture of the educational setting through language. Schools are discourse communities which involve members from a variety of cultural backgrounds, beliefs and actions, and they are thus potentially constructed or built up around prejudice, serving to normalise the values of dominant society as well as leading to patterns of inclusion and exclusion.

Thus, in this thesis I use the term "culture" to refer to values, beliefs, attitudes and behaviours that are socially constructed by gathering of different groups and discourse communities. Social values are constructed through discourses, and these values may serve as a framework of inclusion and exclusion of other discourse communities. Hence, it is believed that multicultural education is a way to increase cultural awareness and could serve as a channel to achieve equity of education (HKCSS, 1996, 2003a; Ng, 2006; SOCO, 2001a, 2004b; Tong, 2006a). For this reason, I will go on to explain multicultural education in the following section.

2.2 Multicultural Education

As discussed in Chapter 1, the cries for promoting multiculturalism and equity for Hong Kong's increasingly diverse population have emerged for two major reasons (Sleeter, 1992; Wax, 1993). First of all, as stated in Chapter 1, the basic principle of local mainstream education is "One education for all". In reality, the size and complex composition of most classes has created the problem of how to meet students' diverse learning needs in local mainstream education. Secondly, the local teachers are mainly trained to teach ordinary students; they are without the skills and knowledge to teach students with diverse learning needs. The current policies of catering for diversity are inadequate because the mainstream curriculum is designed to deal with students with a common point of entry, and this entry point of knowledge and skill levels is set to reflect the dominant culture of Hong Kong (HKSAR, 2005).

Thirdly, new immigrants, people living in poverty, people with disabilities and others continue to face many challenges regarding language, ethnicity and transferability of their low qualifications in school and society. These groups of people are more likely than others to be alienated from mainstream society and to experience inter-generational poverty, isolation, depression, domestic violence and substance abuse (SOCO, 2001a). As a consequence, their children may seldom have a social life during school days and weekends, or participate in extracurricular activities held by school or community centres, and so are mainly engaged in solitary activities that are likely to limit their social development and negatively affect their self-esteem (Banks and Banks, 2004a; Nieto, 2004a).

As mentioned above, cultural difference is socially constructed and the students with diverse learning needs or differing potentials, or who are far below the normal academic standard, are mostly misconceived as "disadvantaged" or "low achievers"; unfortunately, teachers do not acknowledge their misjudgements to their students. In order to help achieve education for all, multicultural education should be seen as a possible way to provide teachers and students with adequate knowledge to care about people and social issues, and eventually act to achieve equity in society (Banks, 1992, p.7).

2.2.1 Basic Definitions of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is understood variously as a concept, an educational philosophy (Banks, 2006; Shade and New, 1993), a pedagogical process (Banks, 2004b; Nieto, 2004b; Sleeter and Grant, 2007), and an educational reform movement (Li, 2007). Li (2007) states that multicultural education addresses real-world and controversial problems, such as racism, poverty, prejudices, educational equality and equity, and teachers are required to have the critical reflective skills needed to examine curriculum to accommodate the needs of students (Gorski, 2006). Multicultural education could then be defined as a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings and discriminatory practices in education. In addition, multicultural education is grounded in ideals of social justice, educational equity and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners. In the following section, I will employ a critical perspective to scrutinize different approaches of multicultural education, arguing that, through employing a critical or transformative approach to multicultural education, schools are able to lay the foundation for a transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice (Edelstein, 2005).

2.3 Philosophical Approaches to Multicultural Education

A goal of this study is to present possible strategies for teachers that support the development of multicultural education in local schools. To do this, a spectrum of possible starting points for teachers and students is needed. Firstly, I believe that to

enable teachers to be effective in diverse classrooms, teaching has to be culturally sensitive. Secondly, if educational equity and opportunities to excel are to be provided to all students, a systemic total school environment (Banks, 2002a) has to be involved, that is, one where there is developmental transformative learning taking place that permeates every aspect of the schooling enterprise. (The term "total school" is more or less equivalent to the term "whole-school" also used in this thesis). While multicultural education connotes a commitment to social change (Jenks *et al.*, 2001; McLaren, 1997; Webster, 1997), the literature on multicultural education generally divides into different theoretical approaches to achieving multicultural education (Kozol, 1991). In this section, with reference to the work by Sleeter and Grant (2003, 2007), and Banks (2002b), I present two of the major philosophical approaches to multicultural education: the conservative approach and the critical/transformative approach. As there is a variety of definitions of multicultural education, a baseline to distinguish different approaches to multicultural education is needed, which also implies a specific view of multiculturalism. I will here adopt the critical approach. At the end of this section, the critical approach to multicultural education will be shown to provide educators with a more structural and comprehensive understanding for the development of multicultural education.

2.3.1 Conservative Approach to Multicultural Education

Critical multiculturalists consider conservative multiculturalists as favouring an ideology of cultural homogeneity and ignoring the importance of difference. Conservative multiculturalists assume assimilatory, educational processes in which differences are expected to largely melt away (Sleeter and Grant, 2007). Schools taking a conservative approach to education are considered to seek to assimilate students into the mainstream culture with its sets of values, mores and norms. Policies rooted in the conservative approach to multicultural education frequently use language as "success for all", "inclusion", "empowerment" and "equity" (Jenks *et al.*, 2001). Sleeter and Grant (2003, 2007) suggest the label "culturally different" for the conservative approach to multicultural education, in which the teacher's job is to bridge the "gaps" that exist between mainstream culture and that of the "culturally different" through remedial education. They claim that social mobility leading to equality comes from assimilation. In the multicultural curriculum and pedagogy models of Banks (2002b), conservative

multiculturalists often recognize cultural, racial and social differences in the context of their "contributions" to the society. The contributions approach (Banks, 2002b) to multicultural education emphasizes what diverse groups have contributed to society; it attempts to sensitize the mainstream culture to some understanding of diverse groups' backgrounds but without an accompanying active change agenda. In the terminology of Jenks *et al.* (2001), the contribution or conservative approach to multicultural education is a kind of "cosmetic" multiculturalism (Jenks *et al.*, 2001, p.96).

In short, the conservative approach to multicultural education includes a commitment to the same academic standards for all students and the belief that cultural differences need not play a significant role in their achievement. It asks the question, "How do we standardize the curriculum so as to give opportunities to all to compete openly for goods and services?". In other words, the conservative multiculturalists believe in rapid assimilation of students into the mainstream culture but they do not care much about the issues of educational equity and do not take any practical action to prepare the minority group for the mainstream culture.

2.3.2 Critical Approach to Multicultural Education

Critical multiculturalists, such as Banks (2002b) and Sleeter and Grant (2003b; 2007) believe that schools impose standards on students that reinforce the power relationships and social stratification of their society. Curriculum policy is usually committed to the dominant values that deny to the powerless and disenfranchised equal access to knowledge. When those in power determine educational policy, standardization will be the result. Critical multiculturalists believe that issues of equity and excellence cannot be effectively addressed without posing difficult but essential questions: Under what conditions and by whom are concepts of equity and excellence constructed? What do they look like for different groups and in different circumstances? Can all groups benefit equally from a particular construction of these concepts? (Jenks *et al.*, 2001) In short, the critical approach to multicultural education seeks justice by focusing on the relationship between equity and excellence.

Sleeter and Grant's approach is named "Social Re-constructionist" (Sleeter and Grant, 2003b), later renamed "Multicultural Social Justice Education" (Sleeter and Grant, 2007). Their approach is rooted in empowering young people to make social

changes and strive for equity (Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.iv). At school, the Multicultural Social Justice Education approach directly challenges students to become social reformers and commit to the reconstruction of society through the redistribution of power and other resources (Sleeter, 1992). In practice, the curriculum organizes content around social issues; uses students' life experiences as a starting point for analyzing oppression; teaches social action skills; and promotes cultural pluralism and alternative life styles (Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.185).

On the other hand, unlike the conservative approach that simply adds some remedial elements to the curriculum, Banks's (2002b) transformative approach to multicultural education requires that the internal structure of the curriculum be changed to incorporate the fabric of diverse groups. Furthermore, Banks (2002b) proposes the Social Action approach to multicultural education, which is an extension of the transformative approach, not merely studying the issues through a restructured curriculum. The Social Action approach calls for student action to deal with injustice and inequity, for instance, students carry out action projects and suggest ways in which change can be initiated.

In short, both the Multicultural Social Justice Education (Sleeter and Grant, 2007) and the transformative or Social Action approaches (Banks, 2002b) to multicultural education endorse education to develop a critical consciousness in learning and teaching. These are included in a critical approach to multicultural education because they focus on how groups can change structures. A critical approach to multicultural education implies a holistic organizational change of schools, and it may involve reforms of the entire education process, and a focus on social critique and democratic citizen participation (Jenks *et al.*, 2001, Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.iv).

2.3.3 Critical Reflection

To summarize, the conservative approach and the critical/ transformative approach are the two major philosophical approaches to multicultural education. In other words, the level of these philosophical approaches is defined as ranging from "an assimilation to" (conservative approach) to "a transformation of" (critical / transformative approach) the dominant culture by means of education. In addition, it is worth noting that in order to reduce social stratification and promote equity, an organizational change of schools

or society is critical for implementing the transformative approach to multicultural education.

I would now like to reflect critically on the Hong Kong education system with reference to these two multicultural philosophical approaches. Broadly speaking, the Hong Kong education system seeks to accommodate the call for diversity policies by aiming to fully develop the potential of students with diverse learning needs in mainstream education schools (EDB, 2007x). This would align the policy of the Hong Kong education system with Sleeter and Grant's (2003c; 2007) "Conservative Culturally Different Approach". For example, as stated in Chapter 1, the Hong Kong government currently sends a number of students with diverse learning needs to one of a number of mainstream schools that are participating in the Integrated Education Scheme (Banks, 2002a). These students will study in a common classroom, and learn and attend examinations as ordinary students. At the same time, the idea of a local implementation of diversity policies is similar to Banks's contribution approach as its goal is to produce a "melting-pot" view of culture or a homogeneous culture in education (Pallas *et al.*, 1989). The Hong Kong policies intended to cater for diversity (EDB, 2007u, 2007x) are in fact examples of the conservative approach to multicultural education, adopted in an attempt to sensitize mainstream culture. However, I maintain that when educational practitioners are urging a comprehensive multicultural education, they have in mind the need for a critical awareness of the role of discourse in current educational practices and for a transformative change of the structure of education in Hong Kong.

2.4 Multicultural Education for the Diversity of Learners and Learning

An understanding of different philosophical approaches to multicultural education has been presented above. No matter what the multicultural education approach is, all such approaches have a common position, that is, to emphasize the acceptance and celebration of difference. Hence, multicultural education aims to provide learning opportunities to students with diverse needs and to help them realize their full potential. Besides, growing cultural diversity in local schools makes it incumbent on educators to have a better understanding of diverging values and behaviours among all learners with

different experiences. Unfortunately, many teachers distinguish students' learning difficulties on the basis of students' behaviours differing from the norms of the dominant culture (Sleeter and Grant, 2003a). A cultural deprivation model is commonly employed by most teachers which leads them to assume that students from disadvantaged groups lack learning incentives and do not want to work or improve their educational status. Under this model, students who have been exposed to inappropriate educational experiences will be easily referred as "exceptional", "disadvantaged", "socially deprived", "of low socioeconomic status" or "culturally deficient" (Hallahan and Kauffman, 2003). The concept of "learner diversities", usually defining learners as having at least one kind of difficulty, for example, an emotional problem, physical impairment, intellectual disorder, poverty, socio-economic status that is notably different from the general student population, family problem, health problem, language use, race, etc., has gained increasing attention in the local education system. All these labels specify a "condition" of learners who are less privileged in accessing education due to differences in culture.

In the 21st century there has been an increasing understanding of multicultural education and the need to adopt a critical/ transformative approach to create harmonious, integrated and cooperative learning organizations through social action (Nieto and Bode, 2008). Bruch *et al.* (2004) claim that multicultural education concerns best practices for schooling in a democratic society because it seeks to enable all citizens to contribute to the kinds of self transformation that make democracies thrive (Banks, 2002a). In order to reveal the target of multicultural education work out in real life, in other words, to achieve the aim of multicultural education to perform the art of managing diversity as an inclusive process in a society, requires organizational change and no student should be left out (Banks and Banks, 2004b). It is an important operational issue that has to be addressed, with multiculturalists such as Banks (2002b), Sleeter and Grant (2003a, 2007) and Nieto (2004b, 2008) presenting arguments for a holistic organizational change of school. Below, I put forth a holistic approach to multicultural education that calls for an organizational change of schools to managing and accepting learner diversity. The studies of Banks (1996, 2002a), Nieto (2004a) and Sleeter and Grant (2003a, 2007) will be introduced, and it will become clear from their studies that under the critical / transformative approach, multicultural education is a vehicle to move education towards enhancing equitable opportunities.

2.4.1 A Holistic Organizational Change to Multicultural Education

As discussed above, Banks (1996, 2002a) urges an empowering total school culture, and Sleeter and Grant (2007) offer a Multicultural Social Justice Education approach to multicultural education. Other critical multiculturalists, such as Nieto and colleagues (Nieto, (2004b; Nieto and Bode, 2008), advise affirming diversity through multicultural curriculum reforms. Here, we notice that the critical multiculturalists hold similar positions in that they urge the adoption of holistic organizational change in multicultural education to promote education for all. Further, they are also inclined to a constructivist process to develop multicultural education as a form of social action. In the following sections, I will outline a "constructivist process" (Nieto, (2004a) of organizational change within multicultural schools that are addressed in the work of Banks (1996, 1997), Nieto (2004a) and Sleeter (1992).

2.4.1.1 Sleeter and Grant's Model of Multicultural Education

Sleeter (1992) found that within a school structure, teachers work in isolation and are given little planning time, so she highlights the need for change of the entire school structure to create time and opportunities for teachers to meet and discuss how to make education more multicultural for their students. Sleeter and Grant (2003b; 2007) present five similar approaches to Banks (1996, 2002a, 2004d) in relation to teaching about diversity: Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different, Human Relations, Single-group Studies, Multicultural Education, and Multicultural Social Justice Education (2007) or Social Re-construction (2003b).

Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different occurs when teachers relate the curriculum to the experiences of their students. However, the primary focus is on teaching basic skills and fitting the students into the cultural mainstream. In the *Human Relations* approach, the curriculum is adapted to include discussion of general similarities and differences among the various groups, with the focus on building tolerance and harmony between groups. The *Single-Group Studies* approach to multicultural education is characterized by attention to a single group. It also endorses education to develop a critical consciousness about students' diverse needs. The main idea of the Single-Group Studies approach is to empower oppressed groups and develop allies (Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.111). In classroom teaching that follows the Single-

Group Studies approach, the speakers from different groups would be invited to address the class to "tell their story", and while important distinctions are made between groups, superficial similarities are put aside in favour of significant distinctions. The *Multicultural Education* approach is an expression of cultural pluralism that promotes equal opportunity through balancing diverse cultures within society and school (Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.152). In practice, the curriculum organizes concepts around the contributions and perspectives of several groups, teaches critical thinking and analyses diverse viewpoints (Sleeter and Grant, 2007).

The *Multicultural Social Justice Education* approach, which is rooted in social reconstructivism, calls for attention to equity issues and empowering young people to make social changes through teaching social action skills (Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.iv). In practice, this approach includes transforming the curriculum and adding critical analysis, that is, the curriculum organizes content around social issues; uses students' life experiences as starting points for analysing oppression; teaches social action skills; and promotes cultural pluralism and alternative life styles (Sleeter and Grant, 2007, p.185).

In sum, Sleeter and Grant (2007) emphasize holistic organizational change to multicultural education; they also contend that multicultural education should not simply be about changing teachers to follow new directions because teachers' actions in organizations cannot be reduced to individuals. According to Sleeter and Grant, a restructuring of schools for multicultural education focuses on organizational issues, for example, structural constraints to curriculum change, such as time, class size, required curriculum and the administrative and bureaucratic context of teacher work (Sleeter, 1992; Sleeter and Grant, 2007).

2.4.1.2 Nieto's Model of Multicultural Education

Nieto (2004a) describes multicultural education as a process of comprehensive and basic education for all students. Multicultural education begins with all forms of diversity among students, acknowledges the oppression and privilege that exists within schools and society, and includes a major focus on school reform (Nieto, 2004a). Nieto (2004a) reiterates the urgency to create not only affirming classrooms for students but also an affirming society in which "racism, sexism, social class discrimination, and

other biases are no longer acceptable" (p.xxii). She addresses how educators can challenge biases, as well as inequitable structures, policies and practices, so it is important to implement multicultural education that confronts issues of difference, power and privilege in schools.

Teachers' Role

Nieto (2004a) states clearly that the role of teachers in implementing multicultural education is significant, but teachers may not be solely responsible for the failure of many students. However, it is the teachers' responsibility to challenge the actions of school and society that affect their students' education, and help create positive change. Nieto (2004a) argues that teachers' limited decision-making role in schools is a structural problem that prevents from making effective change. She suggests that weekly release time and job sharing are critical organizational reforms that promote teacher professionalism and empowerment. Therefore, Nieto highlights the importance of organizational change to multicultural education, and that restructuring efforts should accompany the translation of multicultural education into practice. Nieto believes that teachers need to be involved in the important work of curriculum design and implementation.

Multicultural Curriculum Reforms

Nieto (2004a) maintains that multicultural education permeates the curriculum, the instructional strategies used in schools, interaction between teachers, children and parents. It is also stated that schools conceptualize the nature of teaching and learning (McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007). For Nieto, multicultural education is itself a process of comprehensive reform and constitutes basic education for all students (Nieto, 2004b; Nieto and Bode, 2008). She argues that process issues are often harder to tackle than content, for "changing a basal reader is easier than developing high expectations for all students. Change of content involves changing one book for another; the other involves changing perceptions, behaviours, and knowledge, [which] is not an easy task" (Nieto, 2004a, p.346). Nieto (2004a) emphasizes that multicultural curriculum reforms should not only involve changing content, but also focus on "intangibles" such as teachers' expectations, learning environments, students' learning styles, etc. (p.218). In Nieto's

view, addressing these intangible processes of changing perceptions, behaviour and knowledge are often more difficult than adding curriculum content, so she conceptualizes multicultural education as permeating the school curriculum, instructional strategies as well as interactions among different stakeholders (p.437). In short, Nieto defines multicultural education as a basic, core curriculum component that is simply good education that provides students with wider multiple perspectives on various events and issues studied in schools. Other than aiming at achieving a good education, multicultural education is in fact a complex, controversial and time-consuming process, for "it is impossible to become instantly multicultural" (p.399).

Overall, for Nieto, multicultural education is a constructivist process that involves teachers' unlearning of conventional practices and learning of multicultural practices. This process is never finished or standardized, as multicultural education takes a variety of forms in different settings (p.399). Nieto (2004a) further points out that public education is the last and best hope for many students today to have a better life and that we should do all that we can to fight for it and defend it.

2.4.1.3 Banks's Model of Multicultural Education

Banks has formulated a fairly comprehensive model of multiculturalism (Banks, 2002a) to provide a very useful lens for looking at how particular school's learning programs address diversity (Bruch *et al.*, 2004, p.79). Banks offers five dimensions of multicultural education: (1) content integration, (2) the knowledge construction process, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) equity pedagogy, and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure (Banks, 1996, 2002a, 2004d). All of these enable students from diverse groups to experience equitable learning in a school culture that has a total commitment to multicultural education. These five dimensions of organizational factors in a multicultural school move beyond content reform to wider practices and organizational reforms. Each of the dimensions proposed by Banks (1996) is defined and illustrated below. The dimension *content integration* deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations and theories in their subject area, whereas the dimension *knowledge construction* involves the process in which teachers help students understand and investigate how implicit cultural assumptions and biases within a discipline

influence how knowledge is constructed within it. The above two dimensions focus on developing a "transformative curriculum" which aims to empower students with the knowledge and skills that can help them become critical thinkers and influential citizens.

The third and fourth dimensions, *prejudice reduction* and *equity pedagogy*, centre primarily on the processes of modifying teacher practices to be more consistent with a wide range of student abilities and learning styles. The dimension *prejudice reduction* describes lessons and activities teachers use to help students develop positive attitudes toward different racial, ethnic and cultural groups. Research indicates that lessons, units and teaching materials that include content about different groups can help students to develop more positive inter-group attitudes if certain conditions exist in the teaching situation (Giroux and Simon, 1989). The dimension *equity pedagogy* exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse groups. This includes using a variety of teaching styles and approaches that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various groups, being demanding but highly personalized when working with groups.

The last dimension, *an empowering school culture*, involves teachers and administrators working collaboratively to promote equity within classrooms and schools. The dimension *empowering school culture and organization* promotes equity of diverse groups through examining the school culture and the school organization, with all members of the school required to participate in restructuring it. Furthermore, if multicultural education is developed under a system of whole-school culture, there should be strategies to promote an understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity; to promote alternative choices for people with full affirmation of their differences; to help all children achieve academic success; and to promote awareness of social issues involving the unequal distribution of power and privilege. It is obvious that Banks' last dimension concerns both process issues within an organizational environment in which multicultural education is enacted, and also refers specifically to social interactions between staff and students.

In summary, these three critical multiculturalists take a constructivist perspective to reconceptualizing multicultural education that emphasises two main components: firstly, multicultural educational reform should move beyond content reform to changing various teacher and organizational practices. Secondly, processes that involve practitioners' development of multicultural understandings are needed to encourage

teachers' conceptual change and action in implementing multicultural education. Actually, multicultural education is rooted in a critique of the dominant curriculum (Gaudelli, 2001), and thus simple mandatory change is not enough to successfully and effectively implement multicultural education or to achieve advances in student achievement or teacher improvement (Nieto, 2004a). Multicultural education has to focus on curriculum content and address further processes within a school, such as instructional strategies and other more intangible dynamics such as teacher-student relations, classroom climate, peer interactions and teacher expectations. In other words, only when teaching practices are culturally sensitive to student diversity, and create a whole-school culture including classroom and non-classroom activities and dynamics for all students, will there be benefits from implementing education with diversity. It could be said in summary of the above discussion that in order to achieve comprehensive learning outcomes, e.g., to help all students achieve academic success and to promote cultural awareness of social issues, multicultural education should be developed in a holistic approach to multicultural education to create an inclusive environment in schools which enables people to reject discrimination, celebrate diversity and maximize the full potential of all.

Additional to the above three models of multicultural education, Rosado (1998) presents his "Five Ps", namely, Perspectives, Policies, Programs, Personnel, and Practices – the "Five Ps" indicates an organizational ("structural", in Rosada's term) change in school culture which is significant for multicultural education (p.4). In an effort to understand the common characteristics of the various definitions of multicultural education, Table 2.1 compares the models developed by Banks (1996, 2002b), Sleeter and Grant (2003a, 2007) and Nieto (2004b, 2008).

Table 2.1 Dimensions of organizational school change in different multicultural education models

Dimensions of Organizational Change	Banks's Model (1996, 2002a)	Nieto's Model (2004a)	Sleeter and Grant's Model (2003b; 2007)
Program / Equity Pedagogy in Practice	Content Integration	---	The primary focus of Teaching the Exceptional and the Culturally Different is on teaching basic skills and fitting the students into the cultural mainstream.
Personnel / Professional Development	Knowledge Construction	---	Under the Human Relations approach, the curriculum is adapted to include discussion of general similarities and differences among the various groups.
Practices / Inter-group Interaction	Prejudice Reduction	Challenges and rejects racism and other forms of prejudice.	The Single-Group Studies approach empowers oppressed groups and develops allies.
Perspectives / Equity Pedagogy	Equity Pedagogy	Provides a comprehensive and basic education for all students. Affirms and accepts culture pluralism.	The Multicultural Education approach promotes equal opportunity through balancing diverse cultures within a society and the schools.
Policies / Leadership or School Policy	Empowering School Culture	Permeates the interactions between teachers, children, and parents. Permeates the way schools conceptualize teaching and learning.	The Multicultural Social Justice Education approach is rooted in social re-constructivism; it calls for attention to equity issues and empowering young people to make social changes through teaching social action skills.

Table 2.1 is drawn from an understanding that, though the models by Banks (1996, 2002a), Nieto (2004a) and Sleeter and Grant (2003b; 2007) are unique, each is premised on the notion that existing curricula need to be reformulated. It can be concluded that multicultural education should be done proactively. I constructed the table by trying to infuse the government's "Catering for Student Differences – Indicators for Inclusion", which is a school development instrument for catering for learning differences (EDB, 2004), with Rosada's (1998) idea of the 5Ps proposed for a multicultural school. Table 2.1 demonstrates that Banks's five dimensions emphasize a transformative process of the content of teaching and learning in multicultural education. In terms of putting equal emphasis on process and content changes in multicultural education, Banks' model of multicultural education is more comprehensive than the other two models; however, the comparison illustrates that there is a common target, namely, to nurture a whole-school culture of multicultural education. Moreover, Table 2.1 can be seen as a prototype of the conceptual model of this study, and I believe that both of the individual perspectives should work collaboratively to make a school multicultural. Besides, it is to show that no matter which dimension of multicultural education a school has approached, what is required for "real" multicultural education is the building up of a school culture with concurrent restructuring of curriculum, a change of leadership style, an increase in teachers' professionalism, improvements in students' learning and the facilitation of inter-group relationships with a multicultural vision. (Banks *et al.*, 2001) have gone further pragmatically to point out twelve major areas of concern for builders of authentically multicultural and learner-centred schools. Banks' team has identified the social construction of knowledge and social actions as the major components of multicultural education; for instance, they also stress the ability to care, and the motivation to act as considerations in developing a multicultural environment (Banks *et al.*, 2001). I will further explain their ideas and the theoretical framework of this study in Chapter 3. Before explicating the study framework more deeply, I will present the possible obstacles that a school has to face when it implements multicultural education.

2.5 Critical Issues for Organizational Change

As discussed above, multiculturalists are united in their belief that multicultural education should take a holistic approach to develop students' full potential and nurture

a just and equitable society. To put this belief into practice, teachers undeniably have responsibility for taking actions that will help their students obtain equity education (Banks, 1992). Furthermore, multicultural education is in practice a critique of the dominant curriculum (Gaudelli, 2001; Gollnick and Chinn, 2002; Janney *et al.*, 1995; Salisbury *et al.*, 1995), and public education is seen as the last and best hope for students to experience better learning (Crawford, 2002). The ultimate concern of multicultural education is to achieve equity learning outcomes for all students in society. Multicultural education must then involve an organizational change in mainstream schools that is expected to help accommodate diversity within the school context. This may be in the form of building up leadership with a vision to mobilize teachers to multicultural action (Crawford *et al.*, 1999; EMB and SEKPS, 2002; Goodlad and Field, 1993), which may involve curriculum restructuring and re-evaluating of students' learning (Vaughn *et al.*, 2000). Obviously, the challenges of multicultural education are deemed to be complex and several factors come to the fore in the planning of multicultural education in schools.

2.5.1 Teachers' Initial Resistance

Western literature on multicultural education or multicultural integration (Gaudelli, 2001; Salisbury *et al.*, 1995) has outlined challenges and strategies of multicultural education in schools. Teachers' initial perception of change or of multicultural education is often expressed in terms of a variety of anxieties. At the same time, local teacher education programs appear to socialize pre-service teachers to believe that they are incapable of teaching children with diverse learning needs (Crawford, 2002). Research also reports (Giangreco *et al.*, 1993) that teachers in general view themselves as inadequately prepared to teach students with diverse learning needs in regular educational settings. Multicultural education is a good means to support students with diverse learning needs to learn well in mainstream schools; however, the task is complex and requires demanding reform. The situation of multicultural education is similar to that of integrated education in Hong Kong which is sometimes resisted by teachers and is not always fully understood or supported by school administrators (Crawford, 2002). For instance, a local report (Crawford *et al.*, 1999) shows that teachers' low level of understanding of diversity is significant to integrated education; as shown in the report, there were many "don't know" comments in response to an

open-ended question on strategies used by their schools to respond to integration. Hence, if teachers do not realize that placing students with diverse learning needs in the mainstream is good for both the students being integrated and the students already in place, then it is extremely difficult to motivate teachers to achieve new skills, or upgrade existing skills (Janney *et al.*, 1995; Steel and Hudson, 2001).

Additionally, ambivalence about whether change will be favourable is nearly always experienced before change is attempted. Fullan (1991) points out that providing support to teachers during an initial trial is critical for getting through the first stages (p. 129). For example, a study by Girod and Cavanaugh (2001) illustrates that many teachers who had integrated students in their classes began with negative initial feelings but later reported positive "transforming experiences" and benefits to all involved. Locally, it is reported that the usual excuse from teachers to reject teaching students with diverse needs is their lack of training in catering for diverse learning needs (Armstrong *et al.*, 2001; Decker, 1997).

2.5.2 A Cost-Benefit Comparison

Fullan's view (1991) of educational change may provide an answer to teachers' initial resistance to change. Fullan is of the view that many innovations are adopted with no clear explanations given to teachers of either their benefits or implementation procedures. This fact, coupled with the provision of inadequate resources to support implementation, often results in teachers experiencing more costs than rewards. Further, the initial weighing up of costs and benefits occurs before teachers have had a chance to gain experience with the change and to reach an accurate understanding of what it actually means for them (EDB, 2007u). In short, teachers' views of change are similar to the notion of a cost-benefit analysis, that is, they weigh up the impact that change will have on their time, energy and routines against the benefits it holds for their students. Generally speaking, this kind of cost-benefit analysis affects teachers' positive judgements of success to any changes.

2.5.3 A 'Worst-Case Scenario'

The majority of mainstream education teachers are hesitant initially to take on innovation or change because they anticipate a worst-case scenario, which means that teachers' decisions about launching an innovation are linked to the benefits they see for their students, and usually, in the teachers' perception, new change is believed to bring disruption to students' normal learning (Crawford, 2002; Talavera, 2002). This is so particularly in traditional learning environments where students are often viewed as receivers of knowledge (Nieto, 2004a). Moreover, teachers complained about the larger paperwork involved when they have to cater for learning diversity. Therefore, mainstream teachers disagreed the need of students with SEN to access the mainstream curriculum and the need to assess students on the same academic content standards (Abell *et al.*, 2005).

In fact, as multicultural education requires organizational change, the worst-case scenario is actually a challenge to multicultural education. Multicultural education can only be successfully implemented after teachers have received substantial support from collaborative teams; built up a shared vision with school administrators; have gained adequate information and understanding about the change; and have seen the benefits the change offers their students.

2.5.4 Inflexible Curriculum and Exam-driven System Intensifies Segregation

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, local teachers are trained to teach curriculum and content of dominant culture, teachers are unfamiliar with how to differentiate pedagogy for children at stages of development. In addition, an exam-driven system may not permit differentiation, and may be more conducive to didactic teaching. Rose (2008) explicated that in primary school, though professional teachers recognise the shortcomings of curriculum content and teaching resources that appear distant from their students, teachers have limited time or make limited efforts to link teaching contents to their students' real life experiences. The supposed close relationship that students had with primary teachers is lost (Rose, 2008, p.133). The problem of segregation is worsening in secondary schools. School-based assessment (SBA) is a

core part of many important public examinations[5], SBA is an assessment carried out by schools as part of the teaching and learning process, students are assessed by their subject teachers and marks awarded will count towards the results of public examinations (HKEAA, 2009). Classrooms are then battlefields of marks, and teenagers may also be reluctant to support peers with disabilities and may reject them socially. Moreover, the heavy workload of teachers discourages parents from involvement and impedes communication; and support services for students and teachers are often minimal (Pearce, 2008, p.143).

Section 2.5 aimed to highlight the critical issues of a school that tries to get teachers to adopt new changes, including multicultural education. The report by Crawford (2002; 1999) made it clear that recommendations must be made to government that careful preparations for systemic school change are essential to ensure effective integration. Furthermore, the following issues were highlighted as major concerns in their consultants' reports: pedagogical limitations of many mainstream schools; teachers' competency and attitudes; lack of commitment on the part of key participants; magnitude of the task; inertia in education systems; resource allocation mechanisms; and parental concern. All of these concerns invoke the multi-facetedness of a school, with school principals and teachers playing a central role in initiating and infusing multicultural concepts and ideas into school cultures because they set the cultural climate for the school (Nieto, 2004b; Sleeter and Grant, 2007). It is therefore only by having school support and then trying something out that we can really know if it works, and doing this would be a possible way of minimizing teachers' initial resistance to change. As a consequence, both individual factors (e.g., a teacher's attitude to and belief in multicultural education) and organizational factors (e.g., a school's vision and pedagogies) are significant for multicultural education. For this reason, effective preparation of teachers in pedagogical design; a culturally responsible curriculum; support from school leadership; and the teaching of inter-group interaction, are vital. As the objective of this study is to understand the ways in which teachers manage to improve equitable education in a local mainstream school setting, I will be

[5] Local significant public examinations such as, Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) which will be replaced by the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) in 2012, and Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination (HKALE). The results that students have obtained in these examinations are recognised and accepted as a basic level of academic achievement and for employment purposes in Hong Kong and international institutions.

exploring how and why organizational factors (e.g. school structures, norms, programs, resources), individual teacher factors (e.g., personal background, training) and student factors (e.g., peer group, ability, age) interact to shape the construction and practice of a multicultural curriculum by teachers in mainstream education.

I have reviewed the obstacles to multicultural education and found that constraints of local multicultural education are consistent with what the literature reports. In Chapter 3, based on the literature reviewed in this chapter, I will further elaborate and compare the ideas of various prominent multicultural educators. Further, I will also compare the literature with the local whole-school approach policies of catering for learning diversity, and finally, a theoretical framework of the study will be presented.

2.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter, based on work by Banks (2003b; 2007), Nieto (2003b; 2007) and Sleeter and Grant (2003b), argued that the teachers' role is crucial in the implementation of multicultural education, and that further, one of these roles is to challenge any action or measure that is likely to affect students' learning. Furthermore, the mainstream schools, with their large and complex student populations, are also believed to be the most suitable place for the implementation of multicultural education, if for no other reason that the impact will be relatively far-reaching. Such implementation requires a holistic, organizational, critical and transformative change. To achieve a transition to providing multicultural education, every school will face obstacles, such as teachers' initial resistance, school's readiness for change, inflexible curriculum and exam-driven system, etc. For this reason (as set out in Table 1), the two major components of multicultural reform will have to be content *and* process. A synthesis of the literature review of published research, and an outline of the framework of multicultural education used in this study are presented in Table 2.1.

As the review of the literature has shown, I believe that multicultural education is worth doing, for it is only by creating a whole-school environment dedicated to multicultural education that we will be able to address the diversity found in society. It is both an opportunity and a challenge for every student in a school to be provided with equitable learning opportunities and assessed on an individual basis. Next, I maintain that multicultural education starts from the idea that all students should have an equal

opportunity to learn. Equity pedagogies will be a necessary tool to empower all students to develop their potential. In addition, leadership backing up a multicultural school policy is essential to get teachers to understand and eliminate bias towards student diversity through professional development. The insights of a range of studies, such as the twelve operational principles of multicultural education formulated by Banks *et al.* (2001), can be usefully applied by schools in their curricula. These operational principles will be used in the next chapter as the skeleton for a theoretical framework for this study, itself based on a constructivist model of building up teachers' multicultural competence in a school trying to implement multicultural education. More importantly, this framework seeks to illustrate a practical model of multicultural education more generally.

Chapter 3 – Theoretical Framework

In Chapter 1, it was argued that the major local education system put great emphasis on the "one education for all" and the whole-school approach policies in catering for students of diverse educational needs. These policies bring about many challenges for the schools and also the teacher education systems because the local teachers are trained for the dominant curriculum. After the review of the current education situation in Hong Kong presented in Chapter 1, a literature review of multicultural education was presented in Chapter 2. There is a common position held by advocates of multicultural education, which is that it requires a holistic change, i.e. a critical, transformative and organizational change in schools. In order to help understand the ways of implementing a holistic change in schools that work in developing and maintaining tea chers' acceptance of multicultural education and its enactment in a whole-school environment, I have in the current chapter cross-referenced the academic literature with the local education policies for integration (EDB, 2007v, 2007w). Among critical multiculturalists, Banks' model (1996, 2002a) of building a total school system for multicultural education is found to be comprehensive, transformative and well structured when compared to Sleeter and Grant's (2003b; 2007) and Nieto's (2004a) models (see Table 3.1). In this chapter, I will illustrate Banks *et al.*'s (2001) twelve essential principles of managing diversity in taking a whole-school approach. Their wide-ranging principles will be compared with what I discovered in my literature review. A theoretical framework for this study will be generated and presented at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Multicultural Education in Practice

The multicultural education movement first emerged in the 1960s in response to charges of racism, ethno-centrism and language discrimination in schools (Muijs and Reynolds, 2002). As stated in Chapter 1, over the years multicultural education in Hong Kong has been perceived in numerous ways by various groups to match their particular objectives and values, making it increasingly confusing and difficult to determine the nature of the field. I believe that multicultural education cannot simply be modification of curriculum content; instead, there are inter-connected, interactive and dynamic

factors that contribute to successful multicultural education. On the other hand, even though there is a general awareness of various types of multicultural curricula and instructional approaches, there is relatively little known about multicultural education in practice in Hong Kong. It is therefore important to illustrate the ways in which different teachers in the school under investigation accepted or resisted change, and how these actions further impacted on teachers' practices. In order to explore how and why school organization (e.g. administrative structures, norms, policies, programs, resources), teacher roles (e.g. personal background, training) and student factors (e.g. background, ability) interact to shape how multicultural curricula are constructed and practised by teachers in the classroom, a holistic approach to understanding a school in implementing multicultural education is essential.

The study will use a constructivist perspective to understand these issues; the core premise of this theoretical approach is that teaching practices and teachers' perceptions and behaviours are socially constructed within the social organization of schools. In the next section, I will elucidate the elements that facilitate an organizational change of multicultural education in schools, and which also comprise a theoretical framework for the study.

3.2 Theoretical Framework of the Study

The theoretical framework of this study synthesizes a range of relevant studies in the multicultural education field; it is also a summary of critical issues in managing diversity that are within teachers' ability to change. This section discusses a school's significance in supporting and facilitating the implementation of multicultural education in the whole school. It is important to note that a whole-school approach to organizational change should not ignore the role of the people within it. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Sleeter (1992) reminds us that organizational change is essential in multicultural education and that a school should focus on the individual teacher. The theoretical framework of this study implies that understandings of various cognitive and psychological processes of teachers, such as perception, motivation, emotion, memory and the like, when they take individual actions, are important. In fact, as human behaviour involves moment-to-moment decisions, teachers infuse personal beliefs and values into their practical actions (Meltaer *et al.*, 2002; Meltzer *et al.*, 2004). It has been

reported that teachers' attitudes and beliefs directly and indirectly influence the decisions they make in the classrooms (Arbeau and Coplan, 2007; Tomic, 2001), and their general classroom behavioural style (Banks *et al.*, 2001; Flavell, 2001; Villegas and Lucas, 2007). Moreover, teachers' attitudes and beliefs contribute toward children's acquisition of knowledge, serve to provide children with rules, generate a climate for learning, and directly influence students' behaviours in schools (Chong *et al.*, 2007; Cook *et al.*, 2000).

A better understanding of teachers' attitudes, beliefs and responses to students' diversified learning needs provides insight into the establishment of teacher-student relationships and ultimately into the process of catering for learner differences. Positive teacher-student relationships may serve to buffer students from negative adjustment outcomes, whereas stressful teacher-student relationships may hinder students' school adjustment (Cook *et al.*, 2000). It has been found that there are links between teacher beliefs and responses, and students' socio-emotional adjustment at school (Banks *et al.*, 2001). In the study by Arbeau and Coplan (2007), the teachers reported unique patterns of beliefs and responses toward each of the different types of student described, and the teachers held the harshest attitudes toward aggressive students. In my study I employ a constructivist perspective to explore the content and process of the multicultural reforms at St. John's to explore the teachers' pedagogical practices of multicultural education. In the other words, I hold the strong view that a school is a social organization in which teachers can change their perceptions and behaviours.

Furthermore, in order to gain a better understanding of the roles that various factors play in constructing teachers' practices of multicultural education, I will adopt the twelve operational principles for multicultural education by Banks *et al.* (2001); these principles are based on a constructivist perspective to organizational change in both the content and processes of a school. The detail of their principles and the theoretical framework of my study will be introduced in the following section. In addition, I illustrate the framework in the form of a table (Table 3.1) at the end of this chapter – the table synthesizes six studies and two local policy documents concerning catering for diversity (Bruch *et al.*, 2004), taken from the literature review of multicultural education in Chapter 2. Before I go on to discuss the theoretical framework, it is worth noting that the categorizations of the multicultural strategies in Table 3.1 are according to a holistic organizational change in a multicultural school.

What is immediately clear is that to put multicultural education in practice, a school has to promote the ideas of multicultural education within the school constructively, and a whole-school change is essential.

3.2.1 A Constructivist Perspective on Multicultural Education

Banks (2002a) holds that the major goal of education is to help low income students and students from diverse cultures develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to participate in the mainstream workforce and in mainstream society in the 21st century. As stated above, this goal can only be attained by restructuring schools so that they are learner-centred and multicultural with transformative goals and ideals (Banks, 1992, 2006).

In the first year of the 21st century, Banks *et al.* (2001) were involved in a four-year project sponsored by the Centre for Multicultural Education at the University of Washington and the Common Destiny Alliance at the University of Maryland. The project focused on multicultural education in schools and developed a comprehensive framework for multicultural teaching and learning consisting of twelve essential principles translated into five key principles (Bruch *et al.*, 2004). These principles were derived from both research and practice, and they describe ways in which education policy and practice related to diversity can be improved. In addition, the twelve principles help educators take a holistic organizational approach to multiculturalism, including giving attention to curriculum, pedagogy, professional development, student development, institutional governance and assessment.

Further to the challenges that have been outlined in Chapter 2, teachers' perceptions of innovations may have reduced their initial resistance to the change. It was assumed that the criteria by which practitioners judge the success of multicultural education might be different from those of an outside consultant or researcher (Kelley *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, to develop strategies for implementing multicultural education in a school setting so as to promote or develop equitable outcomes for all students, the teachers' beliefs about and attitudes towards the success of their own integration efforts are influential factors.

With reference to the literature review of numerous studies in the related field of multicultural education, and synthesizing some possible ways of accepting social

diversity, I will introduce the practical conditions for success of multicultural education in the following section. Cross-reference to Banks *et al.* (2001) is also introduced in this section.

3.2.2 Four Working Principles for Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is important for all students. Nieto (2004a) maintains that multicultural education is by definition inclusive, for it is about all people and it is also for all people (p.353). In addition, the multicultural education framework Banks *et al.* (2001) is designed to help practitioners in all types of schools increase students' academic achievements and improve inter-group skills. Another aim is to help schools successfully meet the challenges and benefit from student diversity. Twelve essential principles were developed, with one of them considering multicultural education at district or state level in the United States. In the following sections, based on the local educational situations, I extract and review these twelve principles, and synthesize four key domains of multicultural working principles for this study, namely: (I) School Policy and Leadership; (II) Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning; (III) Professional Development; and (IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning. I have also made comparisons between the four domains and various suggestions for multicultural practices from other advocators of multicultural education.

(I) School Policy and Leadership

Educational equity and excellence for all students in a multicultural school permeates every aspect of the schooling enterprise, and school organization and leadership can either enhance or detract from the development of multicultural education. In 2004, Banks was interviewed by Bruch and his colleagues to discuss effective practices for multicultural education. Banks (2004) mentioned in the interview that when a school or university organization promotes equitable learning opportunities, a comprehensive examination of school policy and leadership are required when setting up an organizational structure for multicultural education. This would include infrastructure, staff attitudes and skills, pedagogy and student inter-group relations. In regard to school policy and leadership for effective multicultural education, Banks *et al.* (2001) formulated the 10th and 11th principles:

10th Principle: A school's organizational strategies should ensure that decision-making is widely shared and that members of the school community learn collaborative skills and dispositions in order to create a caring learning environment for students. School policies and practices are the living embodiment of a society's underlying values and educational philosophy.

11th Principle: A leader should ensure that equity in school funding is a critical condition for creating just multicultural schools. (pp. 78-79)

Clearly, leadership and school culture are regarded as two dominant factors affecting the development of a powerful multicultural school which includes a wide variety of stakeholders, ranging from students, teachers and administrators, to parents and members of the community. Below, I introduce the roles of leadership and school policies that have been identified as vital to multicultural education in the literature.

3.2.2.1 Education Leadership and Vision Building

In regard to the organizational changes needed to implement multicultural education, there is a priority to build up a multicultural school which is receptive to working with all members of the students' communities (Banks *et al.*, 2001). Early in 1996, Banks confirmed that multicultural education is a concept for approaching educational equity and excellence for all students and a total school environment must permeate every aspect of the schooling enterprise (Banks, 1996). To achieve the above goals of multicultural education, attention must firstly focus on the school system, which needs educational leaders who respond to the challenge of improving schools to create an environment where students from diverse groups have equal opportunity for educational success and community responsibility.

In addition, there is the idea of enhancing student achievement by improving education leadership (Malouf and Schiller, 1995), suggesting educational leadership is an important determinant of an effective learning environment. Effective education leaders establish high expectations for all students (Senge *et al.*, 2000); understand procedures and processes that create the conditions necessary for organizational improvement; and correctly envision future needs and empower others to share and implement that vision (The Wallace Foundation, 2006, p.7). Research has shown that

the ways in which policymakers and practitioners think about diversity problems and provide specific techniques for improving diverse student learning outcomes (Banks *et al.*, 2001) will affect the learning outcomes of "education for all students" (Cohen, 1988; Kauffman, 1993; Shavelson, 1988). A local educator openly spoke at an international conference on special needs, saying that only when a school has a good leader will the school culture change and the school accept student diversity (Banks *et al.*, 2001). With respect to these authors' views, leaders should have a better understanding of the conditions of practice to achieve sustainable multicultural learning (Tong, 2007). Hargreaves and Fink (2006) offer the concept of sustainable educational leadership for multicultural education. This means that all educational leaders are more than instructional leaders; they should spend effort to achieve depth and breadth of student learning, i.e. engage students' learning in every sense: intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually (p. 33). Leaders should consistently communicate with all stakeholders in schools, and articulate core values that support a focus on equitable learning (EDB, 2004). According to Hargreaves and Fink (2006), leadership has a strong and unswerving sense of moral purpose in formulating and running school policy for catering for learners' differences. Effective leaders are willing to abandon cynical attempts to boost test scores; instead, they have high expectations for all students and customize learning related to the meaning and life circumstances of every student (p.39) and especially for the most disadvantaged. Similar to the concept of a mental model in a learning organization (Senge, 2006), school improvement must focus not only on what students should know and be able to do, but on fair and equal access to learning of a diverse student population. Multicultural or moral leaders must strive to build professional collaboration, providing forums for teacher dialogue (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006, p.48).

3.2.2.2 School Organization and an Equity-based Learning Culture

Banks *et al.* (2001) in their discussion on school policy and leadership say that school leadership can either enhance or detract from the development of learning communities that prepare students for a multicultural society (Cuban, 1996; Fullan, 2001). The tenth essential principle put forward by Banks *et al.* (2001) implies that an effective leadership that mobilizes a widely shared school culture is able to create a caring environment for students (Banks *et al.*, 2001). In Hong Kong, there is an

indicator of inclusion for school self-evaluation and self-development in catering for students of diverse backgrounds, which is that a philosophy of integration should be shared by all school staff, students and parents, and that a partnership between staff and parents in the integration practices should be developed (EDB, 2004). All these points demonstrate that powerful multicultural schools are organizational hubs that include a wide variety of stakeholders, ranging from students, teachers and administrators to parents and members of the community.

Banks *et al.* (2001) claim that if educational equity and excellence are to be provided to all students, a systemic total school environment has to be structured that permeates every aspect of the schooling enterprise. Successful schools need capable leaders to achieve excellence, and effective leaders strive for re-culturing by activating and deepening moral purpose through connecting people and getting them to come on board for making changes (Larrivee, 2000). In addition, to implement multicultural education, school leaders should identify structural features in their own school that have to be changed and should help teachers learn and implement appropriate knowledge and skills for a multicultural education environment. For example, according to the study by Villa *et al.* (1996), mainstream teachers believed that they were able to work with Special Teachers as co-equal partners to provide education for a diverse group of students. A policy of collaboration between administrators, teachers, students, support personnel, school board and other community members from both mainstream and special schools was instituted to foster joint decision-making. In the following section, some suggestions for multicultural leadership gleaned from the literature are outlined.

3.2.2.3 Obtaining Teachers' Understanding

Like other people, teachers develop mental habits, biases and presuppositions that are based on untested conclusions and which are inferred from selected observations (Huberman and Miles, 1984). Eventually teachers tend to close off new ways of perceiving and interpreting experiences (EDB, 2004; Janney *et al.*, 1995). It has been said that involving teachers in the design of an innovation would get the plan working smoothly (EDB, 2004), or that teachers with experience providing concrete information

and examples would be a way of encouraging more teachers to get involved in change (Gelzheiser *et al.*, 1997).

3.2.2.4 Top-Down Leadership and Bottom-Up Implementation

Furthermore, Fullan and Hargreaves (1992), Huberman and Miles (198 4), and Janney *et al.* (1995) point out that leadership has a role in reducing some of the initial resistance to change at the school level. They have suggested that school reform efforts should be guided by top-down leadership and allow the teachers to engage in bottom-up planning and implementation to execute the change.

3.2.2.5 A Collaborative Team and a Total School Environment

A collaborative team may enable a whole school to construct high expectations for all students (Banks, 2004c), taking a team approach by getting input from everyone involved, including teachers, parents and other auxiliary personnel, with planning for multicultural education found to be effective (OFSTED, 2000).

Putting emphasis on the roles of leadership and policies in multicultural education, the 10th and 11th principles of Banks *et al.* (2001) are found to apply in Hong Kong. The inclusion document of the local government cited the encouraging role of building a partnership between the school and parents in catering for learner differences (EDB, 2007u, 2007x). As well, the integrated education policy is urged to be run in a whole-school approach, and the leadership of the school is required to create an inclusive environment and mobilize the whole school team to support students with diverse educational needs (EDB, 2007w, Section 5.1).

(II) Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning

A multicultural school is viewed as a social system which has its specific values, traditions, customs, and shared meanings (Banks *et al.*, 2001). According to Banks (2002a), leadership and school policy provide a macro administrative direction to the school; and the concept of equity pedagogy is a guiding principle of teaching strategies that prepares students from diverse groups to attain the knowledge, skills, and attitudes

needed to function effectively within a just, humane, and democratic society. Teachers who embrace equity pedagogy believe that all students can learn. They work to develop student potential and to create a classroom environment that is encouraging and filled with opportunities for success, so teachers utilize instructional strategies that are beneficial to all students. Equity pedagogy requires a dismantling of existing school structures that foster inequality. Besides, equity pedagogy actively involves students in a process of knowledge building by challenging the traditional ideas of instruction as transmission of facts, the image of the teacher as a citadel of knowledge, and students as passive recipients of knowledge. In a sense, equity pedagogy alters the traditional power relationship between teachers and students. On the other hand, equity pedagogy has an important implication for adopting new modes of assessment. Under the hypothesis of all students can learn, assessment strategies are used to provide opportunities for students to improve their performances. So, the teacher who embraces equity pedagogy frequently gives students detailed formative feedback (Banks and Banks, 1995, p.155). As teachers use equity pedagogy to challenge the deep structure of schools, and teachers (and students) then become aware of the relationship between the school culture and the social structure, thus equity pedagogy applies critical or transformative approach to multicultural education and it involves four areas of pedagogical change, i.e. content integration, prejudice reduction, knowledge construction, and an empowering school culture (Banks and Banks, 1995, p.154). On the whole, equity pedagogy is student-focused, it incorporates an idea of creating a multicultural school environment in which students can acquire, interrogate, and produce knowledge and envision new possibilities for the use of that knowledge for personal and societal change (Banks *et al.*, 2001).

3.2.2.6 Creating Educational Opportunities

When schools engage in equity pedagogy it implies that teachers are responsible for increasing learning opportunities for all students in multicultural education. The teachers must be knowledgeable about the social and cultural contexts of teaching and learning, so as the cultural backgrounds of their students; they should also acquire the skills needed to translate that knowledge into effective instruction and an enriched curriculum, teachers should also be ready to adopt alternative assessment or non-traditional approaches to judge student performance. Of the principles put forward by Banks *et al.* (2001), the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 12th are related to equity pedagogy for student

learning. In these principles, teachers' incentive to take up culturally sensitive learning strategies for students is essential to multicultural education. Details of the four principles are marked as follows:

> *2nd Principle: Schools should ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and to meet high standards.*
>
> *3rd Principle: The curriculum should help students understand that knowledge is socially constructed and reflects researchers' personal experiences as well as the social, political, and economic contexts in which they live and work.*
>
> *4th Principle: Schools should provide all students with opportunities to participate in extra- and co-curricular activities that develop knowledge, skills, and attitudes that increase academic achievement and foster positive interracial relationships.*
>
> *12th Principle: Teachers should use multiple culturally sensitive techniques to assess complex cognitive and social skills.*

The ideas of equity pedagogy are not new to local educational policy. Under the local whole-school policies, teaching should value all students equally, and the teaching staff need to remove all barriers to learning and participation in school.

3.2.2.7 Individualized Learning

Equity pedagogy is focused on students; if students are legitimately engaged in different activities, and the students are the focus in the classroom, learning can then be interesting and rewarding (Banks and Banks, 1995, p.154). In local schools, the development of a caring school culture and the enhancement of acceptance of students with SEN by school members is a target of the local integrated education policy (Cook *et al.*, 1997; Roberts and Pratt, 1987). To achieve this, the school team has to focus on the needs of students. Individualized Education Plans are drawn up in which curriculum is adapted according to the ability of students; and differentiated teaching methods are adopted to cater for different learning styles and a variety of assessment methods are employed for students to demonstrate their abilities (EDB, 2007w, Section 1.3).

3.2.2.8 Assessment Accommodation

As equity pedagogy is striving for the benefit of all students, it implies new modes of assessments, e.g. portfolio assessment, peer assessment, or else to give students an opportunity to demonstrate their growth over time, and for teachers to give students ongoing support and encouragement (Bullivant, 1993). In Hong Kong, while the education system is moving towards multicultural or integrated education, it is reiterated in the *White Paper on Rehabilitation – Equal Opportunities and Full Participation* (Kyriakides *et al.*, 2002) that the local mainstream schools use multiple teaching strategies and assessment methods to cater for the diverse needs of students. As a consequence, the potential of the students could be developed to the full so that they can grow to be active and responsible members of the community (EDB, 2007w, Section 1.3).

Overall, the above discussion has shown that teaching of equity pedagogy should be culturally responsive to students from diverse groups in multicultural education. Moreover, the local integrated education policies and Banks *et al.*'s (2001) ideas of multicultural education have a common vision to make teaching culturally responsive, involves strategies such as constructing and designing relevant multicultural representations to help bridge the gap between what students already know and appreciate and what they are to be taught (EDB, 2007x).

(III) Professional Development

In a classroom, it is possible to see that teachers and students belong to many different groups, and that teachers' behaviour is influenced by their expectations about student achievement (Darling-Hammond and Falk, 1997; Sleeter and Grant, 1998). Some studies (Munro, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1992) suggest that teachers do not hold very positive attitudes toward students with diverse needs. Further, Brown (2004) points out that there is a strong relationship between teachers' instructional methods and their awareness of the cultural diversity of students, hence teachers' perceptions of educationally disadvantaged students is a mediating factor of their low achievement in schools (Barker and Camarata, 1998). All these findings imply a dissonant relationship between teachers and students with diverse learning needs. The situation is intensified as local teachers are usually not trained for multicultural education; they are unprepared

to understand that students with diverse backgrounds have the potential to be successful. Furthermore, teachers often work as isolated individuals in a bureaucratic school system in which administrators have much more formal decision-making authority than teachers. These factors create learning barriers for students with diverse needs (Banks *et al.*, 2001).

Since effective teaching does not happen in isolation or with mono-cultural teaching methods, some of the literature listed below suggests that teachers should possess adequate understanding and skills to provide a classroom environment. Professional development is believed to be a way to equip teachers with information and knowledge, such as knowledge of employing multiple strategies, alternative assessments, teaching collaborations, reading strategies and so on to work for a dynamic field-based curriculum in multicultural education. Sindelar *et al.* (2006) hold that building professional teams helps resolve the problem of poor communication in the bureaucratic school system. Trust is also seen as necessary for developing a learning community and is fostered through effective communication among team members (Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Flavell, 2001). Besides, by showing sustained trust in the change process, a professional school team can facilitate progress towards the desired outcomes and overcome unexpected obstacles. Thus, in order to build up a culture of multicultural education, a school should act as an organization that provides directions or pedagogies to empower what most teachers believe they can do with multicultural education. All these need to focus on educating individual teachers to reach a multicultural readiness in their school. The first principle put forward by Banks *et al.* (2001) is related to the issue of professional development:

> *1st Principle: Professional development programs should help teachers understand the complex characteristics of diversity and the ways in which race, ethnicity, language, and social class interact to influence student behaviour.* (p. 78)

The literature considers professional development sessions as important to teachers as they provide specific skills and knowledge associated with specific changes for multicultural education. Some important issues highlighted for teachers' professional development for multicultural education are listed below.

3.2.2.9 Personal History and Experience

As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers' ambivalence about change is an obstacle to multicultural education. Janney *et al.* (1995) argued that teachers have their own initial fears about integration. The information and knowledge gained from their professional peers will eventually transform the teachers' experience and create changing attitudes and beliefs in multicultural education. Generally speaking, teachers' life histories and experiences offer the potential for helping them to understand issues of equity, cultural diversity and power in their own and their students' lives (Booth and Ainscow, 2000; Flavell, 2001; Janney *et al.*, 1995; Kozleski and Jackson, 1993; Sindelar *et al.*, 2006). It is suggested that the sharing of teachers' life histories offers other teachers a window into the diverse worlds of their students, and that this leads to insights into teachers' work in multicultural classrooms (Fullan, 1991; Giangreco *et al.*, 1993; Janney *et al.*, 1995). Furthermore, the process of sharing the life histories of teachers facilitates meaningful dialogue among teachers – it may involve confrontations, but it also offers teachers a new perspective on making connections between their own personal experiences, their students' lives and the schooling environments (Semmel, 1986).

3.2.2.10 Teacher Professionalism

Professionalism of teachers is found essential to multicultural education. Janney *et al.* (1995, p.434) revealed that teachers did not mind trying something new or different, but they wanted to have the professional autonomy to make decisions about implementation. In the same study, the teachers were found to be working effectively in multicultural education when there was a core working team who took a "problem solving approach" to implementing integrated practices (p.435). This demonstrates that teachers' respect for their professional autonomy is important both to the initiation and implementation of multicultural education (Langness and Frank, 1981). Furthermore, teachers may request support from the school authority, in the form of providing them with preparatory information about students with diverse needs (Allexsaht-snider, 1996).

3.2.2.11 Collegial Support

Team work requires mutual planning and cooperation to maintain on-going support among teachers (Scharmann, 2007). It was found that although mainstream education teachers have taken much or all of the responsibility for both the planning and the implementation of integrated classroom activities, special education teachers were still expected to coordinate the process and be accessible and willing to answer questions (Janney *et al.*, 1995, p.435). It may be that when there is change in school, teachers emphasize the importance of professional development activities in reducing these apprehensions, correcting inaccurate assumptions and hence changing attitudes and garnering support for the effort.

Building up a collaborative teaching team is emphasized in local education reform, for example, the integrated education policy encourages schools to empower school personnel to support students with diverse educational needs and to strengthen the cooperation between parents and teachers. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to carry out collaborative teaching so that all students in the regular class get more teacher attention (EDB, 2007g, Section 5.2).

3.2.2.12 Professional Partnership to Remove Negative Feelings

Inter-school support, such as mainstream educators working together with their special education colleagues, is noted as crucial to the success or failure of multicultural integration (Flavell, 2001; Parker and Asher, 1987; Rubin, 1980; Salisbury *et al.*, 1995). It is generally believed that after mainstream teachers have worked with special education professionals in educating students with disabilities in mainstream classrooms, their teaching attitudes and job responsibilities will have undergone positive changes (Villa *et al.*, 1996). Villa *et al.* (1996) further state that the coequal partnership between mainstream and special teachers is a determining factor of the success of integrated education (p.37). It is also a way to build a professional development school partnership, in which the schools could exchange teaching methods, hold professional seminars and promote interpersonal relations in a dynamic collaborative network, and so prepare teachers to handle issues of multicultural education (Brown *et al.*, 1989; Meyer and Putnam, 1988; Sleeter and Grant, 2003c).

The above discussion has shown that although teachers may begin with negative initial feelings when they engage in multicultural education, professional development training is seen as essential for teachers engaged in multicultural education. This is because after teachers have seen the benefits for their students, positive feedback about multicultural education is often eventually reported (Banks and Banks, 1995; Flavell, 2001). Hence, the school authority should review teachers' initial perceptions and anxieties as part of a dynamic of multicultural education.

(IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Relationship

While students are the focus of multicultural education, its major concern is to equip their teachers to prepare pedagogies for the benefit of students, which includes helping them fit in society. Helping their students develop better interpersonal skills, especially those who are educationally disadvantaged, is a way of getting them ready for the world of adults. Moreover, it is suggested that if the students are actively engaged in interactions with other students throughout their school days, they can also learn from their peers (Banks *et al.*, 2001). Peer relationships are an important part of the social context of the classroom, and teachers have a role in fostering student interactions.

Social relationships with peers are required to provide students with a range of support and acceptance. Studies reveal that positive inter-group relations influence the intellectual, communicative, interpersonal and emotional development of students (Banks *et al.*, 2001). Despite the importance of these relationships, helping students with diverse needs to develop positive social relationships and networks is one of the major concerns in multicultural education, for this group of students has been routinely segregated from contact with ordinary students in mainstream schools (Flavell, 2001; Giangreco and Putnam, 1991; Johnson and Johnson, 2002). As early as in the 1970s, local education policy aimed at helping students with diverse needs integrate into the mainstream as far as possible, so that the students could receive an appropriate education alongside their peers (EDB, 2007w, Section 1.1). Hence, it is crucial for this study's framework to investigate how teachers may help students improve their social relationships, attitudes, values or behaviours.

3.2.2.13 Promoting Inter-group Relations

Teachers helping students develop inter-group relationships is found to counteract stereotypes as negative stereotypes are modified when different groups are interacting (Farmer and Farmer, 1996; Flavell, 2001; Gelzheiser *et al.*, 1997; Johnson and Johnson, 2002; Salisbury *et al.*, 1995). Of the twelve principles put forward by Banks *et al.* (2001), the fifth to ninth principles emphasize the teachers' impact as a result of motivating students to build positive inter-group relationships. Details of each of these principles (Johnson and Johnson, 1999) are as follows:

> *5th Principle: Schools should create group memberships in order to improve inter-group relations.*
>
> *6th Principle: Students should learn about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations.*
>
> *7th Principle: Students should learn about the values shared by virtually all cultural groups (e.g., justice, equality, freedom, peace, compassion, and charity).*
>
> *8th Principle: Teachers should help students acquire the social skills needed to interact effectively with students from other racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups.*
>
> *9th Principle: Schools should provide opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups to interact socially under conditions designed to reduce fear and anxiety.*

Despite the promotion of social relationships being identified as an effective working practice for multicultural education, remarkably little is known about the naturalistic strategies employed successfully by mainstream teachers who are currently working with students in multicultural settings. Some strategies used by mainstream teachers for developing multicultural education found in the literature are listed below.

3.2.2.14 Cooperative Grouping

Salisbury *et al.* (1995) demonstrated in their study that teachers use cooperative groups as a vehicle for teaching ideas of equity and accommodation that are important

to the ultimate success of an inclusive school. Booth and Ainscow (2000) have also shown that the use of cooperative learning groups is an essential strategy for promoting positive social interactions within the classroom context, and that grouping enables students with diverse abilities to become contributing members of society.

3.2.2.15 Peer Tutoring

In Salisbury *et al.*'s (1995) study, peer tutoring is used because it allows the stronger students to offer help to their weaker peers. In addition, the weaker students found it easier to ask for help from their stronger peers (Banks *et al.*, 2001). In sum, it is found that peers help reveal the true potential of their classmates with diverse learning abilities (Banks *et al.*, 2001; EDB, 2007u, 2007x; Flavell, 2001; Huberman and Miles, 1984; Klingner *et al.*, 2001; Vaughn *et al.*, 2000).

3.2.2.16 Students Motivated to Learn

To facilitate students' learning in multicultural education, classroom schedules are suggested to allow both the time and the opportunity for students to connect. Such time is seen as an important and necessary condition for the development of social relationships in their classrooms (Huberman and Miles, 1984). The local education authority in Hong Kong also encourages teachers to create jobs, e.g. an "assistant to the teacher" for the week, or the "big-brother-big-sister" schemes (EDB, 2007w, Section 1.5), in each classroom to promote learning and personal development by usin g a variety of roles within the classroom context to promote equity and a concern for others.

As argued above, it is important to note that apart from the teachers' commitment to multicultural education, the teachers' role in facilitating students' positive social relationships is another essential principle for successful multicultural education. To achieve this, teachers need to set out to build a climate of concern for others and to mediate the development of attitudes and values required for a class to function together as a group. To conclude, multicultural education is a working solution for empowering multicultural education in a school context. The essential principles or strategies, as discussed above, are the ways in which educational policy and practice related to diversity can be improved. These principles are derived from research and practice; they

are designed to help educational practitioners in all types of schools increase students' academic achievements and improve inter-group skills. Inter-group skills are believed to help schools successfully meet the challenges of diversity and benefit from diversity (Huberman and Miles, 1984). As the current study aims to investigate how multicultural education is being implemented in local mainstream classrooms, identifying the strategies that a school can develop that will create equitable learning opportunities for all students is one of objectives of the study. In the next sections, the journey towards local multicultural education will be presented. A pre-emptive conclusion is that although the road to multicultural education is bitter, calling for the development of equitable learning opportunities for all students in Hong Kong is necessary.

3.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I maintained that Banks (2003b; 2007), Nieto (2003b) and Sleeter and Grant (2007) have put similar emphases on using a constructivist perspective to study the organizational factors that contribute to multicultural education. On the other hand, I borrowed ideas from most of the essential principles put forward in Banks *et al.*'s (2001) study. Following this, I formulated the theoretical framework with reference to a range of multicultural studies and the local whole-school education policies.

Beyond the elaborations that I have given of the four working principles of the theoretical framework, I illustrate the framework in Table 3.1. The table synthesizes six studies and two local policy documents concerned with catering for diversity gathered in the literature review of multicultural education. It is worth noting that the categorizations of the multicultural strategies are based on the organizational change in a multicultural school. Reading Table 3.1 it is immediately clear that to put multicultural education in practice, a school has to promote the ideas of multicultural education in the school constructively, and that organizational change is essential. Table 3.1 shows that there are some similarities between the literature and the local education policies as far as effective strategies of managing diversity are concerned. In summary, there are four organizational factors comprising the theoretical framework of this study: (I) School Policy and Leadership; (II) Equity Pedagogy; (III) Professional Development; and (IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning. These factors can be understood

as implicating four organizational change principles that support multicultural education implemented in a whole-school approach through a constructivist perspective, and which I will further apply in the data analysis.

Table 3.1 Dimensions and key principles of multicultural education

Advocators / Key Principles	Huberman and Miles (1984); Klinger *et al.* (2001)	Banks *et al.* (2000)	Klinger *et al.* (2001); Vaughn *et al.* (2006)	Flavell (2000)	Sindelar *et al.* (2007u)	Booth and Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007v)	EDB (2007w)
School Policy or Culture and Leadership	Involve teachers in the design of an innovation	Total School Environment; diversity is an asset not a liability School governance, organization, and equity	Stable leadership	Work together for the benefit of all students Diversity is an asset not a liability	Stable leadership Shared vision and decision making	Domain III. Support for Student Development; School Ethos & Links with Parents and External Organizations	Whole School Approach Build a School Culture by setting up of a SST
Equity Pedagogy	Innovations should be smaller in scope; placed fewer demands on teachers	Equity Pedagogies	--	Integration and inclusion	Innovations should be smaller in scope; placed fewer demands on teachers	Domain II. Learning and Teaching	Curriculum Adaptation
Professional Development	Teacher leaders as enforcers for adopting new practices	Teacher's Learning	Teacher's belief and teaching styles	Necessary resources and training to handle the more complex situation	Received supportive training	Domain I. Management and Organization	Collaborative Teaching Team
Facilitating Student Inter-group Learning/ Peer Supports	--	Inter-group relations	--	Inter-group relations	--	Domain IV. Student Performance	Co-operative learning; big-brother-big-sister schemes

Note: The dimensions in the last two columns are referenced and adopted in Whole-school Approach Policy to Integrated Education and Whole-school Approach Policy to Cater for Students' Diverse Learning Needs of Hong Kong.

I would like to briefly summarise Chapters 1 to 3 at this point. This study presents a case study of a local mainstream primary school in Hong Kong that tried to implement multicultural education to improve equitable learning opportunities. Multicultural education is an innovative and unfamiliar idea to the local schools, so the teachers at St. John's may have undergone a process of conceptual change – possibly from a position of ignorance, avoidance or acceptance, or even with a commitment to change. Thus, a constructivist perspective is applied in this study as a conceptual framework to investigate the teachers' conceptual and perceptual changes towards multicultural education, which involved liaising with the school leaders and colleagues; making judgments on selecting and adopting strategies that they considered appropriate strategies for developing equitable learning outcomes for all students; and/or building confidence in their students' abilities. Further, in order to demonstrate that the four organizational change principles are the influential factors in multicultural education, I devised a research design with a series of data collection methods for this qualitative case study that I will introduce in the next two chapters, namely, Chapters 4 and 5.

Chapter 4 – Methodological Approach

As stated in the literature review, multicultural education performs a constructivist role in transforming education to develop a learning environment that works for all. In this study, I took a constructivist perspective to explore how the school staff shape their thoughts and actions according to the "reality" they experience, and to understand how multicultural education was socially constructed and enacted by the teachers at St. John's, a local mainstream primary school. In this chapter, I will describe the methodological approach that was adopted for the study in Section 4.1. It begins by explaining the conceptual framework of the study – the constructivist approach, within which the study was conceived. In Section 4.2, a detailed discussion of the data collection and data analysis methods will be presented. This is followed by a description of the strategies used to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the data and findings. Overall, the detailed methodological account provided in this chapter aims to enable readers to understand how the conclusions reported in this work have been reached.

4.1 Conceptual Framework of the Study

A conceptual framework is used in an educational study to present a preferred approach to an enquiry and to relate different parts of the study process in a coherent pattern (Dottin, 2001). This study takes a constructivist perspective to investigate how multicultural education is promoted and enacted to improve equitable learning opportunities in a mainstream primary school. As shown in the literature review, multicultural education is a holistic and on-going process to transform a school into a learning environment that provides education for all (Jonassen *et al.*, 1999). A

constructivist perspective is applied because this perspective sees learning as built on a similar ground that emphasizes the co-construction of knowledge and socially-shared cognition within a community of collaborative learners. Constructivists commonly believe that knowledge is constructed, not transmitted (Candy, 1991). Three interrelated domains are useful for defining the term "constructivism". Firstly, within a constructivist view of learning, people continuously inquire, explore and interact with others to make meaning of their experiences and develop their own models to guide their actions. Secondly, a constructivist view of knowledge maintains that knowledge is constructed by the learner who experiences it. Knowledge cannot be taught but only be learned (or constructed). Thirdly, constructivism in learning involves teachers being aware of the prior knowledge of learners (Hein, 1991).

4.1.1 A Constructivist Perspective of Research

In a constructivist learning perspective, learning is a social activity and an active process in which the learner uses sensory input and constructs meaning out of it (Berger and Luckmann, 1967; Williamson, 2006). Further, social construction is one of the constructivist learning perspectives which places emphasis on people developing meanings for their activities together, i.e. socially constructing reality (Charmaz, 2003). Just as social constructivists recognize that participants create the data and ensuing analysis through interaction with the researchers (Merriam, 2002), my study has made careful considerations in selecting research methodologies to investigate how multicultural education is socially constructed and enacted by teachers.

First of all, a qualitative case study was selected as the overall research methodology of this study. A qualitative case study was used to focus on one school in depth to draw out what the teacher informants have tried to achieve through the design

of an equitable education for all students, and the ensuing suggestions generated by the school staff for the directions and blueprints for future development in a local public school setting are outlined.

Second, the primary data sources are observations of the school leaders, teachers and students together with a series of semi-structured interviews with the members of the school's SST. Official school documents and government policies are treated to cross-reference data in the analysis process.

Third, during the study process, everyday discussions among the school leaders, teachers and students were recorded. In the following sections, an overview of the qualitative case study and a blend of qualitative data collecting methods will be introduced.

4.2 Qualitative Case Study

Qualitative research is a powerful tool for those research situations where there are no established theories, or where existing theories are found to be inadequate to explain the phenomenon of interest (Williamson *et al.*, 2002), and a qualitative case study is one of the methods used by social constructionists in such situations (Merriam, 1998). In Merriam's earlier work (1998, 2002), she states that qualitative research is "an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that helps us to understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p.5). It is believed that all types of qualitative research are based upon the philosophical assumption that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds (Gay and Airasian, 2000a; Slavin, 1992). Researchers identify qualitative research as exceptionally suited for exploration of social phenomena (Gay and Airasian, 2000b)

because it is useful for describing or answering questions about particular contexts and getting the perspectives of a participant group toward events, beliefs or practices (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Slavin, 1992).

4.2.1 Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative data are attractive as they are rich, complex, full, earthy, holistic and real (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007). Taking the ideas of Slavin (1992), Merriam *et al.* (2003) and Bogdan and Biklen (2007) into account, I summarize five characteristics of qualitative research as follows:

1. A key characteristic of qualitative research is that it is descriptive, that is, data is collected in the form of prose and pictures rather than numbers, including field notes, interview transcripts, personal documents and other official records or archives.

2. Qualitative research has actual settings as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument. The researcher assumes that human behaviour is affected by the setting in which it occurs and spends time in the research context.

3. The qualitative data are analyzed inductively. This type of research builds abstractions, concepts and hypotheses rather than testing existing theory.

4. Rather than outcome or product, process is the focus of qualitative research.

5. The main concern of qualitative research is in participants' perspectives, rather than in the researcher's perspectives. Thus qualitative research aims to

understand the participants' viewpoints and explore the inner dynamics of situations which may be invisible to or taken for granted by outsiders.

4.2.1.1 Strength in Understanding Mental Worlds

With regard to the above five characteristics, a qualitative case study research method provides a vehicle for the study to collect and interpret the data which are descriptive in nature; a qualitative case study is also a powerful tool to understand the viewpoints and explore the inner mental worlds of the participants and their dynamics. For these reasons, case studies have been used in a variety of investigations, particularly in sociological studies, with researchers having their own understanding of a case study. As a research strategy, the case study research method is a technique for answering who, why and how questions.

4.2.1.2 Strength in Understanding Process

A case study is chosen because qualitative research is concerned with process, and understanding of the process is more important than looking for the outcome (Merriam, 1988; Merriam *et al.*, 2003). Yin (2003) also defines a case study as a research process: "it is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". In addition, qualitative research is flexible and the research process continuously evolves and unfolds (Merriam, 2002, p.174). Regarding multicultural studies, Flavell (2001) points out that multicultural integration or, in the context of this study, multicultural education, is a process; it is not just for the students, but for the leaders, teaching staff and local community. Thus, a case study can provide rich

information to understand the ways and the reasons of different organizational factors that interact in the process of educational change.

4.2.1.3 Suitable for Small-scale Research

Unlike quantitative analysis, which observes patterns in data at the macro level on the basis of the frequency of occurrence of the phenomena being observed, case studies observe the data at the micro level. McWilliam (1991) argues that the case study method enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. In most cases, a case study method selects a small geographical area or a very limited number of individuals from a wider range of data as the subjects of study (Lee and Baskerville, 2003). In using the case study as research strategy, I agree with Yin (2003, 2009) that the case study helps me to explore and investigate contemporary real-life phenomena through detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of events or conditions, and the relationships between them. Stake (1995) is another researcher to support the qualitative case study as it allows researchers to conduct a study on a small scale; he identifies two types of single case study: intrinsic and instrumental case study. An intrinsic case study is carried out to learn about a unique phenomenon that the study focuses on. The researcher needs to be able to define the uniqueness of this phenomenon that distinguishes it from all others, possibly based on a collection of features or the sequence of events. An instrumental case study is carried out to provide a general understanding of a phenomenon using a particular case. The case chosen can be a typical case although an unusual case may help illustrate matters overlooked in a typical case because they are subtler there. Stake's (1995) collective case study does not mean conducting a large-scale case study; instead, it is done to provide a general understanding using a number of instrumental case studies of the same site or of several

sites. Yin (2003, 2009) further describes the collective case study which is made up of several small-scale cases; a small-scaled case study, which can be conducted in a very small geographical area or with a limited number of subjects of interest, is able to provide sets of rich data to understand any natural phenomenon (Yin, 2003, 2009).

In addition, Yin (2003) proffers that the case study inquiry "benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis" (p.13). A small-scale case study is also applied in my study, for my research focuses on referencing a theoretical framework to guide data collection to explore how multicultural education could be implemented to produce equitable opportunities in a local mainstream primary school.

4.2.2 Case Study Strategies of this Study

A qualitative case study is an ideal research methodology for this research because, first, it allows free flowing of participants' thoughts and discovering those ideas that may be invisible to the outsiders. Second, in the case study, the primary sources of data were observations and semi-structured interviews with a focus group, which projected different participants' perspectives on implementing multicultural education in their school. Third, together with conducting observations in staff meetings and follow-up semi-structured interviews, I could focus on analyzing the challenges that the teachers encountered, the strategies they adopted, and the impacts of multicultural education at St. John's. The study is focused on the process and the experiences of the participants, thus the data collected relied heavily on participants' self-reflections and interpretations of multicultural education. St. John's tried to work out possible strategies for multicultural education, so as to ensure communication, sharing of good practices among teachers and appreciation of the strengths of students. In other words, a case

study was chosen for this research as it allowed "an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events" (Yin, 2003, p.14) in order to explore the roles of different organizational factors, and the stakeholders' changes in attitudes towards multicultural education and in their actions through discursive activities. As I sought to understand the dynamic process of how multicultural education was enacted within the school, a qualitative case study was desirable as it allowed a continuously evolving research process (Feagin *et al.*, 1991; Silverman, 2005; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2003, 2009).

On the whole, I believe that this study is significant because it is the first to investigate how multicultural education is socially constructed and enacted by teachers through organizational, collegial and student-teacher interacting factors to shape the ways in which multicultural curriculum is constructed and practised by teachers in a local mainstream school. Given my interest in understanding how and why teachers tried to enact multicultural education in a mainstream school setting, I decided to employ a qualitative case study to describe comments and interactions as they occurred within its real-life context of promoting multicultural education in a mainstream primary school. In the research, several sources of evidence were used which allowed me to provide convincing answers to the questions posed.

4.2.2.1 Research Design

With the topic of this study being "Multicultural Education in Hong Kong Primary Schools: Promoting Equitable Learning Opportunities", my study is an attempt to answer the question, "How is multicultural education enacted to improve equitable learning opportunities in local schools"? As stated in Chapter 1, one primary school was selected for the study. In order to have this single case study successfully represent a

unique case (Yin, 2003, 2009), Yin and Davis (2007) prescribe the use of procedures that involve what they call multiple sources of evidence, which will help to ensure the quality of the descriptions. Below, I explicate the case study design of this research.

Research Question and Proposition

This research is the first to study why and how multicultural education is promoted and implemented in a local mainstream school – it is in fact a study of the reform of this particular school. As this case study is concerned with investigating the implementation process and organizational change of a decision or program (Yin, 2003, p.23), a deliberate thinking through of the breadth and complexity of a study are required. Yin (2003) has developed a robust research procedure which contains five important components for a case study design process: (1) a basic study question, (2) study propositions, (3) its unit(s) of analysis, (4) the logic linking the data to the propositions, and (5) the criteria for interpreting the findings (p.20). I tried to employ and modify Yin's case study procedures for my research in the following ways. In order to answer the study question – How is multicultural education enacted to improve equitable learning opportunities in a mainstream primary school? – I derived certain study propositions from the study question. For instance, I applied the school vision of St. John's, which emphasizes all students can be educated; this vision can also be seen as an underlying proposition of the research. Furthermore, according to a systemic total school environment of multicultural education (Banks, 2002a), I derived the proposition that successful multicultural education depends on the school staff attempting to work as a unit to overcome problems for the benefit of all students.

Units of Analysis

According to Yin (2003), units of analysis are the major entities or selected resources that are analyzed in a study. In this research, the data informants, such as the school heads, teachers, students, artefacts (school reports, documents, school website, and photos, etc.) or other relevant information that will be introduced in Chapter 5 could then be seen as the units of analysis of my study.

Linking Data to the Propositions

As my study seeks to address the question of how a multicultural school ensures equitable learning opportunities for all students, the theoretical framework stated in Chapter 3 provides me with a tool for exploring the research questions by examining the units of analysis. Yin (2003) shows that in a case study data collection, analysis and the criteria for interpretation of the findings should be logically linked to the propositions, and the organization of the unit of analysis. In order to link the data to the propositions of the case study, I have further divided the theoretical framework into four organizational principles for teaching and learning in a multicultural learning environment: (I) School Policy and Leadership, (II) Equity Pedagogy, (III) Professional Development, and (IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning. These four organizational principles form a development puzzle for the enquiries of the case study. As these four organizational factors are logically linked in a thematic approach to understand how multicultural education is conceptualized and enacted in a school organization, they help me to understand how multicultural education is conceptualized and enacted from the teachers' perspectives.

The Criteria for Interpreting the Findings

A case study is able to bring out the details from the viewpoints of the participants by using multiple sources of data (Campoy, 2005; Merriam, 1998; Simons, 2009; Stake, 1995, 2006; Yin, 2009; Yin and Davis, 2007). The criteria for interpreting the findings are aiming at using different finding patterns or intellectual puzzles (Manson, 1996) from a case study and to develop an interpretation that will derive the results. The criteria for interpreting the findings of this case study include information from both process and intended outcomes for research evaluation: (1) Data collection methods: documentary analysis, semi-structured interviews of the focus group, participation observations; (2) Data source: school-internal survey findings, government's external review report, overall curriculum plan, teaching and learning materials, and others; (3) Range of intended outcomes for evaluation: change in school policy, change in teachers' attitudes and behaviour, adoption of strategic plan, increased of teachers' professional knowledge, change in students' learning attitudes, incorporation of strategic plan strategies in future years, and others.

Above I have introduced the nature and structure of qualitative case study research. It is worth mentioning that I do not closely study the government's policy on multicultural education, I focus instead on the ways in which a school has interpreted and implemented multicultural education through a self-initiated, school-based project. Therefore, rather than using large samples, I adopted a qualitative case study method which involves an in-depth, longitudinal examination of a single case. It was expected that I would gain a sharpened understanding of how a local mainstream school promoted multicultural education to improve equitable learning opportunities for all students through a systematic approach to a qualitative case study as modified following Yin (2003), which provides a more comprehensive way of looking at events, collecting

data, analyzing information and reporting the results from my study. In addition, the research seeks to discover any implications for present policy and practice. In the next sections, I will elaborate the units of analysis (i.e. selection of the case and the participants) and the criteria for interpreting the findings (i.e. the data analysis and management).

4.2.2.2 Selection of the Case

The use of a single case can "minimize the chances of misrepresentation and maximize the access needed to collect the case study evidence" (Yin, 2003, p.42). The selection of St. John's in this single-case study is then an important decision that determines whether the data collected will be adequate, useful and relevant. The suitability of the potential case was the first consideration for the selection of the case. The study was carried out in a school, St. John's, where I had conducted professional development training for the teachers on questioning skills three years previously. This topic was chosen because the new school principal recognized that didactic teaching could not fully meet the diverse learning needs of the students. The principal thus believed that the teachers should be equipped with a systematic and logical questioning sequence which could sharpen students' perceptions and refine their thinking (see Section 5.1.4.2 for details). From this experience, I gained a better understanding of the school background and the school sponsoring body's visions of education.

Furthermore, St. John's was selected for it was an educationally inclusive school, which also claims to be "an effective school" in relation to the government's advocating the idea that, "*Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools*" under the special education policy (EDB, 2007u). St. John's was selected using four purposeful sampling criteria: (1) the school is a government-funded school with a mainstream curriculum. (2)

The school has a track record of having a clear vision that, "all students can be educated together". (3) Most of the students have several learning needs, the school having both special and minority students, and so the school participates in the government scheme "Whole School Approach to Cater for Students' Diverse Learning Needs" (EDB, 2007v). (4) The school is striving to implement a mainstream curriculum catering for student diversity.

In this study, with the permission of the school authority, I was able to access a wide variety of documents, including the school's profile report, the school's past and new strategic development plans, meeting minutes, teachers' and students' handbooks, assessment schemes, teaching schedules and instructional materials that facilitated the in-depth analysis of St. John's. As discussed in Chapter 3, organizational change is essential for building a whole-school culture of multicultural education, and this research site provided rich information to show how its ME Project was implemented in a real context. For instance, the school had made special arrangements in the school curriculum and timetable to incorporate the implementation of multicultural education.

4.2.2.3 The Participants

In a semi-structured interview, the principal explained that the school was aiming to develop multicultural education in a whole-school approach, so a total of thirty-five staff would be involved in this endeavour. Due to time and financial constraints, I could not study every staff member. I had to make practical decisions and, as suggested by Silverman (2005), I employed purposeful sampling in my study. Purposeful sampling means selecting groups or categories to study on the basis of their relevance to the research questions and their ability to help develop and test the research theory or give explanations (Silverman, 2005, p.130-131). In this study, the purposeful sampling

approach was adopted to select the teaching staff of the SST as the major informants of this research. The teachers who taught the primary four and five levels would also be the major informants to provide further information for the study (see Section 6.1.1.1 for details). As shown in Table 4.1, I have divided the participants into groups to represent diverse viewpoints in this study. To ensure anonymity, the data analysis and the reporting of results in Chapters 6 and 7, I use job titles for school staff while the names of students are pseudonyms.

Table 4.1 Participants and role perspectives of the study

Participants	**Role Perspectives**
Supervisor and principal	School authority's or Initiator's perspective
Other members in SST: curriculum officer, vice-principal, activity officer and social worker	Planners' or collaborators' perspective
P4-P5 class teachers	Implementers' perspective

Overall, this study focuses on the implementation of multicultural education at St. John's, which involved a change in teachers' actions during the process of implementation. I believed that the participants, i.e. supervisor, principal, senior teachers and the other primary four to five teachers in the team would present different descriptions and interpretations of multicultural education. Given the particular roles and positions, as I have shown in the second column of Table 4.1, some assumptions about the informants' perspectives are made. It is worth pointing out that teachers (an inclusive term covering school leaders and teaching staff) are the major informants in my study. However, as teaching creates potential learning outcomes and the school project was primarily designed for the students, some students or their feedback will be mentioned or recorded by the teachers or on the school web blog. For this reason, some of the students' comments are used to triangulate the school data in the thesis.

4.3 Data Management and Analysis

As the objective of this study is to explore how multicultural education was implemented in a local mainstream school and to identify some exemplary strategies, it may be said to be an investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. This qualitative case study was employed to observe subjects, i.e. the school leaders, teachers and students, in their natural habitats, and to study how these people behave in a multicultural school environment. During the research process, I observed the participants' actions in a natural setting without attempting to influence or control it. The document analysis, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with the focus group (comprising the team members of the Student Support Team) are treated as ways of triangulating the data gleaned from direct observations. The four thematic organizational principles of the theoretical framework, introduced in Chapter 3, to demonstrate multicultural education that involves constructivist changes in a school organization will be discussed in Chapters 6 and 7. However, as the changes in attitudes and beliefs of the teaching staff on the project cannot be demonstrated by experiments or questionnaires, I decided to adapt a qualitative case study to function as an illustrative research technique for gathering first-hand information about social processes in a naturally occurring context (Silverman, 2005, p.113).

Qualitative Data

Patton (1990) defined qualitative data as "detailed descriptions of situations, events, people, interactions, observed behaviours, direct quotations from people about their experiences, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts and excerpts or entire passages from documents, correspondence, records, and case histories" (p.22). As stated in the discussion of the theoretical framework in Chapter 3, the present case study draws on constructivist

approaches in examining ways of carrying out organizational change in a local mainstream primary school. Adopting constructivist perspectives in the conceptual framework of the study to understand the interactions among the participants helped me understand the development of the teachers' acceptance and their enactments of multicultural education in a whole-school environment. In order to uncover the relationship between the teachers' interactions and their implementation of multicultural education, a series of qualitative strategies for studying the social interactions in educational setting are applied in my study, including document analysis, on-site observation, focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews with the focus group, to probe into the subjective experiences of the teachers of the implementation of multicultural education. In the following sections I will present the data collection strategies followed, i.e. document analysis, observation and semi-structured interview, to address the validity and reliability concerns of the study.

4.3.1 Data Collection and Management

Miles and Huberman (1994) define data management as the operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage and retrieval. These operations are aimed at ensuring high-quality, accessible data; documentation of just what analysis has been carried out; and retention of data and associated analysis after the study is complete (Patton, 1990). Following Yin's (2003) qualitative case study model, a careful selection of units of analysis is also considered crucial to data collection, management and analysis in my study.

4.3.1.1 Documentary Analysis

Stake (1995) maintains that documents serve as substitutes for records of activity that the researcher could not observe directly. Yin (2003) points out that there are several strengths of documentation: (1) documents can be reviewed repeatedly; (2) documents can provide exact names, references and details of an event; and (3) documents have broad coverage with a long span of time, covering many events and many settings.

Patton (1990) also states that records and documents serve various purposes: (1) documents are a basic source of information about project activities and processes, and they can give the researcher ideas about important questions to pursue through more direct observation and interviewing; (2) documents provide information about trends of development in their historical context, planning, implementation and, in my study, a review of various aspects of multicultural education or catering for learner differences; (3) documents are records of an accumulation of experience, effort and expertise of the school personnel in different areas of the school. In order to have a clear picture of the historical development of school policy on multicultural education, the following documents were analyzed:

1. Findings of two school-internal surveys on providing diversified learning opportunities to cater for students' needs;
2. Teachers' Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) findings obtained in 2005;
3. Students' Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) obtained in 2005;

4. Official curriculum documents concerning government policies on integrated education and catering for learning diversity in the whole-school approach;
5. School profile and report of the government's external review of the school;
6. 2006-2009 strategic development plan of the school;
7. School's overall curriculum plan for 2006-2009;
8. Schedule and documents of staff development day;
9. Scheme of work, minutes of meetings of the school; and
10. teaching and learning materials, including teaching handouts, assessment criteria and worksheets, etc.

All these documents related to the study were collected and examined before observations and semi-structured interviews were carried out as they provide basic information for the researcher to pose questions for the study (see Chapter 5 for details). Permission was given for access to these documents by the school authority and the confidentiality of records was respected.

4.3.1.2 Observational Method

Observation is closely linked to constructivist learning perspectives, as it emphasizes the study of people in their everyday contexts, or the participation in peoples' social interactions to achieve the goal of understanding them (Bow, 2002). But human interaction is usually very complex; it is easy to misunderstand behaviours in our everyday interactions, which is why Jorgensen (1989) suggests that a qualitative researcher should be able to uncover and observe the subjective beliefs of those being studied (p.18) and Wolcott (1990) advocates that researchers "do less, more thoroughly"

(p.62) as the most crucial task of a qualitative study. In order to learn about the insiders' way of life as it is experienced, defined and made meaningful by them, observation is a distinct method which allows collecting rich detailed and different data (Jorgensen, 1989). Slavin (1992) remarks that the observational method in research means the investigator directly participates in the activities being studied (p.68). In short, observation is used to understand the social world from the subjects' point-of-view.

In this study the selection of the observational method is important to help me gain an understanding of changes in the teachers' beliefs and behaviours regarding the achievement of equitable learning opportunities for students through interactions. The observational method thus includes a variety of informants as they are likely to represent diverse viewpoints according to their roles, with their beliefs and behaviours changing with regards to time, space, situation, social interaction, etc. during the research.

Moreover, the methodology of observation is characterized by a flexible, open-ended strategy of defining a problem for study by reference to the participants' (i.e. insiders') daily lives (Jorgensen, 1989). In the context of my study, the "insiders" are the school leaders and teachers. For the purpose of defining a problem for study, I began with a general problem, "How is multicultural education enacted to improve equitable learning opportunities in a mainstream primary school"? Human interactions were recorded in field notes through observations. The research questions were further addressed within the theoretical framework to ascertain if there was any change of attitudes, beliefs and actions by influential stakeholders, such as school leaders, teachers and students.

Non-Participant Observation vs. Participant Observation

For qualitative studies based on observation, two categories are considered: participant and non-participant observation. In participant observations, the research participant will be the researcher, i.e. the one making and recording the observations, and data are collected by interacting with and experiencing the research subjects (UCEL, 2004). Participants may make reports about themselves or others; answering questions about themselves would be classified as a "self-report" (Spurlock *et al.*, 2008). Applied to my study, if using the methodology of participant observation, the teachers and school managers – but not myself – would be the researchers, and they would be required to provide reflections about themselves.

On the other hand, the methodology of non-participant observation involves the researcher or a third-party making and recording observations, usually of the participants. Generally speaking, this is a methodology of direct observation where data are collected by observing behaviour without interacting with the participants. In non-participant observation, third parties may make reports about the participants, or information may be learned from data collected for more objective research purposes (Spurlock *et al.*, 2008).

The distinction between non-participant and participant observation is not as clear-cut as it may seem, as it is difficult for an observer to make no impact on the situation when s/he acts as a non-participant researcher. Further, I faced the problem of distinguishing the exact observational method I applied in my study. This is because this study was originally conceived as a non-participant study and I intended to take no part in the situation being studied. However, as discussed in Chapter 5 below, I had worked with the school staff before undertaking this study. Thus, during the study, the relationship between staff and myself were friendly and trusting. In the end, there were

more interactions than there would have been if I had been an unknown researcher, and the nature of the interactions was also characterised by familiarity. Therefore, it is extremely hard for me to distinguish my study as solely non-participant in the sense of a researcher who sits back and observes without any kind of participation. However, in order to maintain the reliability and validity of the research data, I remained as non-participatory as possible, and I informed the informants of my study purposes.

Overt Observation

Due to the overt nature of observation in this study, I was allowed to enter the world of the people being studied; at the same time, I was open with the group involved in the study (Vockell and Asher, 1995). In short, the subjects were aware that they were being studied and my research purpose was openly acknowledged, and the research was thus carried out with the permission and cooperation of the group. As the main purpose of this research was to obtain first-hand information of the teachers' experiences of implementing projects, tackling difficulties and achieving objectives, this aim was greatly facilitated by being able to observe what was happening to them throughout the study. I also recalled informal conversations heard in the field (e.g. at meetings or in other school areas) and wrote down field notes. Overall, the non-participant role enabled me to stand aside from the informants and take notes openly. This helped me gain a better understanding of the nature of the school's culture, and the reasons for the insiders' responses to multicultural education.

Further, in order to arrive at a more meaningful answer to the basic research question – "How is multicultural education enacted to improve equitable learning opportunities in a mainstream primary school"? – I designed an observation guide that was centred on teachers' perspectives and practices (see Appendix I). The goal of this

observation guide was to understand what and how factors operating in teachers' social contexts interacted to produce and shape their constructions and enactments for ensuring that students had equitable learning opportunities.

4.3.1.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Observation aims to gain access to as many perspectives as possible (Jorgensen, 1989; Silverman, 2005). In the other words, observation aims to gather the best possible evidence of the meanings that people apply to the circumstances of their daily lives. Yet, I needed a research strategy to clarify and explore the meanings of the insiders whom I sought to observe. With reference to education researchers, the major advantage of the interview is that ambiguity can be reduced since it is possible for either the interviewer or the respondent to ask for clarifications during the interview (Bernard and Bernard, 1994; Wiersma, 2000). More importantly, as this study is taking a constructivist approach to reveal the change processes of a group of mainstream teachers towards implementation of multicultural education, the interview provides me with a possible way of interpreting the interview responses and what the informant thinks.

In this study, I used the semi-structured interview as the interview strategy, for it not only facilitates a friendly relationship between researcher and informants, it also means that supplementary information relevant to the research could be obtained easily and promptly. It is recommended in the literature that for a semi-structured interview an interview guide be developed to guide the interview process (Bernard and Bernard, 1994); see Appendix II for the interview questions used at different stages of the study. Different sets of questions were designed according to the situations at different stages of the study. The series of interviews allowed opportunities to raise follow-up questions, with the questions expected to cover all the focuses identified in the set of research

questions (Jorgensen, 1989; Williamson, 2006). In order to develop concepts, insights and an understanding of people's activities (Merriam, 1998), during semi-structured interviews, I started with questions and then tried to probe further with different perspectives to collect data. Broadly speaking, the study fell into four stages: Project planning stage (April 2006 – Early October 2006); Exploratory stage (October 2006 – Early November 2006); Project implementation stage (November 2006 – March 2007); and Project evaluation stage (April 2007 – Late May 2007). The planning of the data gathering stage is outlined in Table 4.2; both observation and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection in each stage. Different sets of informants were accessed according to the nature of the study events.

Table 4.2 Planning of data collection

Stage	Date	Research Method (Code)	Set of Informants
PHASE I - PROJECT PLANNING STAGE	April 2006	Observation (O-1) of school-internal meeting for ME Project	Student Support Team (SST) members of St. John's
	May 2006	Observation (O-2) of internal meeting between St. John's and Edith's	SST members of St. John's
	Aug 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-1)	Principal (P) and Curriculum officer (CO)
	Sep 2006	Observation (O-3) of internal preparatory meeting	SST members of St. John's
	Sep 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-2)	P and CO
	Sep 2006	Observation (O-4) of internal meeting of St. John's	SST members of St. John's
	Late Sep 2006	Observation (O-5) of internal meeting of St. John's	SST members of St. John's
	Late Sep 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-3)	CO
	Oct 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-4)	P
	Oct 2006	Observation (O-6) of internal meeting of school	SST members of St. John's and the teachers
PHASE 2 - EXPLORATORY STAGE	Oct 2006	Observation (O-7) of the school visit, i.e. the professional development program	SST members and teachers of St. John's
	Nov 2006	Observation (O-8) of pre-education workshop for St. John's students	Teachers and students (Ss) of St. John's
PHASE 3 – PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION	Nov 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-5)	P and CO
	Mid-Nov 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-6) for discussing selection of students	CO
	Late Nov 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-7)	CO
	Nov 2006	Observation (O-9) of Kick-off Ceremony, i.e. the first student inter-group activity	SST members, teachers, Ss of St. John's, SPTs and SPSs
	Dec 2006	Observation (O-10) of the second student inter-group activity of ME Project	SST members, teachers, Ss of St. John's, SPTs and SPSs
	Jan 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-8)	CO
	Feb 2007	Observation (O-11) of the third student inter-group activity of ME Project	CO, class teachers and Ss of St. John's, SPTs and SPSs
	Feb 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-9)	CO
	Mar 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-10)	P and CO
PHASE 4 – EVALUATION	Mid-April 2007	Observation (O-12) internal project review meeting of school	SST members and teachers of St. John's
	May 2007	Observation (O-13) School review meeting of student who participated in ME Project. Review record was also uploaded to school's website.	Ss
	Late May 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-11). Final interview of SST	SST members and teachers of St. John's

4.3.2 Data Gatherings, Transcriptions and Translations

As shown in Table 4.2, three sets of semi-structured interview questions for different research stages (see Appendix II) were emailed and faxed to the schools at least a week before the interviews took place. All research participants were informed of the nature and purposes of the research, their rights to withdraw from the research project at any time, and their right to remain anonymous in the research. I translated all conversations of the interviews and school documents myself, to prevent distortions of

the original meanings of the informants. All interviewees were informed that their use of specific terminologies on education would be translated according to the government's published bilingual glossary reference book on education (HKSAR, 2001). Moreover, for those terms where I was unsure of the exact English wording, I consulted the original teacher-speakers for confirmation. All this work was to ensure that the translations were in line with the conventions of written English, unavoidably contributing to a loss of authenticity in the English data used for analysis, though not in the original Chinese. Even though the purpose of this study was not focused on detailed linguistic analysis, but rather on the major issues being discussed, still the relevance of such details was not taken lightly, for I am aware that they may carry implicit meanings in the conversations. I referred, therefore, to the original tape whenever necessary in interpreting the data.

4.3.3 Data Analysis

In a qualitative study the emphasis is on the depth of data collection. The purpose of data analysis is to organize and present the rich and enormous amount of qualitative data in a concise, precise and easily comprehensible way to the readers. To analyze such a large volume of data for this research, a systematic approach to data analysis that involves the examination, categorization, tabulation and recombination of the evidence to address the initial propositions of the research study, must be carefully selected. Gay and Airasian (2000b) suggest a data analytical approach which focuses on: (1) Reading – becoming familiar with the data and identifying main themes in it; (2) Describing – examining the data in depth to provide descriptions of setting, participants and activities; (3) Classifying – categorizing and coding instances of data and physically grouping them into themes; and (4) Interpreting – interpreting and synthesizing the

organized data into general conclusions or understandings. Considering the above account of data analytical approaches, I attempted to adopt a cyclical process of data interpretation by classifying the data. In brief, the data analysis of this study was to undergo several interactive steps: reading, describing, classifying and interpreting of the data.

4.3.4 Validity and Reliability

Observation is a technique that provides first-hand insights into why people behave as they do (Jorgensen, 1989). Jorgensen (1989) further states that concepts are defined phenomenologically, i.e. concepts are derived from the meanings insiders use to make sense of their daily existence. Concepts emerge through what insiders do and say in concrete situations, and observation thus results in valid concepts. Hence, observation does not measure reliability, but contributes to producing dependable and trustworthy findings. In addition, observation does not prejudge issues and events (in the way a questionnaire may, for example), and for these reasons it is possible to argue that such a method provides data that has a high level of validity (Karvonen *et al.*, 2004).

The methodology of observation is very much concerned with dependable and trustworthy findings. Maintaining simple, routine and highly standardized procedures in the research process is the way to ensure consistency of results.

In order to maintain the validity and reliability of the study, a number of procedures are employed in this study. First, following Yin's (2003) suggestion to use several sources of evidence as a way of ensuring construct validity, the current study uses observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The specification of the unit of analysis provides me with a way of considering the research questions by

reviewing the four organizational principles of learning and teaching in a multicultural school set out in the theoretical framework. In addition, data and concepts are formulated and checked by several procedures and forms of evidence, such as direct experience and observations, different stages of interviews, and different informants and documents.

Second, it is important for me to access the insiders' worlds, so naturalistic observations were carried out by attaching myself to teacher meetings and different student groupings; this helped provide direct access to understand the change process of the participants' beliefs and the social interactions of the teachers and the students. Third, the use of several data collection methods and a number of informants, as well as triangulating the data collected at each learning event with the SST increases the credibility of the data (Gay and Airasian, 2000b, p.239). Fourth, to overcome the problem of subjective judgment, the principle of methodological triangulation was adopted to enhance validity and reliability. I used several sources of evidence to have convergent lines of inquiry (Yin, 2003). For instance, what the teachers said in the interviews was triangulated with actual observation. The analysis of official documents and school minutes was triangulated with teacher interviews.

On the whole, in this study, a systematic investigation of the school plan and triangulation with school documents, leaders, teachers and students ensured an in-depth understanding of the changes and possible strategies for implementing multicultural education in the local mainstream school setting.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Overall, the current study is a case study that takes a constructivist approach to investigating how multicultural education is implemented in a local mainstream school and to identifying exemplary practices to ensure equity learning opportunities for diverse groups of students. In this chapter, I introduced the methodology of case study research not as a sampling technique but as designed to bring out the details of one site from the viewpoint of the participants by using several sources of data.

Research Questions

In order to discern the multicultural practices in the local mainstream school setting, two major research questions and three sub-questions were asked to investigate how multicultural education in a Hong Kong mainstream school is implemented to improve equitable opportunities:

1 How is multicultural education organized and implemented in the local school to improve equitable opportunities for all students?

   1.1 How do the participants or school staff construct shared understandings through their interactions?

   1.2 How do these understandings lead to collaborative action?

2 What are the barriers, if any, to implementing multicultural education strategies?

   2.1 What kinds of changes did school staff go through during the development and implementation of multicultural education in the school?

The research questions are framed as "how" and "what" questions, so this case study is exploratory in nature (Yin, 2003, p.8), using a variety of evidence, such as, school documents, report of the government's school review, teaching and learning materials, and so on. In addition, my observations of the teachers' talks and practices, and the data gathered in semi-structured interviews with the teachers ensured the credibility and reliability of the research findings. To reiterate, the data were analyzed by comparing how the teachers' ideas moved from one point to another. Through the combined methods of interviews, observations and document analysis, the data analysis is expected to throw light on the participants' reflexive processes in some depth.

In the next chapter, I will introduce the research site (St. John's) and the work flow of the data collection. It will be found that the design of questions and guidelines for interviews and observations was such as to link the data to the proposition "All students can be educated together", and the criteria for the interpretation of the findings, i.e. the four categories for teaching and learning in a multicultural learning environment: (I) School Policy and Leadership, (II) Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning, (III) Professional Development, and (IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning. Furthermore, any changes in these four categories for teaching and learning in the ME Project will be revealed. The findings are presented and discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 of the thesis.

Chapter 5 – Research Site and its Challenges

In Chapter 4, I gave a broad theoretical overview of the reasons for choosing a qualitative case study as the research methodology for the study in light of the study taking a constructivist approach to investigating the ways in which multicultural education was implemented in a local mainstream school to promote equitable opportunities. This study uses several qualitative methods, i.e. document analysis, observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, to collect evidence of the teaching strategies employed in this school in order to examine the relationship between understandings of multicultural education and action, and to gain access to the inner worlds of the school staff. The data collection was made with the consent of the school. The period of data collection took place in a local mainstream primary covers two school years - 2005/06 and 2006/07 (i.e. from March 2006 to May 2007). To maximize what can be learned in the study, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted and observations are selected. The participants provided data to this study involved a total of 15 school staff and 106 students (69 ordinary students and 37 visually disabled students). Furthermore, in order not to cause disruption to the work of the school staff, each interview did not exceed 60 minutes, resulting in a total of 1120 minutes of recorded data. The data that I collected in observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were in Chinese. The observational and interview data were recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed by myself after each visit.

This chapter will discuss the research sample, the actual research design and the process of the study pragmatically, i.e. it will give an in-depth account of the methods employed in the implementation of the research design, for example, background information about the informants, arrangements made for fieldwork, transcription of data, etc. I have organised this chapter into two major areas. First, in Section 5.1,

detailed information will be provided about the school background of St. John's, its organizational structure and the research participants. As discussed in Chapter 4, the primary data sources of this study are the data collected in observations and interviews. In Section 5.2, I introduce the design of the study and the data of the documentary analysis. As the government documents have been discussed in Chapter 1, I will not repeat the discussion here. Another source of documentation, the school documents and relevant school records on multicultural education, are further discussed in Section 5.2. These documents will be used as a cross-reference for the observational and interview data, and for that reason they are discussed in the data analysis chapters, that is, in Chapter 6 and 7. In order to give a clearer picture of the school records on multicultural education, these will be discussed in detail in Section 5.1.2.

5.1 Research Site

In this study, a qualitative case study was undertaken in one mainstream school that claims to be "an effective school" in terms of the government's slogan that "*Effective schools are educationally inclusive schools*" under its special education policy (EDB, 2007n, 2007p). The school was selected using four purposeful sampling criteria. Firstly, the school is a government-funded school. Secondly, as illustrated in the official reports of the primary school profile, the school has a track record of having a clear vision that "all students can be educated together" (CHSC, 2004, 2007). Thirdly, there are diverse learning needs problems at the school, for example, some of the students have a mild physical or mental disability, some are from single parent families, some are minority students, and so on. Lastly, the school has a vision of implementing a multicultural curriculum. In this study, observations of the school head, teachers and students were employed together with a series of semi-structured interviews with the

members of the school's student support team (SST). In addition, relevant school and government policy documents were examined.

In the following section, I introduce the research site of this study, St. John's, more fully. The information was mainly obtained by reviewing the school's official documents and discussions of the school staff. St. John's will be introduced in several steps: firstly, I introduce the school's mission, teachers' backgrounds and their conventional school practices; secondly, I explain the school's rationale for embracing the change challenge of becoming a multicultural school; thirdly, I outline the school's preparations for this change, for example via surveys of both the teachers' cultural awareness and the students' readiness for multicultural education.

5.1.1 General Background of the School

St. John's is a government funded primary school that has served the local Western district for nearly half a century. The school is a Catholic school, with the motto "Faith and Charity", which represents the commitment of the whole teaching team to a belief that all students can develop to their full capacity. As St. John's is a government-funded school, it is subject to the rules and regulations of the government regarding accountability of the school to the public. Official documents outlining the rules and regulations provided me with data for the study pertaining to its overall practices.

5.1.1.1 Accountability of the School

In Hong Kong, in order to evaluate school performance and encourage schools to conduct school self-evaluations, the education authority requires each public school to make itself visible to the public. Thus, the government publishes the school profile

reports of all the local public schools; parents and members of the general public can inspect these reports and obtain relevant information about the public schools in which they are interested (EDB, 2007n). For the convenience of the general population, the school profiles are distributed in the form of booklets and electronic copies. Most of the schools in Hong Kong will also upload their school's self-evaluation document and their three-year strategic plan, the government's Quality Assurance Report (EDB, 2007l), and all sorts of data which help to publicize the school via its own official school website.

5.1.1.2 School Mission

In the government's document Primary School Profiles – 2007 (CHSC, 2007; EDB, 2007n) St. John's stated that the school is faithful to the spirit of Jesus Christ to provide a quality and holistic (all-round) education that focuses on the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetical development of the students. In addition, inspired by the beliefs regarding education for youth handed down by the founder of the school board, the school strives to create an ideal and pleasant environment for the students to develop their full potential, a passion for life and a positive attitude towards serving society. On the whole, the school team is committed to the principle that "*all our students can develop to their full capacity in the love of God*" (CHSC, 2004, 2007).

5.1.1.3 School Heads

In Hong Kong, a supervisor is a director of a school, appointed by the school board or sponsoring body. As a supervisor, s/he is also one of the members of the school board, and so has the power to recommend a candidate selected by the selection

committee to the government for the position of school principal (EDB, 2007o). The major functions of a supervisor are to preside over the school meetings, sign the statement of school accounts and to notify the government of any personnel change, e.g. that a principal or teacher ceases to hold office, or is newly employed (EDB, 2007g). On the other hand, the school principal appears to play a similar role to that of a paid chief executive officer or CEO; s/he is responsible for the overall management of the school and plays a decisive role in the success of quality reforms (EDB, 2007d). The supervisor (S) of St. John's was a Catholic priest appointed to the board of St. John's in 2001 to handle the struggling school's problems. The principal had been newly employed by the supervisor in 2003. The two school heads – the supervisor and the principal – were significant figures in the multicultural changes at St. John's investigated in this study; for further details about the heads see Section 5.1.3.

5.1.1.4 Students and Teachers

St. John's is a well-established school with its own traditions. It is an ordinary co-educational mainstream primary school, without facilities to support students with SEN. There are 18 classes comprising three classes at six levels (primary one to six). St. John's has approximately 600 students, ranging from primary levels one to six, whose ages range from seven to twelve years. St. John's is situated in the Western district on Hong Kong Island, and the students are predominantly from low to middle income families, so the students' socio-economic status varies. Although a Catholic school, only 5% of students are Catholic, with the remaining students coming from families of various Christian, Buddhist, Confucian or other faiths; many of the students' families may have no formal religious beliefs.

At the time of the study, the school had 32 teaching staff in total, 31 of them are the regular teachers and one is a non-regular teacher - the social worker. With the exception of the social worker, all the regular teachers had completed recognized primary school teacher training. Five (including the supervisor and the principal) were core members of the SST. According to the school's self-evaluation document for the External School Review, a measure of quality assurance for public schools in Hong Kong (EDB, 2007l), there were seven male and twenty-five female teaching staff who made up the staff. Seven of the teaching staff fell into the age range of 50-60 years; six into the age range of 40-49 years; twelve into the age range of 30-39 years; and the remaining six into the age range of 20-29 years. Of these teachers, 13 had been teaching for over 15 years; eight for l0-14 years; six for 5-9 years; two for 2-4 years; and only one had fewer than two years teaching experience. Some of the relevant information can be found in Table 5.1. In addition, there were also three part-time teaching staff at St John's, one of whom was the school social worker. As the major responsibility of a school social worker is student counselling, this staff member had no formal teaching duties at St. John's. Of the 31 teachers, only one (TD) had special education training but this teacher was due for retirement. Although the school is a Catholic school, the religious affiliations of the teachers varied: twelve were Catholic, ten belonged to other Christian denominations, and the remaining nine had not provided any relevant information to the school. In sum, there was diversity in the teaching team of St. John's; however, the "typical" teacher was female, Catholic, middle-aged and experienced.

5.1.1.5 The Student Support Team

To address the diverse learning needs of students through the whole-school approach, schools are offered an Intensive Learning Support Grant by the government

according to the number of students in need, and they are provided with greater autonomy and flexibility in resource deployment (EDB, 2007u). Due to the whole-school approach, similar to other schools St. John's set up an SST to coordinate the teaching staff and parents in the provision of systematic and appropriate school-based support services (EDB, 2007u). The SST was made up of the supervisor, the principal, the vice-principal, the curriculum officer, the activity officer and the part-time school social worker.

As illustrated in Table 5.1, the SST members participated in both the focus group discussions and the semi-structured interviews, that is, they were the major informants in this study. Table 5.1 also lists another nine teachers who as the class teachers of the students were also involved in the project. These teachers were valuable informants, particularly in terms of their reflections on multicultural education in an internal project evaluation meeting, and so it is useful to provide general background information about them in Table 5.1. This table presents the characteristics of the participants. First, with the exception of the school's registered social worker, the members of the SST were predominantly Catholic, experienced teachers and carried out different administrative roles at the school. Second, none of the team members had any relevant training in special education or catering for diversity. Third, the administrative experience of the school administrators, e.g. the principal, the vice-principal and the curriculum officer, was slight. It is not surprising that these members of the SST were hesitant to make firm decisions at the planning stage of the project (see Chapters 6 and 7 for details).

Table 5.1 Participant information

School Staff	Religion	Gender	Years of Teaching Experience	Years of Service in Current Administrative Position	Professional Teacher Training	Special Education Training
Student Support Team						
Supervisor (S)	Catholic	Male	20+	10	Yes	No
Principal (P)	Catholic	Male	12	3	Yes	No
Vice-principal (VP)	Catholic	Female	14	0	Yes	No
Curriculum officer (CO)	Catholic	Female	17	3	Yes	No
Activity officer (AO)	Nil	Male	10	3	Yes	No
Social worker (SW)	Nil	Female	N/A	N/A	No	No
Other Involved Teachers						
Teacher A (TA)	Nil	Female	4	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher B (TB)	Christian	Female	4	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher C (TC)	Christian	Female	7	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher D (TD)	Catholic	Female	20+	N/A	Yes	Yes
Teacher E (TE)	Nil	Female	8	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher F (TF)	Nil	Female	20+	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher G (TG)	Nil	Female	11	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher H (TH)	Catholic	Female	6	N/A	Yes	No
Teacher I (TI)	Nil	Female	5	N/A	Yes	No

Note: N/A = Not applicable

5.1.1.6 Assessment Model

Students with diverse learning needs and abilities demonstrate their competencies in different ways, and so schools have to go beyond traditional measures of subject-matter knowledge and include considerations of complex cognitive and social skills (Banks *et al.*, 2001, p.202). Banks *et al.* (2001) pointed out that, "*evaluating the progress of students from diverse racial and ethnic groups and social classes is complicated by differences in language, learning styles, and cultures. Hence the use of a single method of assessment will probably further disadvantage students from particular social classes and ethnic groups*" (p.201). A multicultural school is then expected to be able to design, use and evaluate the various assessment modes so as to gather more accurate and comprehensive information to diagnose students' learning to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching. However, in Hong Kong, "elite schools" are those that can help their students achieve high academic results in public examinations. The teachers of St. John's subscribe to this definition of an elite school as

well. Therefore, in order to maintain the good reputation of their schools, teachers neglect the learning needs of their students and provide intensive training for students, with the students having to sit for two examinations and two tests per year. In Hong Kong, one test is a mid-year assessment mainly focusing on major subjects, e.g. Chinese and English Languages, Mathematics and General Studies in primary schools. While the test at the end of the year, called an examination, examines every teaching subject, including those are regarded as minor subjects, e.g. Physical Education, Music, Visual Art and Religious Studies. The impact of an examination on a student is far-reaching as the results will determine whether s/he is promoted to the next grade level or not. In Hong Kong, most of the tests and examinations are summative assessments and they are mostly written, not practical tests and examinations. There are even written exam papers for Physical Education, Music and Visual Art.

5.1.2 Diversified Learning and Learning Diversity

As noted in Chapter 2, local schools will declare catering for diversity to be the major focus of the promotion of multicultural education. Yet, finding ways of catering for learning diversity is a serious issue in the development of multicultural education in Hong Kong. First of all, multicultural education requires a substantial cultural awareness on the part of the local teachers because it affects teachers' willingness to provide diversified learning opportunities to their students. In addition, students with diverse learning needs are regarded as disadvantaged, and their learning may not supported at home. Like other local schools, St. John's has to cope with these two issues, readiness of providing diversified learning and a better understanding of students with diverse learning needs.

5.1.2.1 Cultural Awareness of the Teachers

With the school's approval, I had opportunities to read the school documents for this study. From 1997 onward, the government had put enormous effort into publicizing the idea of "a whole-school approach in catering for learning differences" (EDB, 2007u), and the two new leaders at St John's began to explore their teachers' attitudes to diversity before launching new programs or a curriculum for multicultural education. In one of the school's records, there was a January 2005 report of the teachers' cultural awareness of the students. The supervisor had been a guest lecturer at a local teacher education institution to teach life education to in-service teachers in 2003-2004, so he had a prior connection with the HKIEd. In 2005, he got help from the teaching team at the HKIEd, and adopted the Cultural Diversity Awareness Inventory (CDAI) (Henry, 1991) to examine the teachers' cultural diversity awareness. This instrument was a 28-item opinion questionnaire using a 5-point Likert-type scale (i.e. 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5=strongly agree), which was completed anonymously by 31 full-time teachers of St. John's. The instrument items were clearly identified and divided into five subsets: diversity awareness, classroom environment, family-school interaction, cross-cultural communication and alternative assessment.

It is noteworthy that a majority of the teachers chose neutral responses to the survey questions. This might have been due to their lack of familiarity with the new school heads and consequently they did not yet feel comfortable expressing an opinion.

The findings of the survey showed that the teachers were culturally aware of catering for students with diverse needs, but they still showed a reluctance to teach such students, e.g. 29% of the teachers stated that they preferred working with students who shared their cultural background. Further, 32.1% agreed that they felt uncomfortable

teaching or working with people with different values from their own. Table 5.2 lists selected findings of the survey.

Table 5.2 demonstrates that the teachers agreed to share the burden of catering for learning differences with the parents. In the category purporting to reveal the teachers' attitudes towards the Culturally Diverse Family, 52% of teachers felt that they should establish parental interactions outside the normal school setting; 48.4% of teachers agreed that the parents should have a role in program planning, and 61% agreed to schedule meetings and program planning at the convenience of parents. However, 32.2% of participants felt that parents of different cultural backgrounds would know little about the assessment of their students, and so school education was still seen as the domain of the teachers. Regarding Cross-Cultural Communication, some teachers (29%) responded that they were uncomfortable with people who spoke non-standard languages. Lastly, with regard to Creating a Multicultural Environment, 79.3% of teachers agreed that cultural knowledge could affect a teacher's expectation of students. Eighty-eight per cent of teachers stated that they would not accept ethnic jokes or phrases by students in the classrooms, and only one teacher (3%) thought that public schools had no responsibility to teach ethnic customs and traditions. Furthermore, 52% of teachers stated that they were willing to accommodate teaching for diversity. Most of the teachers (94%) believed that diversified learning opportunities should be provided in the classroom. In sum, the survey demonstrates that many teachers in St. John's recognized their roles in multicultural education, and that they would also be willing to take up the task of developing and maintaining a multicultural environment for students with diverse needs.

Table 5.2 Selected survey findings of attitudes towards multicultural education by St. John's Primary School teachers in 2005

Cultural Awareness of the Teachers at St. John's Primary School (*Survey results obtained in 2005)								
Questions	Strongly Agree & Agree		Strongly Disagree & Disagree		Neutral		Missing	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
There are cultural differences between the teacher & student	15	48.40	10	32.30	6	19.40	0	0.00
It is important to identify students by students' diversity	27	87.10	0	0.00	4	12.90	0	0.00
I prefer to work with students who share my culture	9	29.00	5	16.10	17	54.80	0	0.00
Uncomfortable with people who have values different from me	10	32.10	14	45.20	7	22.60	0	0.00
Perceptions of the Culturally Diverse Family								
Teachers should establish parent interactions outside school activities	14	52.00	0	0.00	16	45.00	1	3.00
Should include family view of school and society in school program planning	15	48.40	0	0.00	16	51.60	0	0.00
Necessary to include parent input in program planning	24	77.40	0	0.00	7	22.60	0	0.00
Parents know little about assessing their own children	10	32.20	3	9.70	18	58.10	0	0.00
Schedule meetings at parents' convenience	19	61.00	2	6.00	7	23.00	3	10.00
Cross-cultural Communication								
Uncomfortable with people who speaknon-standard language	9	29.00	17	54.90	5	16.10	0	0.00
Assessment								
Students should be referred for testing if learning difficulties appear to be due to cultural or language differences	19	61.30	3	9.70	9	29.00	0	0.00
Creating a Multicultural Environment Using Multicultural Methods and Materials								
Solution to communication problems of certain diverse groups is child's own responsibility	10	32.30	14	45.20	7	22.60	0	0.00
Accept the use of ethnic jokes/phrases by children	2	6.00	27	88.00	1	3.00	1	3.00
Public schools have no responsibility to teach ethnic customs and traditions	1	3.00	24	78.00	4	13.00	2	6.00
Teachers should provide opportunities for students to share cultural differences	19	62.00	0	0.00	10	32.00	2	6.00
Teachers should make program adaptations to accommodate diversity	16	52.00	1	3.00	12	39.00	2	6.00
Student tasks should be rotated regularly and with equal opportunity	29	94.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	2	6.00
Cultural knowledge should affect teacher's expectations	23	79.30	0	0.00	6	20.70	2	0.00

5.1.2.2 Students' Attitudes to Learning

In order to create a multicultural learning environment, getting to know the cultural awareness of the teachers and their attitudes towards teaching in a diverse environment is not enough. Meltaer *et al.* (2002; 2004) argue that students' self-perceptions frame their willingness to work hard at learning, and teachers' encouragement is a powerful strategy that could help them bypass the effects of their difficulties and achieve greater success in school. In marked contrast, students with learning difficulties who have negative academic self-perceptions and are judged by their teachers as making only a limited effort in school would just achieve at below-average level in comparison with their peers (Meltzer *et al.*, 2004). Hence, to have a better understanding of the students' social attitudes and helping them to develop positive self-concepts requires giving positive support to the students. So the supervisor and the principal decided to collect social and affective data about students through an official survey, the Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) (EDB, 2007b; EMB, 2001b).

Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO)

The Assessment Program for Affective and Social Outcomes (APASO) is an official instrument (EDB, 2007b) that covers both the interaction of the social and affective domains as well as the cognitive domain of a student. In January 2000, the Education Department obtained support from the Quality Education Fund to commission the HKIEd to conduct a research project aimed at developing performance indicators for measuring students' affective and social outcomes. The APASO provides general indices of affective and social outcomes through a comparison of a set of Hong Kong school norms obtained from 37,000 students at 69 primary schools and 71 secondary schools from March to April 2001. APASO for primary school level contains eight sets of questionnaires (from PS1 to PS8)[6], and the initial targeted student group for most of the questionnaires was primary level three. To refrain from putting an excessive demand on the students for the completion of the test, the government strongly

[6] PS1- Attitudes to School (Quality of School Life); PS2- Self Concept; PS3- Attitudes to Learning; PS4- Causal Attribution; PS5- Interpersonal Relationships (Appropriate Social Skills and Inappropriate Assertiveness); PS6- Values; PS7- Interpersonal Relationships (Interpersonal Competence); PS8- Problem Solving

suggested that schools arrange selected groups of students to do the test, and gave the schools discretion in the selection of questionnaires for testing the students.

School Findings

The supervisor and the principal took a similar view to Meltaer *et al.* (2002, 2004); these two school heads thought that if their students with learning difficulties could be treated encouragingly by the teachers, they would have positive perceptions of themselves and their school lives. As a result, these students would work equally hard and attain similar levels of academic competence to their peers who did not have learning difficulties. In October 2005, 97 students, boys and girls, from primary levels three to five, ranging in age from 8-10 years, were tested with APASO. It is worth noting that most of the students in these groups were later the participants in the ME Project of this study. Three sets of questionnaires were selected from the APASO (EDB, 2007f) to measure the students' attitudes to school (PS1), self-concept (PS2) and attitude to learning (PS3). The students' social and affective attitudes were found to be outstanding compared with Hong Kong school norms: the students' attitude to learning (Mean=3.03) is higher than the general local school norm (Mean=2.93). They also have relatively lower negative feelings about studying at school (Mean=1.61). This may be due to the high mean score of teacher-students' relationship (Mean=3.17). In fact, the students' overall satisfaction with learning was positive (Mean=3.03); they appreciated the opportunities that the school offered them (Mean=3.15). The peer relationships (Mean=2.84) were also higher than the norm (2.79). The students responded that they had a good sense of achievement in learning (Mean=2.84). When compared with the local school norm (Mean=2.50), St. John's students had a better academic self-concept (Mean=2.56), and so their self-concept (Mean=2.53) was higher than the norm (Mean=2.29). In sum, St. John's students held positive attitudes to learning and, as recognized by the supervisor, the students were equipped with "multicultural readiness" for the school's ME Project to be introduced in the academic year 2006-2007. The major findings of the APASO are given in Table 5.3 below:

Table 5.3 APASO findings concerning school students in 2005

Domains of APASO	Average Score of St. John's Students (N=97)	Hong Kong School Norms	Difference
Learning Attitudes	3.03	2.93	+0.10
Negative Feelings	1.61	1.63	-0.02
Teacher-Student Relationship	3.17	3.06	+0.11
Overall Satisfaction with Learning	3.03	2.79	+0.24
Opportunities	3.15	3.07	+0.08
Achievement	2.84	2.71	+0.13
Academic Self-concept	2.56	2.50	+0.06
Self-concept	2.53	2.29	+0.24
Peer Relationship	2.84	2.79	+0.05

5.1.2.3 Learning Diversity in School

According to school-internal data collected in 2006 (i.e. one year after the APASO test was undertaken), about 20% of students studying at primary levels four to six (i.e. the former groups of students who took the APASO test) had mild mental disabilities and/or emotional problems. These students were mainly from single parent families or living in poverty; most of these families were originally from Mainland China and thus the students had different learning backgrounds, including the use of different spoken and written languages. In a sense, though the school norms of social and affective attitudes were positively recorded in the APASO test, student diversity was still a matter of concern to the school.

The principal and the teachers commented that after this group of students had reached primary levels four to six, their emotional problems were expected to intensify due to the increasing work required to prepare them for secondary level education. Further, the school team told me that in their experience, when the students reach the age of 9-12 years, their self-concepts would be influenced by their outlook or appearance and opportunities to engage in a variety of extra-curricular activities, e.g. having private tutoring; attending drawing, dancing or instrument classes; buying new sport shoes for ball games; owning an internet-connected home computer for project learning, etc. Having the opportunity to engage in any of these activities is dependent on the students' family being able to afford them. In the other words, the 20% of students who were from low economic families could be seen as a disadvantaged group in the school. These groups of students were sometimes complained about by the teachers as emotionally uncontrollable, misbehaving students or trouble-makers. Generally speaking, 20% of students who lacked adequate family support or did not have the

opportunity to participate in a variety of learning and other activities, were found to perform below the average in school scores. In order to assist these students, they were required to join the school's intensive learning classes in Maths, Chinese and English after school. If the students continued to be the subject of complaints from the teachers for disruptive behaviour, they would be referred to the school social worker for special counselling. However, being made to attend intensive learning classes or being referred to the school social workers are reactive actions to the students' problems and the school leaders would like to have a more effective and pro-active measure to educate the students to be successful and responsible students and good citizens in future.

5.1.3 The Pathway to Change

For a long time, St. John's had put great emphasis on students' academic achievements and the school policies were guided by the written rules and regulations of the government education authority and the school board. The teachers only focused on students' academic achievements, and so they would train their students with endless testing and assignments. Thus, the possibility of adopting teaching innovations for learning and assessing was almost completely ignored.

5.1.3.1 Meeting the Supervisor

The supervisor of St. John's is an experienced school administrator of different schools with over 35 years' experience. As the supervisor has sound knowledge of how to provide leadership in Civic Education at his schools, he was invited to be a part-time guest lecturer by the HKIEd, where I was employed. In April 2003, I was a lecturer at HKIEd and met the supervisor of St. John's at a module meeting. Both of us had to teach a module about promoting Civic Education in teaching and learning for in-service teachers. I spoke to him about my interest in studying multicultural education, and he told me that multicultural education and pastoral care were also his two major concerns for his school's development. Unfortunately, the supervisor claimed that his school was too conservative and the teachers had a heavy workload in providing the intensive training for the students needed to maintain the good reputation of the school, but at the cost of neglecting the learning needs of the students. As a result, learning at St. John's is not joyful but causes the students distress. In addition, at that time the supervisor had to

take disciplinary action against the former principal for misconduct and neglect of duties. It seemed to the supervisor that to employ a new principal was the first priority before launching any new innovation in St. John's. Hence, the supervisor had to put promoting multicultural education and pastoral care aside.

According to the policy of HKIEd, to ensure that marking is undertaken appropriately; that it is fair, valid, reliable and consistent; and that the standards applied are appropriate for different groups, a post-module meeting was held for double marking of the students' assignments before the summer break of 2003. At the meeting, the supervisor told me that he was going to resign from HKIEd because a new principal had been appointed to St John's and would report for duty in August 2003. As the new principal was also new to taking up a school headship, the supervisor would have to spend much effort in assisting the new principal in taking up the tasks of school development. Nevertheless, the supervisor invited me to his school.

5.1.3.2 Opportunities for Change at St John's School

In March 2004, half a year after I last met the supervisor, I paid my first visit to the school. On that day, the supervisor introduced me to the new principal. The supervisor mentioned to me that it might be an opportunity for starting a new page in the development of the school. Multicultural education could be launched at St. John's because of the existence of this "opportunity". Leaving the discussion of the study design aside for a moment, I would like to turn to the factors which had been constituted as the opportunity, as mentioned by the supervisor of St. John's.

5.1.3.3 Senior Management Team

A well-organized senior management team and the SST were formed after the supervisor and the principal came to St. John's. Forming a new senior management team was the first thing that constituted a new opportunity. The members of this management team were required to acknowledge the mission and vision of the school. In the following paragraphs, I take a brief look at this new senior management team. In accordance with the school's regulations, the members of the senior management team are automatically involved in the SST, i.e. a school team that is established to cater for

learner differences in a whole-school approach (see Section 1.2.3 for details). A number of school staff will be introduced below, with their job titles.

The supervisor

The senior management committee of St. John's was chaired by the school supervisor (S), who was assigned by the school board. As mentioned above, the supervisor was a Catholic priest, who had been head of many schools over 30 years. At St. John's, the supervisor was a school consultant and a "spiritual" leader to the whole school team. The supervisor told me in several interviews that he had a strong belief that education was not for boosting students' academic achievements, but that schools have an important role in providing pastoral care for young people. He disagreed with the current examination-oriented education system because it is only concerned with providing a standardized education and puts too much stress on students' academic achievements. In the academic year of 2005-06, the education authority conducted a school inspection, the External School Review (ESR), in which St. John's was criticized for not having appropriate strategies to cater for student diversity (see Chapter 6 for details of this school inspection). This report helped convince the supervisor to develop St. John's in keeping with the mission of his Catholic Church: "*[we should] provide an education which embraces the joy of learning and stresses the spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical, communal and aesthetic development of [our] students*". He emphasized this motto again and again in different staff meetings and it was prominent in the Primary School Profiles (CHSC, 2007) which could be viewed by the public.

The principal

Following local school practice, a principal is another head of the school and s/he is also an ex-officio member of the senior management team. Another ex-officio member of the school's senior management team is the principal (P) of St. John's. The principal told me that before he came to St. John's, he taught in a public school in a slum district of Kowloon East. A Catholic, he had been pastoral care officer at his old school, and his particular task was dealing with students who exhibited disruptive behaviour. When he became head at St. John's, he also became the newest member of the SST. At the time of the study, it was his third year as a principal.

Three other senior teachers were also members of the SST, and they are introduced below.

The vice-principal

The vice-principal (VP) was a Catholic who had been teaching Chinese Language and Religious Studies at St. John's for 20 years. She had been the Chinese Subject Panel Chairman for more than 10 years, and had just been promoted to vice-principal in 2006 (i.e. the year St. John's introduced the multicultural learning project). The two heads (i.e. the supervisor and the principal) told me that she got promoted to VC because she was experienced, sincere, reliable and hardworking, and so other teachers liked to work with her.

The curriculum officer

The curriculum officer (CO) had been teaching Chinese Language and Religious Studies at St. John's for about 15 years. Instead of teaching, the CO had had the role of developing the school-based curriculum for five years. The supervisor told me that the CO had been promoted because she had a good relationship with both the former supervisor and the former principal, as a result of which the other teachers were not willing to cooperate with her.

The activity officer

The activity officer (AO) has no religious background, unlike the other members of the SST, that is, the supervisor, principal, vice-principal and curriculum officer, all of whom were Catholics. He had been teaching Mathematics and Information Technology at St. John's for ten years. He was also the teacher-in-charge of the school's Campus TV, which is a medium for broadcasting programmes such as school debates, singing competitions, weather forecasts, interviews, campus news, etc. on the school's website. The activity officer has had an administrative role for six years; his major tasks included organizing student extra-curricular activities and helping teachers to use the school campus TV to produce their teaching materials via multimedia platforms such as DVD or electronic files for online or remote learning. The activity officer believed that the

lively school campus TV programmes encouraged the building of team spirit at the school.

The social worker

The social worker (SW) was not a member of the teaching staff; she was deployed by the government to the school as a provisional service to cater for the developmental needs of students, with the official title of "student guidance officer". In the year of the study (i.e. 2006-2007), the school shared a student guidance officer with another school, under the same school board as the one for St. John's. This student guidance officer is a registered social worker, so everyone at St. John's preferred to call this person a social worker. Although St. John's has five teaching days a week, the social worker was on duty at the school only two to three days a week. Her role is mainly to work closely with other organizational units at the school (e.g. Student Affairs, Management and Organization, etc.), as well as with staff, parents and members of the community. As a result, the social worker was invited to join the SST to provide a comprehensive guidance service to students to help them achieve whole-person development and life-long learning (EDB, 2007a).

The core members of the senior management team have diverse backgrounds. The supervisor told me that he would take this opportunity to rebuild the school and to create a multicultural school environment. To achieve this aim, he realized that the initial and major task was to get acceptance from the senior teachers, for they were expected to be the supporters of the school policies. So, the two school heads decided to adopt a sustainable leadership style to create an open conversational space for the senior management team and for other teachers. The two heads believed that by encouraging the teachers' expression of ideas and opinions, inviting their participations in decision making and encouraging mutual support of one another, a professional collaboration within the school would be built. Overall, the senior management team was responsible for: (1) helping the school policies follow the vision and mission of the school; and (2) implementing and promoting the school policies to the teaching staff, the students and their parents.

5.1.4 The Multicultural Education Project and School Mission

In relation to the school's mission, the school administrators decided to launch an ME Project in 2006-2007, and a series of new areas of school development were instituted accordingly. Before turning to a closer examination of the research design, I wish to comment on the direction of the proposed school development and the new challenges posed by it. A detailed account of the areas of school development in the "new era" – the school was being led by a new administrative team – is given below.

5.1.4.1 Whole-School Approach to Cater for Students' Diversity

As mentioned in Chapter 1, Hong Kong carried out a pilot study on integration in 1997 (see Chapter 1 for a fuller explanation of the Hong Kong approach to educating for diversity), and after that, a whole-school approach to catering for diversity was launched (Crawford *et al.*, 1999; EDB, 2007x). Since "education for all" is the mission of the school board, the SST was then formed at St. John's to cater for diversity. The supervisor (S), principal (P), vice-principal (VP), curriculum officer (CO) and activity officer (AO) are the core members of the SST.

5.1.4.2 Fostering Diversified Learning Opportunities

St. John's has a mission to provide education for all; there is no streaming of students, so there were high, average and low achievers in each classroom. Yet a majority of teachers were still feeling comfortable delivering their teaching in a traditional way, and the assessment of students was still examination-oriented. Learning opportunities were then naturally given to the so-called "good" students, who were high achievers or obedient students. Both the supervisor and the principal were not satisfied with the present situation; they believed that the use of a variety of teaching strategies contributes greatly to addressing individual learner differences. In recent years, in order to facilitate the learning of students with diverse learning needs, the heads and their senior management team have been committed to leading the school in implementing lesson adaptations in several formats, for example, the students learn writing skills through language games in language subjects. The provision of flexible assessment

modes for evaluating students' performance in both academic and non-academic areas was another measure to cater for the diverse learning needs of students.

Regarding low achievers, the school claimed that it provided intensive remedial teaching classes in different subjects for low achievers to attend after school. Several extra-curricular activities, for example, ball games, chess, reading, community service (Scouts and Brownies) and cultural learning exchanges with some Mainland China schools, are also provided and emphasized to nurture the students to become well-rounded members of society. Furthermore, an emphasis on life-wide learning in project-based learning activities is made to extend students' exposure to outside communities.

5.1.4.3 Students' Learning

For years the teachers had complained that their students were too self-centred and that they were not willing to cooperate with their peers. On the other hand, the school heads criticized the local education system for being too examination-oriented, as they wanted education in their school to facilitate student learning, foster acceptance of individual differences and building up students' appreciation of the values of responsible citizenship.

In 2007, St. John's was required to submit a "Three-Year Strategic Development Plan – 2007-2009" to the local education authority. In the plan, St. John's set out three major focuses of school development. The first focus was to "Explore Potential to Foster Positive Human Growth", which is related to civic and multicultural education. To achieve this goal, three major tasks were designed: (1) valuing community service; (2) building resilience; and (3) fostering self-discipline. The second focus was on strengthening students' "Biliterate and Trilingual Abilities", that is, to enhance students' language proficiency in Chinese and English. The third focus was on "Building up a Healthy School Learning Environment", which included emphases on healthy diet, physical health, emotional well-being, positive daily habits, and so on. These three focuses would be seen as the guiding principles of the school's strategic development during 2007 to 2009, including the dimensions of teaching and learning.

5.1.4.4 Seeking External Support

In order to get substantial resources and professional support, building up good connections with the community was also adopted as a new policy by the school. A Parent-Teacher Association and an Alumni Association were founded at the school to provide basic support for many school activities, e.g. fund raising for buying new books for the school library. For publicity purposes, archives collecting all school activities and students' learning events were put onto the school website and its online campus TV.

5.1.5 Summary Description of the Research Site

In Section 5.1, I have illustrated the school's history, provided general background information on its staff and its structure, and outlined its learning problems related to student diversity. I have also outlined how the change of school personnel has been a significant driving force in the school's adoption of innovation. As St. John's had made preparations for creating a multicultural school, this idea was echoed in the school ethos, and the personal backgrounds and religious beliefs of the school heads. The survey findings, conversations with staff and school documents showed that although the students of St. John's had a relatively positive self-concept regarding learning, and a higher mean score of satisfaction with their school than found in the normal local schools, the diversity issue was still being overlooked or even ignored. Below, I capture the complexities of St. John's, the research site, in terms of its strengths and challenges in creating a multicultural learning environment.

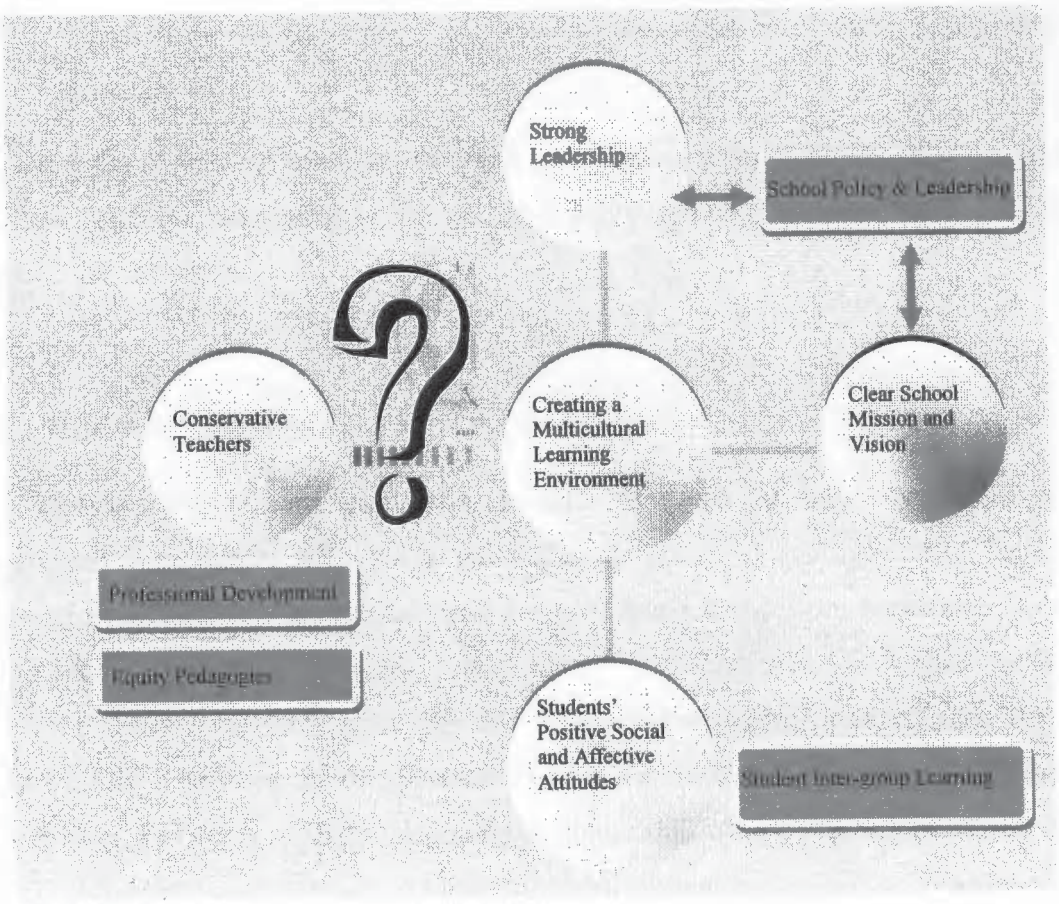

Figure 5.1 Overview of developing multicultural education at research site

In Figure 5.1, the role of the teachers is shown as one of the significant facets of building up a multicultural school, together with an indication of how the four categories of the theoretical framework of my study relate to these. St. John's was equipped with strong leadership and a clear vision for developing school policies. The new headship had put an effort into building a professional collaboration within the teaching team by encouraging their members to express new ideas and opinions; by inviting participation in decision-making and by achieving mutual support for one another. Of equal importance, the results of the APASO survey indicated that the students' attitudes to school were positive. However, since the teachers were conservative regarding change, it is useful to examine the professional development and equity pedagogies employed to create a school culture of multiculturalism. The diagram in Figure 5.1 also pertains directly to the two major research questions of my study:

1. How is multicultural education organized and implemented in the local school to improve equitable outcomes for all students?

2. What were the barriers, if any, to implementing multicultural education strategies?

In order to answer the above research questions, a comprehensive research design for data collection and analysis is required. I will illustrate the study process and field work in the next section.

5.2 Research Design

The selection of participants and the data collection for the study should be the carried out to maximize what can be learned in the period of time available. The actual learning events of the ME Project took place in Hong Kong from September 2006 to April 2007. An ordinary academic year is from 1st September to 31st August; however, meetings concerned with running the ME Project were held on and off after the first ideas exchange between the principals of St John's and Edith's, the partner school in the ME Project, in October, 2005. Beginning with an introductory meeting in March 2006, which involved the supervisor, principal and curriculum officer of St. John's and the principal of Edith's, other project meetings followed, and eventually an evaluative project meeting was conducted at the end of the project. The actual period of the observational study took over one academic year, i.e. from March 2006 to May 2007.

As reported above in this chapter, St. John's was a mainstream primary school which provided a general education curriculum; a number of students had diverse learning needs, for example, physical and mild mental disabilities, and/or social and economic disadvantages. Mixed-ability students were studying in the same classrooms in the school. For years, the school had implemented different small-scale project-based learning activities or service learning to give a sense of catering for diversity and to enrich the learning of civic responsibility. Further, the government labelled it an "effective school" (EDB, 2007m) for taking part in a scheme designed to produce "integrated education" (EDB, 2007w). A SST was then set-up to cater for diversity in a whole-school approach. In 2006 St. John's was involved in an inter-school ME Project with a neighbouring school, which is a special school for visually impaired students. The ethos of this project was to deepen the multicultural understanding of students through multiple learning integration activities. The ME Project was run under a whole-school approach; project members included the members of the SST and the form-in-

charge teachers. A close account of the research process and design is presented in the following section.

5.3 Study Process

Within the data collection period from March 2006 to May 2007, the St John's school teachers planned, implemented and evaluated their self-designed ME Project. During the study process, I participated in the school meetings and ME Project activities as an observer. From September 2006 to April 2007, learning, sharing, teaching and visits between the two schools occurred. Both students and teachers of primary levels four to five and a small number of students of primary level six participated in the project. In total, 15 school staff (see Table 5.1 for information about the teacher participants) and 106 students were involved (69 St John's students and 37 visually disabled students) in the project. Observations and interviews focused on the directions of school policy; the objectives of the ME Project; the teachers' conceptions of multicultural education; the relationship between teachers' changes in attitudes to diversity and interactions; the actual teaching pedagogies; and the impact of inter-group relationships. Four three-hour inter-school learning visits were made; furthermore, the students were asked to keep in contact over the Internet (via email and teleconferences) throughout the ME Project. As it was an "open" study, my observations were made with the consent of the schools. Furthermore, eleven semi-structured interviews were conducted with the members of the SST. In order not to cause disruption to the work of the school staff, each interview did not exceed 60 minutes, resulting in a total of 1120 minutes of recorded data (see Appendix IV for details). The observational and interview data were recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed by myself after each visit.

5.4 Field Work and Data Handling

By early March 2006, I had already participated in school meetings with an agenda of initiating a collaborative project on multicultural education between St John's and a neighbouring special school for the visually impaired students. These meetings were limited to the school leader level, that is, involving supervisor, principal and curriculum officer of St John's and the principal of Edith's. Through these meetings, I gathered

pilot data for the study, which provided me with rich background information regarding St. John's. The two school authorities agreed that the ME Project would be run in the new academic year of 2006-2007 and it was expected to have whole-school involvement. In other words, I could carry out my formal data collection from August 2006 to May 2007. Twelve teachers participated in the study, comprising six class masters and six Chinese language teachers (including the vice-principal and the curriculum officer). As in other local primar y schools, the majority of lessons are Chinese language lessons, with Chinese being the mother tongue of the students of both schools. Most of the senior, experienced teachers, including the curriculum officer and the vice-principal, were teaching Chinese at St. John's. Based on the school's belief that the ME Project could be implemented more easily in the language that was the medium of instruction, Chinese language was the subject selected in this ME Project. The interactions and discussions of the teachers from the SST and the Chinese language teachers were to be collected, analysed and reported. Before discussing the research instruments, I will introduce the tools of data handling, namely, the writing of field notes and transcriptions of data.

5.4.1 Field Notes

There are no rules for compiling research diaries or field notes. The prime consideration is finding a format and a style that fit with the needs of the research project, and which are found to be workable and useful by the researcher (Newbury, 2001, p.8). Observational notes are "statements bearing upon events experienced principally through watching and listening (Schatzman and Strauss, 1973, p.100). Note-taking and research diary keeping are mechanical means of storing information for later retrieval. My field notes are related to timing, sequencing, stage setting or manoeuvring in the methodological process.

Emerson *et al.* (1995) look in detail at the process of "coding" or sorting the various ideas and observations in the field notes into categories. Generally speaking, social science disciplines concentrate on watching and recording the activities of others using field notes; they are also of particular value to researchers seeking to observe and study their own practices. Field notes are commonly made after observations and are cross-referenced with photographic images or videos of observations and tapes of

interviews. Importantly, taking field notes is not merely a passive means of recording; my objective of taking field notes was to discover the process of knowledge construction in multicultural education. Similar to Newbury's (2001) saying that, "writing descriptive observational field notes is to record particular events, theoretical concepts, or other leads to follow up. It does not exclude the recording of data in relation to more objective descriptions" (p.8), I found that field notes play a role as a coherent central record of project ideas, information and activities, and in their use as a stimulus for reflective thinking, they were able to clarify many of my ideas in understanding the teachers' social construction of multicultural practices.

As there are no rules about what should or should not be included in a field note or research diary (Newbury, 2001, p.8), following is a list of things that I chose to record:

1. Personal thoughts and reflections when compared with the literature;
2. A record of my reading with comments, summaries or quotes;
3. A record of meetings (such as staff meetings, project meetings and interviews);
4. Observations (such as peer inter-group activities);
5. Plans for action (such as the school's annual strategic plan);
6. Keywords (to find wordings that are frequently used or emphasized);
7. Visual materials (such as photos and videos from the school web blog, and students' artwork).

As mentioned in Chapter 4, there was a range of data collection instruments from which to choose to maintain the validity and reliability of observation in this study. An inquiry into the practical research design and process is made below.

5.4.2 Collection of Archival Documents

The goal of collecting documents was to gather materials of the ME Project that would be able to support or modify information provided in the formal interviews and informal observations. This triangulation of sources serves to strengthen the accuracy of the information and interpretations emerging from the ethnographic work (Greene and David, 1984; LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). In order to have a better understanding of the

readiness of the school and the objectives of the ME Project, the types of documents collected and reviewed included: (1) the government policy documents (see Chapter 1); (2) the school's internal survey findings, i.e. CDAI and APASO; (3) the school profile and the government's external review report of the school; 94) the school's 2006-2009 strategic development plan; (5) the school's overall curriculum plan; (6) the professional development documents of staff; (7) the scheme of work (i.e. an annual subject teaching plan), minutes of school meetings; (8) the school's teaching and learning materials, including teaching handouts, assessment criteria and worksheets, and so forth (see Chapter 4 for details).

In the following data analysis chapter (Chapter 7), it is shown that 2006 was a critical year for the school to rethink its direction, which later brought about the idea of multicultural education. In 2006, the school had to finalize an official document for its new School Development Plan (SDP) for the coming three academic years, i.e. 2006-2009. According to Hong Kong education regulations, every school is required to submit its own SDP, which is seen as a blueprint for school development, setting out its priorities and strategies for the next three years. When schools began to draw up their development plans, they would first conduct an analysis of their "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats" (SWOT). Based on this SWOT analysis, schools formulated their major concerns and corresponding tasks to gauge the effectiveness of continuous school development as well as to enhance students' learning performance (EDB, 2007m).

In August 2006, St. John's development plan was focused on cultivating a positive school culture. To achieve this, the school had nominated the following three major strategic focuses for the coming three academic years: "Building Up a Healthy School Environment", "Civic Education and Service Learning" and "Strengthening Students' Language Proficiency".

5.4.3 On-site Observations

Observational data is crucial to my data analysis, as I believe that such data, if collected from spontaneous human interactions, are better suited for uncovering the knowledge, ideas, beliefs and values of the people taking part in them. Thus, I tried to maximize my opportunities for participating in the school's multicultural education

activities. I believe that this research approach gave me more chances to observe spontaneous interactions between students and to make sense of peer interactions within the cultural contexts of the school and the students' world. The observational data were important for me to generate agendas and follow-up questions for interviews. In addition, the observations provided me with general information about the students' learning outcomes from peer interactions.

5.4.3.1 Applying Observations in the Study

In my field work, observations were used to note the contents and forms of contacts, e.g. how interactions worked to maintain and change work relations in the implementation of multicultural education, the teachers' discussions and involvements in project planning and implementation, the goals of the students' inter-group contacts, etc. I also noted the reciprocal nature of exchanges, the outcomes of contacts I observed and the verbal exchanges between teachers and students. After the observation of each event, I would write on-site field notes. As explained above, the field notes recorded verbal and non-verbal exchanges between students and teachers during on-going activities observed by me.

Moreover, as mentioned in Chapter 4, based on the central question of the study I designed an observation guide (Appendix I) to help me carry out my observations, and help me understand how the four organizational factors (as stated in Chapter 3) operated in the teachers' interactions aimed at producing and shaping their constructions and enactments of multicultural education. The guide was intended to really focus on the teachers' perspectives and practices.

5.4.4 Semi-structured Interviews

As outlined in Chapter 4, the semi-structured interview strategy was used because I intended to explore the subjective meanings, barriers and features of the ME Project from the perspectives of the teachers during their implementation of the ME Project. Interviews were conducted with both a focus group and with individuals. Following the purposeful sampling method, the members of the SST were selected as informants for the team was the school's core team that initiates, discusses and implements any policy

catering for student diversity. The interview data collected from both focus groups and individual participants helped me to understand the ways in which the teachers facilitated the exchange of perceptions and enactments of multicultural education, and so their perceptions of the learning abilities of their students and their students' disabled peers.

After I had reviewed the school documents and collected data from various observations, I structured different sets of question guides to use in different research stages (see Appendix II for details). Asking many specific questions in the interviews will set things up for very particular kinds of responses, whereas, by contrast, more naturally occurring data from fairly non-directive interactions or from observations may draw out things one could never imagine (Silverman, 2005, p.120). Thus, the interview question guides provided a non-directive approach encouraging a free flow of talk in the semi-structured interviews, and they were used for collecting more naturally occurring data. The semi-structured interviews could be divided into three main data collection focuses. The first focus was the Project Planning Stage (April – Early October 2006); the target participants were the SST Members. This semi-structured interview was a pilot to give myself a better understanding of the school development plan, the role of the team members and their vision of multicultural education. The second focus was the Exploratory Stage and the Implementation Stage (October 2006 – March 2007). Again, the target participants of the interviews were the SST Members, for which a variety of pilot questions were designed according to the four categories of the theoretical framework of my study (see Chapter 3).

The last focus of the semi-structured interviews was the Evaluation Stage of the whole project (April 2007 – Late May 2007). The questions of the semi-structured interviews enabled me to collect and clarify many concepts with the participants. Overall, although there were three sets of questions, there was flexibility to adjust questions to encompass new perspectives during different stages of the data collection.

5.4.4.1 Focus Group Discussions

In order to understand the idea of promoting equitable learning initiated, discussed and implemented in the school policy. As mentioned in Section 4.2.2.3, purposeful sampling is employed in my study. The core members of the SST, that is, the supervisor,

principal and curriculum officer, were selected as major informants for the focus group interviews. During the focus group discussions, the group members were able to talk freely and spontaneously about a certain topic through interactions between the researcher and the participants (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Latess, 2008; Morgan, 1997). In return, in-depth information on concepts, perceptions and ideas of the ways the school promote equitable learning opportunities was obtained for the study.

5.4.5 Further Observations

The school campus TV team had made use of video-recorders to record the inter-group activities of the school's ME Project. This provided additional yet peripheral data for me to gain contextual information and observations of the social interactions between the ordinary students and their peers with disabilities. I kept field notes of these informal observations. Additionally, photographs and video extracts from the inter-group activity were uploaded to the school's website, and used to capture relevant data of the activities.

5.4.6 Data Transcription and Analysis

To collect data, I participated in staff meetings and inter-group activities, such as outings. Data were collected from various sources and in various ways, such as by listening to recordings of interviews, by making observations and by watching videotapes of the students' social interactions on the school web blog. I was immersed in the data event by event, reviewing all the interview transcripts and observational notes. The data were transcribed and analysed by myself; I listened to the tapes and noted down key words and phrases that the informants emphasized or repeated, after which I transcribed and translated the data from Cantonese to English. With the use of Atlas Ti, a computer program for the qualitative analysis of large bodies of textual, graphical, audio and video data, I carried out a close reading of each set of data and coded and categorized the date in three steps: first, by reference to the four thematic organizational principles of the theoretical framework (Table 3.1); second, I sorted the data into meaningful groupings to answer the research questions; and third, I matched the themes and codes with the literature. I coded all the individual transcripts and the field notes, and then categorized the interview scripts sentence by sentence and

structured a Coding Guide for the Study (see Appendix III). After having coded all the transcriptions, I restructured the Coding Guide by assigning duplicate codes and grouped codes with similar denotations together and re-categorized any similar codes into a code family.

5.4.7 Research Process Summary

Table 4.2 summarizes the stages of data collection, the research methods used and the focus of the research events. Generally speaking, the observational data for this study were collected in four stages: the project planning stage (April 2006 – Early October 2006), th e exploratory stage (October 2006 – Earl y November 2006), the project implementation stage (November 2006 – March 2007) and the project evaluation stage (April 2007 – Late May 2007). The four developmental research stages were found to illustrate a procedural and transformative approach of multicultural education, and so remarks were added to a document outlining the different stages of multicultural development.

5.5 Chapter Summary

Overall, this case study identifies some exemplary practices. The constructivist approach enabled the meanings or perspectives of participants to be studied in-depth. Thus, the complexities of the real world have some chance of emerging by means of using several methods of data triangulation - observations of teaching staff, semi-structured interviews with the SST members and analysis of school documents. The data were linked to the proposition that "all students can be educated together". Further, I explored how multicultural education was conceptualized and enacted from the teachers' perspectives with the four organizational factors, i.e. (I) School Policy, (II) Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning, (III) Professional Development and (IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning, through discussions of the data.

As stated in Chapter 1, there are many possible avenues for educators to pursue more equitable schooling for underprivileged students. The current research project, "*Multicultural Education in Hong Kong Primary Schools: Promoting Equitable Learning Opportunities*", undertook a qualitative case study to explore the equity

pedagogy in which a local mainstream school catered for the different learning needs of diverse groups. Exemplary practices will be identified and examined in the following chapters. In Chapters 6 and 7, I shall present the data collected in observations from September 2006 to April 2007. During this period, a ME Project was carried out between St. John's and its neighbouring special school for the visually impaired students, Edith's. The actual observational study was carried out over one academic year, i.e. from the preparatory school meeting held in March 2006 to the actual multicultural learning events implemented from September 2006 to April 2007. In order to answer the two major research questions an analysis was carried out of the data collected via observations and semi-structured interviews, and based on a review of annual school reports, the school's three-year strategic plan, the government's external review report of the school and other related documents. Finally, in Chapter 8 conclusions from the study are drawn and recommendations made for multicultural education for local mainstream schools.

Chapter 6 – Analysis and Discussion of Findings

I reiterate that the study is about how a mainstream school tried to promote multicultural education in collaboration with a school for the visually impaired through a special project. As outlined in Chapter 5, document analysis provides background information about St. John's. The major data sources of this study are the observations of and semi-structured interviews with the focus group; the latter are treated as ways of triangulating the data from the documents and the observations. The discussion of the findings will move between data from interviews and observations.

This chapter and the next are organised in a way that has the data reporting constantly intersecting with the discussions of findings, rather than the more conventional presentation of findings followed by discussion. Furthermore, I have also taken a thematic approach to organizing the two chapters for data discussion: First of all, in order to understand how multicultural education can be organized and implemented in a local school to improve equitable opportunities for all students, I review the four organisational domains of the theoretical framework. This is followed by a discussion of the first major research question in Chapter 6. Next, in relation to the second major research question, there will be a discussion of the barriers to implementing multicultural education strategies in Chapter 7.

The Multicultural Education Project

St. John's Primary School is a government funded mainstream Catholic primary school in Hong Kong with a strong vision of maximizing individual student's potential for excellence. As mentioned in Chapter 1, there are a number of issues related to different kinds of diversity at St John's. The school heads of St. John's felt that by promoting this ME Project at St. John's other major school development focuses, such as the promotion of civic responsibilities and values education, would also benefit. With regard to Edith's, its mission is to provide comprehensive educational and rehabilitation services to enable them to help the development of their students' potential and ability to participate in and contribute to society with confidence and independence. The St. John's school heads believed that their students would learn to be positive and affective once they had worked with the visually impaired students. Thus, St John's decided to launch a collaborative school project with a nearby school for the visually impaired

students. In addition, in line with the mainstream curriculum in Hong Kong, Edith's has developed a school-based curriculum to cultivate in the students the idea of equity and respect for diversity in schools and also in society. On account of this history, Edith's was seen as a suitably experienced partner for St. John's for the latter's ME Project. St. John's decided that its special project for the promotion of multicultural education would be implemented in the academic year 2006-2007. The actual learning activities involving the two schools occurred between September 2006 and April 2007. However, in order to investigate what the school teachers had planned, implemented and evaluated regarding their ME Project, the data collection for this study took place between March 2006 and May 2007.

The ME Project aimed to offer equitable learning opportunities and extra support to students with diverse learning needs under the mainstream curriculum. In the project, a group of mainstream school students (about 69 students in total) with a variety of diverse learning needs started learning with a group of visually impaired students (about 37 students in total) attending a special school. A variety of learning activities was organized collaboratively by the teachers of the two schools to facilitate equitable learning and positive social interaction among students. All these learning activities were to take place in the school areas of St. John's or Edith's. Both students and teachers of primary levels four to five and a small number of students of primary level six participated in the project. In total, 15 school staff (see Table 5.5) and 106 students were involved (69 ordinary students and 37 visually disabled students) in the project. Obviously, the backgrounds of the students were complex, requiring the teachers of the two schools to re-think and re-assess the educational needs of the students and thus their usual teaching practices. As a result, according to the students' common interests, a number of learning activities such as inquiry activities and problem-solving activities were designed. The teachers expected that their students' talents and skills could be used and developed through these learning activities. It was expected that successful learning experiences of the students would be maximised.

Overall, the students of two schools spent over 800 minutes together in learning activities during their normal school days. Time spent on keeping in touch and on discussions via the internet after school hours was uncountable.

As this case study specifically focuses on a project that sought to improve equitable learning opportunities, observations and interviews were carried out to

observe any change in direction of school policy; actual teaching pedagogies; teachers' conceptions of multicultural education; the relationship between teachers' changes in attitude to diversity and teachers' interactions; and the impact of students developing positive inter-group relationships. Eventually, four three-hour inter-school learning visits were made; furthermore, the students were asked to keep in contact via the internet (by emails and teleconferences) throughout the ME Project. Furthermore, a total of eleven semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were held with the members of the SST. In order not to cause disruption to the work of the school staff, each interview did not exceed 60 minutes. A total of 1120 minutes of formal data collection was made in my study.

The presentation of the data and the discussion of findings uses a small number of transcription conventions (see Notational Conventions), which I will briefly outline to aid the reading of this chapter. Two main textual dividers - underlining and capital letters - are used. Parts of participants' comments or discussions I want to draw attention to as constituting key points are underlined, whereas words emphasized by the speakers themselves are given in bold and capital letters. Data sources are identified by an abbreviation following the quoted text, for example, "O" stands for Observation, and "SI" for Semi-structured Interview. The sequence in which the text was collected is indicated by a number following the abbreviation, for example, "O-3" means the data was collected in the third observation, and "SI-1" means the data was collected in the first semi-structured interview. I was acting in the role of researcher in the process of data collection, indicated by "R". An overview of the research schedule and findings of the data collection is outlined in Appendix IV, which also provides a quick reference to the research process and the general focus of each research event.

Highlighted Events

The following discussions of the study findings frequently mention several occasions that made a great impact on the teachers of St. John's regarding their conceptualization of student diversity and their participation in the school's ME Project.

1. SI-2: Interview held at the planning stage of the project (September 2006). In this meeting, the teachers demonstrated initial resistance to the ME Project.

2. O-7: First school visit to Edith's (31st October, 2006). This was seen as a formal professional development training session to cater for learner diversity by the leaders of St. John's.
3. O-10: First student inter-group activity (November, 2006). The whole teaching team now had much more information about the students with special educational needs (SEN).
4. O-12: Project review meeting (mid-April, 2007). The teachers who had been involved in the project expressed their appreciation of the ME Project.

6.1 Analysis of Findings

Design, selection and use of particular teaching approaches and strategies arise from teachers' perceptions of learning and learners. In this respect, even the most pedagogically advanced methods are likely to be ineffective in the hands of those teachers who implicitly or explicitly subscribe to a belief system that regards some students as disadvantaged (Bartolorne, 1994). Consequently, changing one or two features of practice or giving one or two class activities is unlikely to lead to significant improvements in acceptance of diversity. According to Hargreaves (2003), teaching practices take the form of scripts that are deeply embedded within teachers, reflecting their life experiences and taken-for-granted assumptions. This chapter investigates the ways in which multicultural education can be organized and implemented in a local mainstream school setting by revisiting the four organisational domains of the theoretical framework. In this chapter, I will uncover the teaching strategies by analysing the many and fragmented comments that I collected during the study at St. John's. At the end of this chapter, the importance of a holistic approach to multicultural education is emphasized. It was found that the success of multicultural education rests on taking a holistic approach to multiculturalism, including giving attention to school leadership, pedagogy, professional development and student development, which are also the four domains of the theoretical framework.

6.1.1 School Leadership and Policy

As discussed in Chapter 2, the adoption of a whole-school approach to catering for the diverse learning needs of students in Hong Kong is aligned with ideas from Giroux and Simon (1989), Gay (1995), Sleeter and McLaren (1995), Banks *et al.* (2001) and Nieto (2004a) particularly their emphasis on implementing multicultural education through a systemic approach. As set out in the local education policy, to address the diverse learning needs of students through a whole-school approach, it is necessary for the school to make full use of all available resources, to adopt diversified teaching strategies and effective assessment methodologies as well as to institute curriculum adaptations to meet students' diverse learning needs.

Taking a whole-school approach or empowering a whole-school culture requires strong school leadership in the pursuit of a far-reaching multicultural education. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) claim that sustainable leadership is essential to schools when coping with diversity, and that sustainable leadership actively improves the surrounding environment by finding ways to share knowledge and resources with neighbouring schools and the local communities. It is notable that in a local school setting, a supervisor is a director of the school who is appointed by the school board or sponsoring body, a principal is the head of overall school administration, and a curriculum officer is a leader of curriculum development at the school. At St. John's, the three dominant school leaders – supervisor, principal and curriculum officer – have put considerable efforts into an approach to build a whole-school culture of multicultural education. The strategies that were devised and applied are discussed in the next sections.

6.1.1.1 A Whole-School Inclusive Environment

To ensure that a variety of teaching strategies were used for addressing individual learner differences and fostering diversified learning opportunities, St. John's took care that any decision-making regarding the visions of the ME Project were widely shared. Decisions were guided by the school mission of building up a caring culture for multicultural education (Banks *et al.*, 2001).

P: ...Several years ago, when I first came to the school, it had a screening system (of the students' academic performance). Unfortunately, we could see most of the students... had average ability, so they couldn't attend the elite class. In the end, both the students and their parents were unhappy and frustrated...

In the following year [2004], we [the whole teaching team] met and agreed to cancel the screening system of students in our school. (SI-1, August, 2006)

In order to develop successful multicultural education, the school managers have the role of cultivating an equitable school culture. The quotation below shows that the school vision is one of supporting the school leader in the implementation of multicultural education.

CO: ...(education for all is an idea) according to our school's vision, we [the SST] believe that the students should develop positive attitudes to taking care of others, and this can be developed through engaging in (community) service learning... so, our school adopted civic or multicultural education as a whole-school development focus for the coming three academic years [2006-2009]. (SI-2, September, 2006)

The above quotations also demonstrate that the school culture is linked with the teachers' decision making in students' learning areas. After the school had made the decision to implement the ME Project, the principal reminded the whole teaching team that the development of multicultural education would be run on a whole-school basis and so everyone would be involved in the project although it had only twelve teachers who had taught primary level four (P4) to primary level five (P5). The principal stressed this point in an interview:

R: What do you expect your teachers to do on the first school visit to Edith's on 31st October [Professional Development Visit to Edith's on 31st October, 2006 (O-7)]?

P: Several days ago, I called a staff meeting to announce our decision to run the project. In the meeting I mentioned that the afternoon session on 31st is not simply a school visit, but that I arranged it as a formal professional development training program.

R: So all the school's teachers will go? How many?

P: Yes, all 32 will go. That's why I told my teachers, even though only the P4 and P5 class teachers and language teachers will be involved in the project, all the teachers on that day bear an important responsibility to bring back a message of multicultural education to all students, including the students of P1 to P3 and P6. It is basically a valuable learning experience in civic and life education. It is because we are expecting to sustain and scale up the project in the future. (SI-7, Late November, 2006)

The above comments show that through introducing the educational equity concept to the whole school staff, the ME Project was specially designed to improve students' opportunities to learn, such as through new curriculum design, pedagogical practices and even engaging parents in their children's education.

6.1.1.2 Building a Collaborative School Culture

Effective leaders create a facilitative school climate, respect teachers as professionals and take a team approach to planning by getting inputs from everyone involved, including parents, teachers and related service providers to educate all students (Hargreaves and Fink, 2006). When the principal first came to St. John's in 2003, the teachers reported to him that the streaming system of students hampered the actual learning atmosphere for most of the students; he held an internal staff meeting to look into the problem. Based on the opinions of his "colleagues", the principal decided to discard the streaming system in 2004, mentioning that it was a team decision.

P: (talking about the streaming system) ...Some of my colleagues told me it [tracking / streaming of students] was no good... I consulted all the colleagues who had taught in the classes for low achievers, where the learning atmosphere was found to be unhappy and (they're) passive (learners). But good students would learn faster and more, and as a

result, good students are successful learners. While the performance of the ordinary students – let's not label them "poor students" – became worse [...] Eventually, we decided to cancel the streaming of students. (SI-1, August, 2006)

The school authority was willing to consult the teachers on a major school policy issue, and it was evident that space for open discussion had been established. The principal's use of "we" indicate that policy changes at St. John's had to undergo the process of collaborative decision-making.

Further, as the school profile recorded, St. John's has run a number of small-scale project-based learning activities to advocate the idea of caring for others. The themes of those learning activities were decided after gathering the teachers' views. In an internal meeting of the SST, the principal explained to its team members that after collaborative discussions with different subject teaching teams, it was finally decided that to promote "multicultural, moral and civic education", which would be the major theme of their new three-year school action plan (2007-2009).

P: The government issued an inspection report to our school after the school inspection. In the same year, we have to submit a new three-year school action plan to the government... I can't decide all the things myself, as I believe that it is important to have a collaborative working environment because we need to implement the plans as a team! So we had a series of subject and staff meetings and discussed our school development directions with the teachers..."

P: ...Finally, we agreed to promote multicultural, moral and civic education as a major theme for the school action plan. Under this theme, three major concerns of the school are formulated... (O-1, April, 2006).

It is noteworthy that the principal's personal beliefs and work practices informing the establishment of a collaborative team for learning and teaching constituted the creation of an open discussion space within the school team.

6.1.1.3 Spiritual Figure of a Liberal School Culture

It was noted that the supervisor was the key person in resolving challenging problems; he played a decisive role in strengthening the teachers' confidence and in re-directing the administrative team onto an appropriate school policy track. It was the supervisor who had the idea for the project, coordinated it with the principal of Edith's, and was seen as willing to give full support to the SST. This made him a powerful figure in the school team. In fact, the supervisor was capable of getting the school to focus on the core value of the ME Project; he even organised an internal preparatory meeting of Edith's principal and teachers with his SST in early September, 2006 (O-5). In the following extract of this internal meeting, the supervisor and the two school principals start a frank and open discussion on the project vision and any constraints obtaining between the two schools; for example, the supervisor honestly reported to Edith's principal that the teachers at St. John's had certain worries, and the principals agreed on catering for diverse learning needs as a common starting point of the ME Project.

S: *It is the first time for our school [St. John's] to run the ME Project with Edith's. I'd like to express my heartful thanks to my old best friend, Andrew (SPP), to give us the chance to work together on the mission of "education for all". [all participants clapped]*

SPP: *Thanks, you're always welcome. In fact, the ME Project gives us a chance to learn from you, my colleagues and I believe.*

S: *To be honest, <u>as the ME Project is new to us, we're (St. John's teachers) still uncertain about many matters</u>. So, <u>we need your help</u>...there was a pre-project meeting [O-3] held at our school, where our teachers suggested we organise a school visit to your school (Edith's) to discuss the project further with your colleagues, if that is ok.*

SPP: *Sure! It's our pleasure. May I know how the project is going at your school? And what your major concerns are?*

P: *Yes, at this stage, our school is still discussing the selection of students for the project. We're still struggling... my colleagues told me that the project idea is too new for them. Fortunately, we've reached a compromise, which is that the project suits our new school*

development focuses very well, to cater for diverse learning needs, and which is also one of the major focuses of government policy. So shall we start with this idea?

SPP: Why not?! That's a good idea to find a common starting point and that's easily grasped by the teachers. (O-4, September, 2006)

After the above meeting, the SST requested Edith's to arrange a one-day school visit for all St. John's teaching staff. This school visit was regarded as a professional development program – Edith's visit (O-7) for all the teachers at St. John's. This school visit was the first time that the mainstream teachers had personal contact with the visually impaired students, and the teachers thus had a chance to equip themselves with substantial information to help their students to work well with the students from Edith's. The impact this school visit had on the teachers' perceptions of multicultural education will be discussed in Sections 6.1.1.4, 6.1.1.5 and 6.1.2.2.

The SST had another internal project meeting to discuss further details of the school visit and the project plan. At this meeting (O-5) it was observed that the teachers were confused about the project values and there were arguments about the implementation plan. To resolve the teachers' frustrations with multicultural education, the supervisor explained the value of the project in terms of the roles and responsibilities of the teachers and the school mission:

S: [The teachers were busy arguing about project details, when S suddenly spoke up.] Before we start arguing about the meanings and implementation details (of the ME Project) we should come to an understanding (that)... the [underlying principle of] multicultural education is similar to our mission, which (is) to remove social barriers by providing learning opportunities for all students, for example, between rich and poor, able and disabled, etc. People should learn to accept others when they are small...For us, as teachers, we'd start with (educating) our students.

[teachers nodded their heads and stopped arguing] (O-5, Late September, 2006)

At this meeting, I observed that the speech of the supervisor was designed to persuade the teachers to rethink the meaning of education and the values to educate students. The teachers gained a more concrete idea of the project after hearing the supervisor's comments. In fact, this project meeting was crucial to St. John's as from then on the school adopted the goals of "removing social barriers by providing learning opportunities to all students" and "learning to accept others" as the underlying principles of the ME Project. At the end of the meeting, the teachers agreed to enhance multicultural education by designing a series of inter-group activities to assist the students in grasping the major concepts, i.e. the big ideas, of accepting diversity.

6.1.1.4 Respect Teachers as Professionals

In the earliest stage of this study it was noticed that once the idea of the ME Project had been introduced to the teachers and its discussion had been invited, the teachers expressed their worries and reluctance without disguising their concerns. Even at the first school visit to the Edith's, the teachers wrote up a question list (see Table 6.1) for comment by Edith's staff on the professional development program, a visit to Edith's School (O-7).

Table 6.1 shows that the teachers at St. John's used the term "blind students" to refer to the visually impaired students. The teachers had no awareness of the complex nature of blindness. Many people in the education system simply ignore students with different severities of visual impairment, and this creates a downgrading of expectations about what a visually impaired student can become or achieve. Besides, like many visually impaired students in local mainstream schools, they should be taught to use their remaining vision, but under no circumstances should they not be taught to read in Braille, if this system can be used as their main reading and writing code. Therefore, people should have a growing awareness of the degree of visual impairments of students and have appropriate expectations of their abilities (Zurita, 1996).

In addition, the questions raised implied that the mainstream teachers had inadequate knowledge of how to cater for special needs; for example, the mainstream teachers ignored the fact that Edith's was also adopting the mainstream curriculum and asked if Edith's had Art or Physical Education (PE) lessons. A further, and different, example of the mainstream teachers' lack of understanding can be seen from their

question, "*What could we do to make them happy?*" While this question implies their view that disability equals misery, it also seems to reflect their worry about doing something that might hurt or offend the visually impaired students.

Table 6.1 Questions about the learning of Edith's students prepared for O-7 (October 2006)

	Question List for Comments by Edith's Teachers
1.	What could we do to make them (the students at Edith's) happy?
2.	Could the school arrange a class observation so that we could gain a better understanding of Edith's students?
3.	How can the visually impaired students communicate with other special students (e.g. the deaf)?
4.	What can the visually impaired students do in Physical Education (PE) lessons?
5.	Are there any taboos when dealing with the visually impaired students?
6.	Would the visually impaired students attend art or drawing lessons? If yes, how?
7.	What is the student-teacher ratio at Edith's?
8.	How could we cater for any emotional problems of the visually impaired students?
9.	Is there any regular classroom training (e.g. a roster to wipe the blackboard) for the visually impaired students? How?
10.	Will they take a longer lunch hour than ordinary students? Any other special arrangements?
11.	How is the language lesson conducted for the visually impaired students?
12.	How do teachers cultivate their reading habits (as they cannot read)?

In a semi-structured interview (SI-2), I asked about the progress of the ME Project and the teachers' relevant responses. The school leaders mentioned that the teachers from both schools would prioritize the working out of a collaborative work plan for the ME Project.

> *CO: in fact, we don't know much about Edith's students, you know, and for this reason, we've met the school principal at his school office twice to discuss the work plan... Internally (at St. John's), we introduced the project ideas to our teachers.*
>
> *R: What is the feedback from the teachers?*
>
> *CO: We introduced the (project) plan to our colleagues at a staff meeting, and there were no objections, but they had no ideas as to how to flesh out the project.*
>
> *R: So what should the school do?*
>
> *CO: Then, we [the SST] called another staff meeting today... we agreed to discuss the plan further with Edith's principal and his teachers... (in fact) to ask for their assistance. (SI-2, September, 2006)*

The principal understood that the ME Project could not be successful without the participation of Edith's teachers, so he speaks of "colleagues" and "as a team" purposefully to describe the partnership of the two schools.

> *P: [Overlapped] [Interrupted to restate and clarify again] We really want free and open discussions between Edith's colleagues and us because the ME Project was initiated by us. We need to discuss and plan it collaboratively with Edith's as a team [a pause and silence] (O-4, September, 2006)*

As will be shown in Section 6.1.2, in order to enable students learning and to achieve effective learning outcomes, the school took a whole-school approach to nurture a collaborative work culture for multicultural education at St. John's and across both St. John's and Edith's.

6.1.1.5 Actualizing Collaborative Practices

The school leader is aiming to build up a school team, but how to mobilize the staff to work collaboratively is still problematic. Two contrasting examples are given in the following discussions among the school staff of St. John's. The first example was observed before the start of the professional development program, a visit to Edith's School (O-7). The teachers were showing their reluctance to change, and kept silent in the discussion of the project, while the school leaders, the principal and the curriculum officer, dominated the project meeting. The second example was observed at a staff meeting after the teachers had visited Edith's and engaged in the First Student Inter-group Activity (O-10). By this time the whole teaching team had obtained much more information about Edith's students, and so the teachers had the confidence to discuss the planned project learning activities with the school leaders.

> *P: [tells teachers about the project at an internal meeting] Now, we have to discuss the plan in detail and I would like to seek your advice. Let's think about the possibilities, such as designing some activities which provide service learning opportunities such as civic education, for example, enhancing students' communication skills or inter-group*

relationships, etc. [....] Well, let's start with the curriculum officer.

CO: [takes turn immediately] Um.. Well.. As we're expecting to run the ME Project with P4 to P5 students, first of all, we're going to select a group of students and to pair them up with Edith's students who are blind. For instance, I've discussed with the principal that we could divide the students into groups of four to five, but what will we do next? This is still open for your suggestions. Now, our team should start discussing the details of the ME Project, ok?

[All team teachers nodded. CO showed her draft of the ME Project schedule and structure to the team.]

CO: Um Ok. I would...

P: [Overlapped] [Interrupted to restate and clarify again] We really want a free and open discussion because the ME Project has been initiated by our school. We need to discuss and plan collaboratively with the Edith's [pause, teachers keeping silent] (O-4, September, 2006)

In the above exchange, the principal showed leadership, inviting other teachers to openly discuss the project plan. Unfortunately, the teachers kept silent and only the curriculum officer responded to the principal.

Following is the second example, which was a project meeting that was held just after the first student inter-group activity (O-9). Armed with the information gained from the professional development program, the visit to Edith's School (O-7) and the first student inter-group activity, the teaching team had much more confidence to integrate their students with the Edith's students, and they also showed their willingness to share their ideas.

P: We've gone through two activities of the ME Project. I believe that we now have more information about the Edith's students, so CO and I are holding this meeting immediately after the first student inter-group activity, when we're going to think about what comes next. Let's start the team discussion.

CO: Thanks, Simon (St. John's principal). Shall we start our discussion with the Chinese subject panel, Teresa (also St. John's VP)?

VP: *Ok...Well, actually, it (the ME Project) is a difficult project. Frankly speaking, our (Chinese) teaching team has discussed this and we have our concerns, that is, we're not confident enough to decide what kind of learning activities for the students and their blind friends can arouse their learning interests. At least, we don't know much about how far they could go...*

TE: *[Interrupted] Exactly. Even though Chinese is our mother tongue and all of us (the teachers at the two schools) have taught Chinese for many years...it's hard to think about their learning tasks.*

VP: *However, fortunately, we got positive messages at the school development visit to Edith's. We're sure that Edith's students have positive attitude towards their studies, so shall we organise more student group activities in the project?*

TD: *Agreed. This is a good idea. I believe that all the students in this project will be highly motivated if they find their learning tasks are interesting and meaningful.*

TE: *Shall we then start from designing authentic tasks in the students' learning activities?*

TB: *Wait, it's always a problem of deciding on authentic learning activities. I always have this experience: I think the learning activity is authentic, but it turns out my students have not much interest at all...So I start giving them some interactive and "challenging" tasks, for example, IQ tests, role playing, designing the story ending, etc. to the learning activity, and this works...My students like problem solving. Of course, I just do this in a few lessons.*

CO: *That's ok. I'd make one suggestion: how about inviting our students to give us some ideas?*

VP: *That's good. However, I believe that our students can contribute according to their individual abilities in this ME Project. Especially the naughty ones would discover their potential, being talkative and creative!*

Ha ha...yes, I do think so... (all the teachers laughed and agreed)

TG: *Right, I've a suggestion... Shall we plan the learning activities*

collaboratively with Edith's teachers? They're experts in the field.

TF: Good idea.

VP: Yes, it's also good to have them sharing their experience with us.

CO: I agree to this idea too. How about we invite Edith's teachers to our collaborative lesson planning meetings?

P: All the colleagues' ideas are good, but I have one concern... I suggest the team email our plan to Edith's for their teachers' comments?

VP: That's right, it's good idea too.

CO: Then, let me take this message to the SPCO and I will inform all of you of the results as soon as possible. (O-9, November, 2006)

The two examples demonstrate a change of teachers' attitudes to participation in the ME project, that is, from hesitation to active involvement in the project discussion and implementation.

Although in this exchange, the teams honestly expressed their view that they did not have enough knowledge of catering for diverse learners and their students' new peers, who have a significant disability affecting their ability to carry out typical classroom activities, the discussion was liberating for the participants and involved all of them. With reference to the first research question on discerning the multicultural strategies to produce equitable opportunities in local mainstream classrooms, the teachers were now armed with the information gained from the visit to Edith's School (O-7) and the first student inter-group activity, and the teaching team had much more confidence to integrate their students with the Edith's students. Thus, the teachers had overcome the barrier of resistance to catering for students with learning difficulties. In this meeting, the teachers grasped the basic idea of the students' learning styles, they were confident to start sharing their experience and ideas. On the same occasion, the teachers engaged in collaborative planning, trying to seek input directly from students, and involving them in interactive learning tasks. As expressed by the VP, the teachers believed that the function of the ME Project was to provide the students with new opportunities for meaningful participation and learning.

6.1.1.6 Providing Equal Learning Opportunities to All Students

In Chapter 1, I discussed the wash-back effect of standardization, which creates public pressure from parents, schools and even students themselves. A mainstream school faces public pressure as local parents strive to send their children to elite schools to ensure better education and job opportunities for them. It leads local schools to adopt the role of "school-as-a-selection-device" (Biggs, 1993), and eventually students are educated in an examination-led system. Students with more "A" grades are thus commonly defined as "good" students and probably have more chances of participating in a variety of learning activities. The issue of providing equitable learning opportunities had been a controversial one at St. John's.

On the one hand, the new school principal had to face the tension created by public pressure. On the other hand, he wanted to follow the school's mission, set by the school board, which proclaimed that "all students can be educated together", and also his personal beliefs. Thus, the decision to discard the system of streaming students and "... *to provide a meaningful education for all learners*", as the principal claimed in the interview (SI-1, August 2006), was a school decision that went against the general emphasis on examinations in most Hong Kong schools. In an interview (SI-1), the principal gave his views on the issue of providing all students learning opportunities without grouping the students by academic ability. Besides, a streaming system of students was not welcome at St. John's since the teachers found that it would eventually undermine the students' sense of belonging and their self-esteem.

R: Is there any streaming system in the school?

P: NO (said firmly). Several years ago, when I first came to the school, it still had such a system. Unfortunately, we could feel that <u>the students were learning unhappily</u>...

R: Do you think that ending streaming was the correct decision?

P: Oh, well. In the view of a school administrator, streaming did help improve the overall school examination results...because the best students had higher exam scores. HOWEVER, it was confined to one class or a GROUP OF STUDENTS (who had good examination results) ... Streaming of students did raise the EXAM SCORES of a small group of high ability students. BUT, as the principal of a school, (I can see that)...

good students would learn better, while the performance of those students with average abilities ... became worse. Eventually, classroom discipline, learning attitudes and students' behaviour all deteriorated. All these gave the teachers trouble and caused them anxieties. HENCE, I REALIZED THAT HELPING ALL MY STUDENTS TO LEARN IS MY RESPONSIBILITY, EVEN IF THEY'RE SLOW LEARNERS. (SI-1, August 2006)

6.1.1.7 Putting Vision into Practice: Selection of Students

The leaders of St. John's have a vision of providing equitable learning opportunities for all students, but how to put such a vision into practice is sometimes problematic. The following extract is from an interview (SI-2), in which I asked the SST a question after I had observed a heated discussion on the selection of students for participation in the ME Project.

R: *Which levels of student will finally be involved [in the project]?*

CO: *The age level of P4 to P5 is appropriate, there are more mature and they will have 1 to 2 years study at school [there are six school levels in a local primary school]. As a result, the project could be continued. P5 students are very busy this year...we've planned a lot of activities for them.*

S: *How about P4?*

VP: *Our current P4 students are rather weak in ability. By the way, most of our (extracurricular) activities are for P5 (students); they're really busy [laugh].*

P: *Hey...Maybe we could choose primary six. Every year, we worry that the P6 students will not have a good student's profile report on service learning [according to the local curriculum, a student's personal growth should be rounded. Thus, school students are encouraged to participate more in community activities], this will be unfavourable for their enrolment in a good secondary school...so why not P6?!*

VP: *...but after this year, they will have graduated, then the plan...*

CO: It's ok, the "spirit" of service learning could be transferred...

S: My view is...we should consider the sustainability of the ME Project. Selecting the P6 students is not appropriate in this situation (as they are leaving the school).

CO: Then, let's discuss this further, ok [asking the whole team]?

P: Ok. Let's discuss it further... (SI-2, September, 2006)

What is immediately apparent in the above extract is that the principal and his team were facing a challenge to select appropriate students for the project. The principal faced public pressure from parents and also had to contend with the school's mission. As a school administrator, the principal's major concern was to assist the primary level six (P6) students to build better personal learning portfolios for enrolling in better secondary schools. The teachers of St. John's believed that their P6 students would have a good track record of community service by taking part in the ME Project. However, this was not the original aim of the ME Project.

6.1.1.8 Teaching for the Benefit of All Students

The school has a vision of playing a role in enhancing intercultural knowledge through multicultural education. Its mission, to work for the benefit of all, can be seen in the comments of the supervisor and the principal:

S: ... As I ALWAYS tell the principal and the teachers that I deeply believe that (after the completion of the project) our students...the ordinary ones... NOT only the disabled students, will benefit from this learning experience... because they will have broadened their learning experiences outside the classroom as well as raising their understanding of the community. (SI-2, September, 2006)

The supervisor's comment explicates his endeavours regarding the implementation of multicultural education at St. John's. His comments continually provided guidance to the principal and the teachers. In this extract, the supervisor stressed the words "always tell", which also implied that there was no need to put too much emphasis on the manner of selecting students, for "all students can learn" is the mission of the school:

P: ... we [our school] are assisting all our students to experience positive human growth as one of our major missions... We all aim at building an equal and caring culture in the school, that is, have high achievers help the medium level students, and the medium level students help the low achievers, that's our mission of education... (SI-2, September, 2006)

After hearing the supervisor, the principal became more confident in emphasizing that enhancing all students' positive attitude to life is a mission of the school. As a quotation above showed, in order to present that "education for all" is the collective vision of the school but not necessarily a personal belief, the principal used "we" and "our" six times plus "all" twice in his short 55-word comment. More importantly, his words implied that the ME Project had addressed the school mission and required the teachers to support it.

At last, the curriculum officer had realized the teachers' inclination to select the well-behaved students. In line with the SST's expectation, she had made some adjustments to the final selection of students as she told me in an interview:

CO: Honestly, the school has laid its "invisible hand" on the selection of students. The teachers were found to be inclined to choose good students with better academic achievements and who are obedient. However, as all the SST members expected that our weak students would gain from the project, our colleagues finally accepted (our ideas) and included all the students... In the end, those students who had long been complained about as selfish, dependent, and as being low achievers were also chosen for the ME Project. (SI-10, March, 2007)

To summarize, the school leaders respected teachers as professionals, the school management team was willing to provide appropriate teacher exchanges and support for the ME Project, and this encouraged the teachers to try out the innovation – multicultural education. Moreover, taking a whole-school approach strengthened the team spirit of the teachers and having the now common and familiar starting point of catering for learning diversity at an internal meeting (O-4) provided the teachers with a

clear focus of the project, thereby creating more room for promoting equitable learning at the school level.

Generally, shared leadership fostered the development of a policy at St. John's to support multicultural education to cater for students with diverse learning needs. A common vision prevailed in the school team and helped to build a social network between a mainstream and a special school, i.e. between St. John's and Edith's. On the whole, the ME Project reflects the mission and values of St. John's and its acceptance of diversity.

6.1.2 Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning

Equity pedagogy is a guiding principle of a multicultural school to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and to meet high standards. This requires teachers' critical judgments of the fairness of educational opportunity that is provided by schools to their students (Banks, 2004b). The discussion below shows that the teachers at St. John's have made relevant changes in pedagogy for the students in the ME Project.

6.1.2.1 Accept Diversity Learning

As the school's mission is to ensure that all students have equitable opportunities to learn and to reach high standards, the SST agreed to adopt the equity principle for the selection of students for the ME Project, i.e. to provide students with learning opportunities regardless of their strengths and weaknesses.

> *CO: About the matter of student selection, some teachers chose those selfish students from wealthy families because they wish them to learn how to care for others. However, the SST provides another approach for the teachers to consider, which is to try to choose those students who are <u>naughty</u>, <u>disobedient</u> (and) have <u>behavioural problems</u>. (SI-9, February, 2007)*

As well as the supervisor and the principal, the SST also started to follow the school vision, getting the teachers to think that everyone has his/her own potential. The

team supported the teachers in arranging a series of interactive events where students from both schools were engaged in collaborative reading and writing, and in creating artwork during various school visits. The students from both schools were able to explore aspects of their own experiences, to share their knowledge with one another, and to explore story writing by making connections between their own lives and texts they had read or written, all in order to support meaningful learning. For instance, Ken, a student, shared his feelings with the principal after he had finished the events at the second student inter-group meeting:

> *Ken* *[P4 student]... we were required to draw a portrait for our peers at Edith's and write them letters, and so I suddenly learned that <u>there is someone from somewhere</u> else because I can write a letter but my friends can't read...[continued] So I have to read my letter aloud to them.*
>
> *Actually, we started writing to Edith's students for several weeks, our teachers scanned some of our letters and posted them on the school intranet. After I read the letters, I began to realize that we're living differently compared with the students of Edith's...<u>I believe that we have some abilities, and that maybe we're different from other people...</u> I think that both of our letters were well written and rich in information because we wrote together enthusiastically. Our group appreciates learning together with people with different abilities. (O-10, 2nd Inter-group Activity, December, 2006)*

The student's reflections show that the inter-group activities had given the children valuable experience in accepting diversity.

6.1.2.2 Prejudice Reduction Practices

The staff professional development program, the visit to Edith's School (O-7), in October 2006 aimed to give teachers professional knowledge of multicultural education. This event was reported as a turning point regarding the teachers' negative conceptions of the visually impaired students. Through the personal contacts with the teachers and students from Edith's, the teachers were able to work beyond their original worst-case

scenarios. The comments below from four St. John's teachers (TA, TD, TE and TF) present their views of the Edith's students after they had participated in the project:

> *TA: I thought they (SPSs) had lower self-esteem; however, during the project, I was so surprised to see that they're vivid, kind, sincere and attentive to learning.*
>
> *TD: It's amazing to work with the visually impaired students; though they are blind, their minds are bright. From them, our students and we have learnt how to care for others, for the blind students are attentive and react quickly.*
>
> *TE: Exactly. I have the same feeling as Miss TD. The visually impaired students are really wise and amazing ...*
>
> *TF: Frankly, I was afraid that our students would be scared by these Special Students; for example, their eyes or their faces are crooked because of an accident or from birth. On the day of staff development [O-7], I was actually surprised and even shocked by the appearance of the Edith's students; however, after talking with them, I was touched by their sincerity about learning despite being disabled, their pleasant looking, welcoming gestures and their intelligence. (SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)*

In this study, the teachers were all surprised that their students' attitude to learning had improved after being grouped with the Edith's students.

> *TF: [...] Undoubtedly, my students have all been influenced by them during the program. Surprisingly, even Peter Wong, one of our students from a poor family, has stopped his disruptive behaviour and is now willing to help the students from Edith's and his classmates; it is really amazing how kind and polite he is now. I can feel that my students are learning to be good citizens [other teachers agreed].*
>
> *TG: Yes, just like Sarah Chan in my class, she is so naughty and rude in class...she was not willing to help others in the past, but she also has become a patient and obedient partner of the Edith's students. [other teachers agreed]*

TF: As for me and my students, I believe that the ME Project has been a valuable experience in our lives. I can see we are more willing to help and accept others. Another thing is that I've observed that my students learn faster through interacting or becoming integrated with another group of students with different abilities. On the other hand, the visually impaired students have gained too, as they could feel that our students are all accepting and willing to learn with them. (SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)

6.1.2.3 Differentiated Instruction

As stated above, St. John's mission is to educate the students to accept diversity by cultivating a caring culture. In order to be responsive to the differences between students, the teachers tried to work outside their conventional teaching practices and adopted new teaching strategies in the ME Project, two examples of which are outlined below.

I. Emphasis on Student's Interest

Instead of avoiding controversies and not to exclude those students who were regarded as disobedient from taking part in the ME Project, the teachers designed interesting learning tasks to encourage students' participation in the project. A memorandum (enclosed with a parents' consent form) introduced the ME Project and requested the participation of students. The students who were interested in joining the project had to fill in an application form. Instead of giving their personal particulars, they were asked to provide information about their hobbies, habits and strengths and answer two self-evaluation questions: "What do I want to improve?" and "What are my expectations of the project?" This information assisted the teachers in selecting appropriate students to match with visually impaired students of similar backgrounds and interests. The teachers believed that the students would have a chance to self-reflect when answering the questions.

CO: ...First, the (Student Support) Team has written a memorandum – actually, it's a school newsletter – to the parents, to introduce the ME

Project and ask for the students' participation... We're planning to attach a self-evaluation form to the memorandum... Those students who're interested in joining have to fill in their personal particulars, interests, strengths and the areas to be improved...the students will have a chance for self-reflection, too, we think. (O-5, Late September, 2006)

It is important to understand that the teachers of St. John's discarded their conventional practice of referring to academic performance in the selection of students for this activity. Instead, the teachers focused on the students' personal interests, abilities, strengths and expectations regarding the ME Project.

When the SST announced the procedures for the selection of students at a pre-project meeting, the teachers all agreed to attach a student self-evaluation form to the newsletter for the parents. However, the teachers retained the right to decide whether a given student was to participate or not.

CO: (continued to introduce the project to her colleagues) after they (the students) have submitted the form, we (teachers) will go through their information and see whether the children are telling the truth. You know, small children like to exaggerate. Based on the students' self-evaluations, the teachers were finally able to give stars to the students...maximum five stars...if they recommend (them) for the project. (O-5, Late September, 2006)

The teachers also made suggestions regarding the information sought from the students in case they were not able to express their feelings in writing.

TE and TH: [TE and TH responded to the CO in the pre-project meeting] Ok...to attach a form (to this memorandum) is good... [almost spoke simultaneously] Why not provide choices on the list? Our students may not know how to use texts to express themselves... (O-5, Late September, 2006)

II. Emphasis on Teaching Network

In order to obtain an in-depth understanding of the teachers and students of the two schools, at the pre-project meeting some teachers proposed to the curriculum officer that the SST could help liaise with the teachers from Edith's so as to organise a pre-education workshop for the whole teaching team.

CO:	*By the way, some teachers said to me...would it be possible to organise a visit to Edith's? So that we can learn more (about their students) from the actual experience of sharing with the teachers from Edith's?*
Others:	*Yeah. That's a good idea, (I) agree... [spoken simultaneously] (O-3, September, 2006)*

The SST eventually accepted the teachers' suggestion at an internal project meeting (O-3). The memorandum for the parents was distributed together with a self-evaluation form for the student applying to join the project to fill in. As discussed above, a list of choices was provided on the form to facilitate the students' expressing their personal expectations.

As was demonstrated in the above extracts, the teachers tried to make space for student voices and foster greater student engagement in the ME Project (see Section 6.1.4 for project details). Within these participatory spaces, the teachers found they were gaining access to their students' thinking about issues of diversity that allowed them to explore their own roles as teachers.

6.1.2.4 Adopting Inquiry-based Learning

The experience of the ME Project taught the teachers that each student has his/her own potential, and that a student's actual ability cannot be measured by a single standardised tool.

The teaching team began to discard their conventional teaching practices, for example, they stopped demonstrating exemplars to their students in writing lessons because the teachers began to realise that these exemplars did not really match the writing ability of their students. The teachers recalled that they used to demonstrate exemplars in composition classes, which was in fact a writing template to ensure that a

student would obtain a grade. Hence, the students did not need much creativity in writing. Instead, once the teachers became involved in the ME Project, they realised that children have incredible creativity and so the teachers started adopting inquiry-based writing as a teaching method of teaching composition. This meant that the students were given information about a writing topic, and then asked to analyse this information and make generalizations and predictions on the basis of it.

6.1.2.5 Peer Assessment of Student Writing

The teachers promoted peer review in the creative writing activities to help students discover, refine and articulate their thinking. The teachers understood that children are motivated to write creatively and meaningfully when they have an audience. At the end of the project, the teachers commented that peer review raises the students' awareness of meaningful writing, and they were surprised to find that peer assessment helped bring about positive interactions among the students. The students labelled "low achievers" eventually showed improvement in their writing abilities, having developed greater self-esteem and confidence in learning.

TB: I used to spend time on purely didactic methods of teaching writing. Now, if my students can use the appropriate vocabulary and write grammatically correct, then I give them marks... Some students may have great ideas but are not proficient in the language, so I couldn't give them marks...they would be the low achievers.

TH: Yes...sometimes we're desperate for we can't do anything to help these low achievers though they are creative...it's the problem of our examination-focused education system.

TB: Fortunately, after we visited Edith's in October, our team asked the question, "How do the Edith's teachers teach the blind students writing?", and the teachers shared their teaching experience with us. Instead of using chalk-and-talk, they'll use numerous ways to enable their students to learn abstract ideas...since they can't read text or see photos, they'll motivate the students to learn abstract ideas through multi-sensory skills in groups.

TD: Yep, we're really impressed (by their teaching practices), we

discussed this in the Chinese language teaching team... we formed peer learning groups in class for peer evaluation. In my class, for example, I don't give them sample articles anymore. I'm now using the inquiry-based method by giving them (the students) data, and ask them to analyze and predict the results. To encourage my students to become actively involve in their learning, they're required to give feedback on their peers' writing...by asking questions for clarification and making recommendations to the authors. As the students are of the same age group and education level... The low achievers can gain ideas and marks from the peer assessment ... sometimes they will even have brilliant ideas too. Finally, the low achievers show confidence in learning and are eager to create interesting stories. (SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)

The teachers of St. John's were able to provide students opportunities to participate in learning activities that developed knowledge, skills and attitudes that increased academic achievement and fostered positive interpersonal relationships in the ME Project.

Overall, the organizational domain of equity pedagogies is a critical factor in making the promotion of multicultural education in a mainstream school a success. The above discussions illustrate how the teachers perceived the nature of equitable learning and what they did to create conditions that motivated students to learn more effectively. Promoting equity pedagogies helped teachers to break down stereotypical walls, and helped students attain the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for functioning effectively in a just society.

6.1.3 Professional Development

Providing equitable learning opportunities and quality education in schools requires the commitment and capacity of teachers to meet their students' educational needs. Professional development of teachers encourages educators to exercise professional judgments, skills and knowledge to achieve quality education in schools.

6.1.3.1 Teacher Professionalism to Reduce Barriers

It is sometimes reported that teachers are the opponents of change in schools (Fullan, 1991; Janney *et al.*, 1995; McLaughlin and Warren, 1992). Fullan (1991) points out that ambivalence about whether change will be favourable is nearly always experienced before the change is attempted. At the very beginning of the ME Project, the principal and the curriculum officer were regarded as the pilots of the project; they were struggling to implement the plan as there were many uncertainties about the project. One factor was that the teachers had no formal training in coping with special students. The supervisor, the principal and the curriculum officer believed that education should provide learning opportunities for all students; this had also been the reason for the cancellation of the streaming system. Unfortunately, the principal and the curriculum had never engaged in multicultural education, and they were unsure as to the actual learning effect on their students as most parents spoil their single child. Moreover, the principal and the curriculum officer were newly appointed, and they needed to gain the teachers' support; however, it was almost certain that the new project would disturb the teachers' normal practices, and thus would probably arouse discontent.

For instance, in the following interaction, the principal and the curriculum officer repeatedly demonstrate misunderstandings of and ambivalence towards Edith's students. It was observed in an earlier planning stage of the study that the principal and the curriculum officer were hesitant to fully engage in the project. They decided that the parents would have the final decision as to whether to permit their children to take part in the project.

> *P:* *[overlapped] they (St. John's students) have never had direct contact with blind students...some of Edith's students look different...and our students will be frightened or else...*
>
> *CO:* *Uhm...that is (the problem)!*
>
> *P:* *...so...then...we should firstly seek the parents' approval for their children's participation (to ME).*
>
> *CO:* *[...] Sure, (because) we're afraid...How could we afford to get complaints from the parents?! (SI-2, September, 2006)*

In the final evaluation interview (SI-11), the principal confirmed that the team was ambivalent about the ME Project, at the project planning stage in particular, because of

their uncertainties about the learning outcomes. From the principal's comments below, collected in an interview (SI-2) held at the planning stage of the project, the principal adopted a "cost-benefit analysis" to weigh up the project's impact by linking its benefits to their students with the cost of the work involved in terms of time and energy (Fullan, 1991).

> *P: [interrupted] in fact, we don't want (our students) to HURT the Edith students or vice versa...and we don't want our students to get frightened, so we have to do something TO PROTECT THE STUDENTS... So the parents' approval is a requirement for (the students to join) the ME Project.*
>
> *R: Well... you told me that the Edith students will come to your school in normal school hours...Then if there are some students in a class without their parents' approval to join the project...the parents are really saying "No" to the project...Since this group of students are at school, when the Edith children come to your school, they will meet them ...Then, what would you do to prevent the non-participating students from meeting the Edith students at your school?*
>
> *VP: [nodding her head, showing her agreement with R's question] Right. It's a question.*
>
> *SW: [nodding her head] Ah...yes...[it's a problem]*
>
> *AO: [nodding his head, not saying anything]*
>
> *CO: [a 5-second pause] Oh...um...I think...so that's why WE HAVE TO CALL A MEETING WITH THE EDITH'S SCHOOL TEACHERS...we want to know whether Edith's would cooperate with us...[she stressed] Now...at this moment...WE CAN ONLY DO OUR BEST... (SI-2, September, 2006)*

In order to resolve the teachers' ambivalence and to maintain a balance between the cost of the resources committed to the project and its positive impact on learning, the school team decided to collaborate with Edith's teachers, something that required further discussion between the two schools.

6.1.3.2 Collegial Support to Handle Complex Situations

When St. John's was planning to launch the ME Project, the school leaders held meetings and discussed matters of concern with the teachers. The school team asserted that the ME Project should not be left to the school managers alone to manage. Instead, the role of the managers was to support the teachers, and every member of the school staff could contribute. The team thus invited Edith's new social worker (SW) to join the project.

> *P: [Slightly adjusted his tone] ...So, well, I'm, just thinking about the "education pre-workshop" we discussed...In fact, we could invite Edith's social worker to give us a talk.*
>
> *CO: [introduced the new SW to the teachers] Oh yes, one more thing: Ms. Fong is our newly appointed school social worker, and one of her jobs is to provide social services and assistance to our students. Ms Fong will also join our team to run the ME Project...*
>
> *CO: [continued] Miss Fong was so nice to accept our (the SST's) invitation to arrange a talk on special needs for us (the students)...in the pre-workshop [i.e. O-8, November, 2006]...which is expected to be a "preparatory course" for the students on the project. (O-4, September, 2006)*

From St. John's point of view, Edith's teachers were also team members of the ME Project, so in order to fully utilize the potential of all team members, the SST encouraged all the teachers who taught the P4-P5 students to participate in the project. These teachers were considered to have fairer and more objective opinions of the students.

> *CO: Actually, we have to explain the project to the students ... I'd like to ask for the team's opinion on this student (self-evaluation) form... There is another point, the form "TEACHER'S COMMENT ON THE STUDENT", which will be filled in by the teacher to get a more objective opinion of the students ...Besides, you know more about these groups (P4-P5) of students because you are teaching them. (O-6, October, 2006)*

St. John's tried her best to engage as many colleagues on the project as possible. The following extract demonstrates that the school had built a collaborative working atmosphere among the SST, the Chinese language teaching team, the class teachers of P4 and P5 levels, and the teaching team at Edith's.

> *CO: [concluding outlining the work flow of the project to the teachers at a project meeting] Well, the SST will follow up matters with Edith's and collect questions from our colleagues. The Chinese subject teaching team and all P4 and P5 class teachers will help organise the pre-education workshop (for the students), and the two social workers of both schools will be the chairmen of that workshop. If you need any help, please feel free to contact us (the SST). The vice-principal is writing a memorandum about the project and expects to send it to all parents before next week. (O-6, October, 2006)*

6.1.3.3 Professional Partnership to Remove Negative Feelings

It seems that St. John's realised that building a professional network for teachers across schools would help to address their teachers' ambivalence. In support, I present some of Edith's teachers' (SPT) speeches recorded in the professional development program, the visit to Edith's School (O-7), as below:

> *SPT2: [SPT2 is the first registered PE teacher in Hong Kong special education; he has taught in this SP for 30 years]...Any questions (that are raised by St. John's teachers) are welcome. Let me introduce my expectations of our students. I teach Physical Education in this school. I demand of each of my students that they have learnt cycling and swimming before they graduate from our school at secondary three, because when they change to another mainstream school in secondary four, the teachers in the secondary schools may not be willing to teach them anymore...So our school is facing a dilemma in teaching them, i.e. in providing them with a safe learning environment; however, <u>to prepare them for their future</u>, our students, although having visual impairments, <u>have to learn self-management</u>.*
>
> *TD: Well, I'm interested to know how to teach cycling and swimming*

to visually impaired students?

SPT2: *We teach the students good balancing skills.. we'll slow down the teaching pace so as to retain their confidence in learning... so eventually they will develop the skills. We should always bear in mind that TIME and PATIENCE are the keys to teaching our students. By the way, teachers' UNDERSTANDING and ACCEPTANCE of the students' problems are significant to the success of education.*

SPVP: *Yes, it is really a "PARADOX" to teach the disabled students... On the one hand, as teachers, we have to ensure they're learning in a safe environment; on the other hand, we have to prepare them for facing reality, which is sometimes cruel and insecure. In short, our belief in teaching and learning is "TO PROTECT BUT NOT TO OVERPROTECT OUR STUDENTS". In my opinion, our students have too much potential to explore; there are three things for a teacher to do to help our students (including the disabled students) achieve and thus enable them to face their future: (1) be patient with the students and help them build confidence; (2) accept and encourage; and (3) give appropriate guidance and let them go. [O-7, Professional Development Visit, October, 2006]*

The vice-principal of Edith's used the term "paradox", which sums up well what was in the minds of the mainstream teachers. The teachers at St. John's found that they gained unexpectedly from the ME Project, for they had invested little but earned great returns.

6.1.3.4 Three Strategies to Ensure Equity Pedagogies

There are three things that a teacher can do to help students achieve and face the future: (1) be patient with and help the students build confidence; (2) accept and encourage students; and (3) give appropriate guidance and let the students develop their potential. In Sections 6.1.4.4 to 6.1.4.7, I will present examples to illustrate that St. John's mainstream teachers adopted these three equitable learning strategies in planning the inter-group learning activities for the project.

Using Multi-sensory Teaching Methods

One immediate consequence was that the whole teaching team had totally forgotten their prepared question list for Edith's teachers (see Table 6.1), and started to ask more practical things related to the actual learning of Edith's students:

VP: *[VP is also chair of Chinese subject panel] Would there be activities in language classes?*

SPCO: *Sure, according to the government policy, we're teaching the mainstream curriculum so language lessons are also running in an activity approach. We design a number of activities for the students, and though they cannot see, they can apply their other senses in learning, for example, (they can) smell, hear and touch...*

TG: *But, how could you teach them abstract concepts, for example, a peaceful GREEN grassland. How could they write a composition with appropriate understanding of different phrases?*

SPCO: *First of all, grass may NOT solely be green in colour! [all participants laughed] ... Using multi-sensory techniques to teach our students really works, for our students are strong in making associations. In addition, we teachers also explain the concepts in detail, and all these (teaching strategies) work for them. Yesterday, it was a language class. I taught the concept of "sour". I cut up lemons and kiwi fruit in class and let my students taste them and describe their feelings. One of my students told me that she could imagine the feeling of sorrow from the taste of a lemon. Fantastic, isn't it?*

By the way, peer grouping is also found useful in learning, that is, grouping our students with visually impaired students. The effect is impressive. [O-7, Professional Development Visit, October, 2006]

The whole teaching team of St. John's was impressed by this frank sharing and valued the school visit. At the final internal project review meeting (O-12, Project

Review Meeting, Mid-April, 2007), all the teachers involved in the project agreed that the sharing by Edith's teachers had given them confidence in the project and strengthened their understanding of the value of multicultural education. The sharing of the Edith's teachers at the professional development school visit (O-7) did help the teachers of St. John's to get rid of unnecessary fear and uncertainties that were associated with their initial resistance to the ME Project.

More importantly, the teachers expressed the view that their teaching practices were deeply influenced by this exchange of experience in the ME Project; for instance, they tried using multi-sensory techniques and peer grouping strategy in teaching and learning in the mainstream classrooms.

Results from this study indicate that the teachers held more positive attitudes concerning multicultural education than negative ones after entering a co-equal partnership with the Edith's teachers, with this cooperative effort providing them with professional development opportunities. The study findings demonstrate that as the teachers had never taught in the context of multicultural education, they were likely to have attitudes of resistance although they might philosophically agree with the spirit of multicultural education. With the building of a working partnership with Edith's, in the two final review meetings (O-12, Project Review Meeting, Mid-April, 2007 and SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007), the teachers and the SST of St. John's had a common belief that multicultural education could provide all students with a safe and equal learning environment, and that it could prepare them for facing their future positively.

6.1.4 Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning

I have presented and discussed school leadership, school policies on equity pedagogies and teachers' professional development in the above sections – all-important aspects in the matter of teaching in the context of multicultural education. In a multicultural school, equity pedagogies provide a guiding principle for the school curriculum. In the areas of learning and teaching, some instructional strategies are required to change how and what constitutes the interaction of students with one another. Social constructivists view the school curriculum as a vehicle for facilitating social change (Goodson, 1997), such that students are provided with learning opportunities for

critically analysing social problems faced by humankind, and they are guided by their teachers in understanding that group efforts could bring about social change. Thus, a multicultural curriculum should put emphasis on group experiences and the development of students' critical consciousness and sense of social responsibility.

However, like other local schools, St. John's is characterized by relatively large class sizes and high teacher-student ratios, and the learning is dominated by memorization and preparation for high-risk tests. This brings up the question, "Does the current classroom environment enable all students to learn?" Teachers tend to devote a considerable amount of lesson time for students to complete problem-solving tasks, and test items are often set in such a way that students have to answer them by recalling from memory. Learning and teaching in the mainstream classrooms is transmission-oriented with little active engagement of students in the learning process.

A mainstream classroom is an environment that creates examination losers and education disadvantage. As mentioned above, teachers' perceptions of possible change often begin with resistance to change. Therefore, in this section I will try to answer the question, "How did the teachers at St. John's enhance students' learning through multicultural education?"

6.1.4.1 Grouping Strategy

As mentioned previously, the SST members agreed that the disobedient students would gain much more from the project, as was observed and argued by the teachers. For example, the teachers did pay extraordinary attention to the misbehaving students in the inter-group activities. The students who were originally labelled selfish, dependent, poor or disobedient were highly appreciated by their teachers in the multicultural project. St. John's adopted a series of strategies to facilitate the students developing positive inter-group relationship. The data below comes from the interview data and research notes that I collected from the observation:

> *CO: We have three P6 students to join, so, in the end, it was mainly students from P4 to P5 who were selected by both schools for the ME Project. The students were grouped according to <u>the cooperative grouping strategy</u>, a form of heterogenous grouping, that is, regardless*

of the students' gender or strengths, every student has a responsibility to contribute and complete their tasks within the groups. Since the number of the mainstream students is nearly double that of the Edith's students, there will be two mainstream students plus one Edith's student in each group. That is to ensure that there are different abilities within a group, and that peers can assist one another in learning.

We've emailed the same student self-evaluation form that our students had used to Edith's, and encouraged the Edith's students to fill it in and sent it back to our school. It was funny when we (the teachers) reviewed the students' self-evaluation forms, we suddenly remembered that they are both primary children, and their interests are the same, for example, cartoons, TV games, online games, etc. Funny! (SI-10, March, 2007)

As demonstrated in the above extract, to ensure that students with different abilities were allocated to each normal student group, the teachers of St. John's adopted cooperative grouping strategies for student grouping, for example, in a peer group of four, two ordinary students would pair with an Edith's student; a good or well-behaved student plus a low achieving or misbehaving student would be paired with a visually impaired student from Edith's. The cooperative grouping approach was adopted because the teachers placed great emphasis on every student having the responsibility to cooperate and contribute within a group. The total number of ordinary students was nearly twice the number of Edith's students, so in every peer group there were two to three ordinary students paired with one visually impaired student.

To accept and to encourage

The curriculum officer mentioned in the above extract that St. John's has emailed the self-evaluation form that their students had used to Edith's and encouraged Edith's students to fill this in and return. When St. John's teachers reviewed the students' particulars, they suddenly remembered that Edith's students were also children, that is, they were of a similar age and had similar interests to their own students at John's. The curriculum officer used "funny" twice to express her feelings at this finding; I believe that it was important for St. John's teachers to realize that Edith's students were not

total strangers to them, in the sense that they were children of an age they were familiar with from their teaching. This illustrates that the mainstream teachers began to experience one of the three equity pedagogy strategies shared by the vice-principal of Edith's at the professional development program (O-7), that is, to accept and to encourage.

6.1.4.2 Student Inter-group Activity

Following are the field notes that I took at the Kick-off Ceremony (O-9); the Kick-off Ceremony was also the first student inter-group activity of the whole ME Project:

> *[Observational field notes of O-9]:*
>
> *As there are only 37 students in P4 and P5 at Edith's, for a better learning outcome the two school principals and the teachers, after some discussions, decided to have a peer group comprising a maximum of two ordinary students paired with one Edith's student. The student participants in the ME Project from St. John's comprised 66 from P4-5 and 3 from P6. Thus 69 St. John's students (from primary four to six) and 37 Edith's students (from primary four to five) participated in this project. Today is the Kick-off Ceremony of the project; it is also the first student inter-group activity of the ME Project. The supervisor of St. John's, the principals from both schools, their teachers and the students attended this activity.*
>
> *It is also the first time for peer interaction. The students of both schools expressed their excitement about this activity. They told me that they would like to learn more of the background of their peers, e.g. what they like to do during their leisure time? What are they going to do when they have grown up? (O-9, Kick-off Ceremony, November, 2006)*

The field notes recorded that to ensure each student was responsible for a particular piece of a task, the cooperative grouping strategies were applied to facilitate inter-group learning by the two groups of students. This strategy enables each student to contribute his/her part of the task to bring about interdependence in a peer team (Carvalho, 2005). According to my observations, the students from both schools were delighted to meet and learn with their new partners.

As the kick-off ceremony was launched without a hitch, it was an auspicious start to the project, and the mood of melancholy over the disruptions to the inter-group activities diminished. It was surprising to find that the teachers had lost their resistance and started to engage in, and even enjoy, the experiences gained in the project. The following extract is the curriculum officer's review of the Kick-off Ceremony in a semi-structured interview (SI-8):

> *CO: [short interim evaluation of the project]...at the very beginning, we did have fears that the ME Project would be a mess as we lack the training and the appropriate knowledge to cater for the Edith's students. Now, we are really touched by seeing that our students could share, integrate and talk with Edith's students. There was an episode in the First Student Inter-group Activity (O-9)...There was a helicopter flying over our school; I could see all of our students were so excited, pointing at the sky and using all their means to describe the scene to their peers (the visually impaired students). <u>It was really amazing; we have never seen this motivation to learn, to express themselves, this willingness to communicate and take care of others</u>... (SI-8, January, 2007).*

Through heterogeneous groupings, the students learn how to interact, accept and respond to group differences; they need to learn not to give or take offence.

6.1.4.3 Common Learning Topics – Multiple Intelligence

Cooperative learning alone has little chance of changing the fundamental climate of learning in the classroom, especially if there are free riders (i.e. students who do not take responsibility for their part in the tasks). In group work, some students become even more passive and dependent learners if they are not individually challenged or involved, that is, learning activities need to be designed to use the talents and skills of all students to achieve successful learning experiences (Nieto and Bode, 2008, p.135). The teachers at St. John's realized this problem, so rather than arranging for the students to learn from outside ideas and unrelated facts, the teachers of both schools encouraged the students to share what they knew, or their interests, with their peers. For example, in an early stage of the project, the activities were conducted through piano playing,

pottery and drawing, as these were claimed to be examples of "the world's common language – music and art" by the teachers. As the students worked out a good relationship, there was sharing of book readings, collaborative writing and exploring of school lives in various visits in the later stages of the project. Hence, the learning activities of the project were designed progressively and aimed at creating interaction and interest for the students.

> *CO: [...] it was difficult to design inter-group activities... as these students couldn't see, they couldn't participate in any learning games... Therefore, we proposed to the Edith's teachers that we'd better start from a common language – music and art!... I have seen that a visually impaired student could play a new melody after he has practised for ONLY TWO DAYS. You know, that student had not attended any formal piano class before! I believe that the visually impaired students are compensated with diverse abilities as their eyesight is taken away by God...(SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)*

The above and the following extracts show that the teachers at St. John's have solved their misunderstandings about the disabled students; they were even amazed and recognized the diverse abilities of the visually impaired students. The students' multiple intelligences were respected in the process of instructional design. As a teaching strategy that is similar to Nieto and Bode's (2008) "constructivist teaching" in designing learning activities according to the students' potentialities, prior knowledge and strengths, constructivist teaching is characterized by teaching practices as inquiry activities, as problem-posing strategies (p.135).

6.1.4.4 Be Patient and Help Build Confidence

To keep a record of the ME Project, the school set up a web blog on the school's website; there were also project archives of photos and students' responses. The following extract comes from a video snapshot of the project on St. John's blog, where its students were providing feedback about the ME Project. These students, who had previously been described as "weak" in self-discipline and "self-centred" by the teachers, began to develop sufficient empathy to take care of their disabled peers.

Steve: *[P4 student] Our visually impaired peers are all fantastic. When they visited our school the teachers assigned us as school tour guides. A few days before their visit, my classmates and I walked around the school campus, inch by inch and step by step... We jotted down those areas which may pose danger to the disabled... so that we could remind the students from Edith's to be careful when they walk around our school... On the day they visited our school, we walked along and approached the staircase ahead, so I tried to hold their arms... my peers rejected that, and stressed that to walk down staircases is an "easy task" for them...right after their speech, they walked down the stairs quickly.*

Sarah: *[P5 student] Yes, they (the disabled) demonstrated jumping down from their school staircases in front of us (in one of the inter-group activities)...how crazy they are! (All the students remembered the scene and laughed.) (O-13, Student Evaluation Meeting by the School, May, 2007)*

The above example shows that schools can provide opportunities for students from different groups to interact socially under conditions designed to reduce fear and anxiety (Banks *et al.*, 2001) and thus help them develop a deeper mutual understanding. It illustrates that St. John's teachers began to borrow the idea that ensuring equitable learning is to *be patient with the students and help them build confidence* (refer to the SPVP's comments in Section 6.1.3.3). St. John's teachers handed learning autonomy over to their students and allowed them to find suitable ways to integrate, communicate and learn with their special peers.

6.1.4.5 Granting Students Autonomy as Curriculum Designers

In everyday school contexts, giving students choices in school learning is exercised in relatively few domains, and is often limited to selecting books for the school library, volunteering in classroom jobs, or choosing recess time activities. At the mid-point of the project, the teachers at St. John's granted further autonomy to the students by allowing them to make choices – with teacher guidance. For instance, the curriculum officer told me that the teachers thought that their students were able to choose the areas

of multicultural learning, for example, topics such as how their peers learn and what their hostel lives are like. On the other hand, the teachers' role provides the students with an opportunity to make judgments about how well they could learn meaningfully with their peers on the project. In fact, allowing students to make learning choices is a way of encouraging curiosity in learning. In addition, the students have to accommodate diverse interests and experiences in the learning process (Yancey, 1992).

> *CO: As we've seen, the students are able to behave themselves and accomplish their task (in the ME Project)... We (the teachers) encourage our students to co-design the project activities; they could choose his/her own favourite book to share with their new peers. Recently, our students suggested having another visit to Edith's [O-11, 3rd Inter-group Activity, February, 2007], as <u>they wanted to know more about the daily life of their peers</u>. So I liaised with Edith's curriculum officer, and we'll have a "deeper excursion" to Edith's students' hostels and are permitted to observe <u>a computer lesson</u> ...Our students are all fascinated by the fact that the visually impaired students can use computers... Anyway, both of us (St. John's and Edith's teachers) realized that the students of the two schools were excited about the ME Project. (SI-8, January, 2007)*

"To give the students appropriate guidance and let them go"

The examples above demonstrate that after St. John's teachers had made contact with the visually impaired students, they had developed confidence in their students' ability to learn independently. The teachers then implemented a learning strategy shared by the SPVP at the professional development program (O-7), i.e. *to give appropriate guidance (to the students) and let them go* (see Section 6.1.3.3). As illustrated in the above extract, the teachers had given their students a considerable amount of learning autonomy.

6.1.4.6 Nurturing of Empathy from Inter-group Contacts

Inter-group contacts can counteract stereotypes if the situation allows members of each group to behave in a variety of ways across different contexts, so that their

empathy with diversity is displayed. Positive impacts of heterogeneous groupings were also found in this study.

> *TF: Undoubtedly, my students have all been influenced by them (Edith's students) during the program. Surprisingly, even Peter, one of the weakest and naughtiest students at the school, has stopped his misbehaviour and is now willing to assist the Edith's students and so as his classmates, it's really amazing to see Peter's become kind and a nice boy... I can also feel that my students are learning well to be a good citizen. (SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)*

Inter-group activities provided the students with an equitable learning environment. When students of different backgrounds worked together, they developed respect for one another. Social acceptance of others was increased because the students were caring for others, willing to help each other and learn from each other. This finding is also connected with research that shows that cooperative learning improves the social acceptance of mainstream students with learning disabilities (Slavin, 1994).

6.1.4.7 Students are Motivated to Learn

The students' positive interactions are seen to be fostered by the teachers' adoption of the second equitable learning strategy mentioned in Section 6.1.3.3, i.e. *to accept and to encourage*. The literature argues that positive interactions between peer groups are achieved through (1) activities which maintain the balance between members of the different groups as equal as possible; (2) inter-group activities being structured so that the likelihood of failure is low; and (3) opportunities for hostility and aggression being minimized (Janney *et al.*, 1995; Salisbury *et al.*, 1995). At St. John's, the peer interactions of the inter-group activities were recorded as positive. As shown in the next extract, reflecting on the ME Project the students said that it had given them valuable learning opportunities by working with other cultural groups, and that they hoped to also bring a message of equity to society.

> *Sarah: [P5 student] It's amazing to have another cultural group of peers, they've lost their eyesight but they're clever. In many activities, like when we're doing artwork or playing IQ games, they*

are always the first to have the correct answers and bright ideas for solving problems. From them I have learnt to use different perspectives to think and understand other things...[giving a cheerful smile] It's wonderful...I even tell my mum I'm lucky to have new friends.

Wallace: *[P4 student]...It's a shame for me...because on the school visit (to Edith's), my peers are blind but they warned me of obstacles or stairs in front of me... "don't play"; "don't run"; "be careful"; "look out". I wonder if they're not actually blind...I told my teachers about this, and they explained to me that my friends are kind, they're considerate to their peers... (I guess) they can see by their hearts...I learnt to give up my seat to those who needed them on the MTR (local public transport). (O-13, Student Evaluation Meeting by the School, May, 2007)*

Overall, through the use of heterogeneous grouping and constructivist teaching, the students' multicultural awareness is raised when all students work together towards a common goal. In this study, the students are highly motivated to work within a group with diverse abilities and learning needs. As a result, high achieving students learnt tolerance and understanding of individual differences, and lower achieving students developed greater confidence in their self-actualization. The positive inter-group interactions in the ME Project support Carvalho's (2005) finding that teamwork helps students learn interpersonal skills, which is especially beneficial to second language learners. In addition, the positive inter-group interactions also reduced teachers' uncertainty and anxiety with regard to adopting multicultural curricula in the school.

6.2 Major Findings

In section 6.1, I applied the theoretical framework to answer the first research question, which aims to discern multicultural practices that promote equitable learning in the school. In this section, I summarize the major findings of the four domains that help promoting multicultural education in mainstream schools. Firstly, the study presents that the school is able to put vision into practice through a sustainable school

leadership and policy. The school puts emphasis on nurturing a whole-school inclusive environment; building a collaborative school culture. The school has a spiritual figure, that is, the supervisor, who has an influential role in building a liberal school culture. The school is then able to respect teachers as professionals, actualize teachers' collaborative practices by deeper understandings of the students' needs; promote equitable learning opportunities for all students by careful selection of students; and teach for the benefit of all students.

Secondly, equity pedagogy for student learning includes: accepting diversity learning; implementing prejudice reduction practices and differentiated instruction; adopting inquiry-based learning and peer assessment. Thirdly, teacher professionalism to reduce barriers is developed through collegial support in handling complex situations, and fostering professional partnerships to remove negative feelings. Fourthly, there was facilitation of student inter-group learning by grouping strategies; motivating student engagement in inter-group activity around students' interested topics. Teachers also granted students autonomy as curriculum designers to ensure learning is relevant to their needs. All these strategies help students engage in active learning, and nurture empathy through inter-group contacts.

6.3 Chapter Summary

The study employed four organisational principles as a holistic theoretical framework to understand the ways in which St. John's teachers conceptualised and implemented multicultural education in a joint project between St. John's and Edith's, a school for visually impaired students. To be successful, multicultural education has to embrace organisational change, including giving attention to school leadership, pedagogy, professional development and student development; these issues are effectively covered by the four domains of the theoretical framework. According to the study findings demonstrated and discussed in this chapter, the school leaders of St. John's were willing to ensure that decision-making was widely shared and that members of the school community learned collaborative skills and dispositions in order to create a caring learning environment for students. Moreover, St. John's was able to build up a collaborative working partnership with Edith's, a relationship that enriched the professional teaching knowledge of St. John's mainstream teachers. The study showed that the teachers started to adopt the equity pedagogical strategies that

contributed a "theoretical lens" for the teachers to re-interpret the meaning of education and to make decisions about what they believed they can and should do. It may be concluded that effective teaching does not require an endless list of instructional methods or resources, rather what is fundamental to good teaching and central to effective instruction is to recognize and respect human values and relationships in a learning environment (Cummins, 2001). In addition, facilitating inter-group activities provided the teachers with an opportunity to see their diverse learners' values, their preferred approaches to learning and their styles of interaction (Villegas and Lucas, 2002). Though the research findings presented so far are positive, there are barriers to promoting multicultural education and these will be reviewed and analysed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 – Barriers and Opportunities

In the previous chapter, I applied the theoretical framework to answer the first research question. In this chapter, I will outline barriers to promoting multicultural education in a local mainstream school. This should be useful for planning appropriate measures. External tensions resulting from the ambiguity of government policies and parents' expectations of education plus internal ambivalence about change by teachers are the major barriers to multicultural education found in this study. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that these barriers are not insurmountable obstacles to change. As illustrated through the data, particularly data from meetings, a collaborative school team engaged in organisational change at the school level, which includes leadership and school policy, equity pedagogy, teachers' professional development and facilitation of students' inter-group relationship, is key to the removal of barriers and the creation of new change opportunities. Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss barriers along with opportunities. Furthermore, as teachers' interactions are critical for their positive constructions of multicultural attitudes and breakthroughs in their conventional work practices, these will also be discussed in this chapter.

7.1 Tensions Arising from Government Policy

A local study reported that teachers have still not been able to appreciate the idea of a whole-school approach to integrated or multicultural education; it is usually the case that teachers still target the "normal" student in class, seen as representing the majority, and the focus of teaching is still academic pursuits (Crawford, 2002). In addition, there is an important policy quality assurance inspection system in the local education system, which aims to achieve quality school education through school improvement and accountability. To do this, a school has to keep its operations transparent and accountable (EDB, 2007l). The (mandatory) school profile report and the (optional) external review reports may be published online on the government's website, or the parents could request that the school announce the results of the external review. In order not to be openly criticized, most schools in Hong Kong are inclined to follow the curriculum set by the government or include those items that are welcomed by the parents in their school development plans.

7.1.1 Initial Concerns of the School

Though St. John's has the vision that, "all our students can develop to their full capacity in the love of God", at the earliest stage of the research, I found that the school's new principal and the curriculum officer were working under the pressure of foregrounding accountability in the school. To ensure their school's survival with adequate student enrolments, the school managers had to keep a balance between their religious beliefs, the school's mission and the government's policy. For example, the school had to take sides between following the trend of education to satisfy the majority of the parents and providing equitable learning for all students. As a result, the two school administrators decided to be conservative in the school policy making, that is, first of all, to design curriculum strategies according to the government's directives, and to ensure that new polices could be safely and easily implemented for meeting the general needs of the dominant culture; following is an example for clarification.

The principal decided to start teaching Chinese language in Putonghua at primary two because this is both government policy (Education Commission, 2006) and a "trendy" practice in Hong Kong. Besides, primary two is a school level that is public examination-free, so the school could take the risk of treating one primary two class as a test of this pedagogical innovation.

> *P: Another focus of the school is to strengthen students' "biliterate and trilingual abilities". Actually, the language proficiency, for example, in English of our students is ok. It is because our teachers have done much work focusing on this, for example, we've hired a full-time NET [native English teacher] to hone the students' English speaking skills. However, [the students' command of] Putonghua in our school is very weak but as we have to follow the trend (government policy), this year we're running a pilot to teach Chinese language in Putonghua in a P2 (primary two) class... the P2 students have no pressure of facing public exam. (SI-1, August 2006)*

7.1.2 External Pressures on School Decisions

During the planning stage of the project, the principal and the teachers were facing external pressures from government policies. The exchanges between principal and

teachers demonstrated that the school policies of St. John's were mostly driven by government policy. For example, a government review – "External School Review" (ESR) – had commented that the school had done too little to cater for diverse learning needs, and this was the catalyst for putting multicultural education into action:

> *P: ...there was a ESR [External School Review], a school inspection, of the school in February 2006, which found that our pastoral care didn't extend to students who were different from the dominant group. After which the government's external reviewers commented to the school... The government suggested that we focus our efforts on "Moral and Civic Education", which is a start to engaging the school in promoting learning equity. (P0-1, April 2006).*

The principal's comments above showed that when the school planned its ME Project, it had taken appropriate measures to follow the government's education policy. For instance, the school would put an effort into those innovations that were being advocated by local educational policies or welcomed by the general public, for example, enhancing students' language proficiency in Putonghua, promoting civic education, a healthy lifestyle, etc. In order to respond to the negative comments of the external review report, the ME Project was run on the understanding that there was to be no clash with the school's regular teaching or with examinations.

> *R: Why does the school want to do the ME Project?*
>
> *P: Oh, the ME Project has involved all the three major school foci, i.e. civic education, enhancing students' language proficiency and building a healthy school learning environment. The project has all these foci, so we decided to do it. (SI-2, September 2006)*

> *P: The schedule of the [ME] Project is drafted according to our school calendar... if there is no clash with our school functions or exams, then I assumed that these days were free and could be marked down for possible days of project activities. (PO3, September 2006)*

According to the principal's responses, the school preferred adopting "safe" actions (that is, actions with no risk of open criticism) to develop strategies for multicultural education. For example, it joined government (i.e. Education Bureau, EDB) commissioned programs catering for learner differences, such as the "Understanding Adolescent Project (Primary)" (hereinafter referred to as "UAP"), the government commissioned several non-governmental organizations [NGOs] to devise this program to support students' personal growth (EDB, 2007t).

> *P:* *...Next year we will join the EMB's [now EDB] Understanding Adolescent Project (Primary) as a way of developing the resilience of the weakest students of primary four. (P0-1, April 2006)*

Parental feedback is one of the measures to enhance the transparency of school work (EDB, 2007s); however, the principal and the curriculum officer show their worries about the possibility of the project arousing the parents' dissatisfaction.

> *P:* *By the way... (regarding which students could participate in the ME Project) WE <u>need to have their parents' consent first</u>... (P0-3, September 2006)*

> *CO:* *If the parents say no, then WE cannot allow their children to take part in the project...because...if nothing unexpected happens, it's ok...BUT in case...a parent tells us...oh, after my child was back from the visit to Edith's, s/he cannot sleep well or has a nightmare...then WE'D BE IN BIG TROUBLE! [raising her voice] That's the point! (SI-2, September 2006)*

Hence, the school decided to give a pre-education workshop (O-8, November, 2006) to the students to explain the values and objectives of the ME Project. After the talk, the students received a memorandum for their parents that was in fact a form letter to be signed by the parents, giving their approval for their children to take part in the ME Project.

7.2 Positive Discrimination vs. Education for All

St. John's has a mission to treat all students equally. At the time multicultural education had to be put into practice, "education for all" was not just a slogan, the teachers used some forms of affirmative action to redress their resistance to the disadvantaged students in the study. Positive discrimination describes affirmative action strategies that can disguise negative perceptions towards under-represented groups (Board of Studies NSW, 2008; Meltzer *et al.*, 2004). Positive discrimination is found to be the second barrier in the project. In the following section, I outline the ways in which the teachers used positive discrimination in the ME Project with regard to the students who had diverse learning needs.

7.2.1 Worst Case Scenarios

At the beginning of the ME Project, the principal and the teachers had limited knowledge about the visually impaired students. In their comments recorded at the project planning stage, they employed pessimistic views and reinforced negative perceptions about the special students; for example, that the St. John's students might be uncomfortable with the visually impaired students' unusual facial appearances (some have artificial eyes), and that this would finally impede interactions between the two groups of students.

> *P: [referring to visually impaired students] As we've seen in many TV programs, many blind students have artificial eyeballs inside their extraordinary deep eye sockets... [continued to clarify] In fact, we have to take care of our students...they may experience discomfort after they've seen the unusual facial appearance of the blind children... (SI-2, September, 2006).*

At the beginning, the principal and the curriculum officer were reluctant to implement the ME Project; I thought that as they were new to the school, they might have trouble mobilizing the teachers to lead large groups of students on the planned school visits. In an interview, they spoke out about their major concern being to avoid any possible embarrassment during the student interactions. Eventually, in the final

evaluation interview, the school staff found that this worry had been generated by their misconceptions about the visually impaired students.

> *R:* *Then...your worries come from...the possible dangers of the school visit (for the students have to travel for some distance to Edith's)... besides, (you're worried that) some of your students have seen the SP students at school, will they be frightened? Therefore, the school has to obtain the parents' consent...*
>
> *P:* *[spoke suddenly] Oh no, I think it's not totally true, we're not concerned about the DANGERS*
>
> *CO:* *Uhm...yeah...*
>
> *P:* *...but we need to take care of our students' FEELING and their RESPONSES [...] <u>If the parents complain to us (about the project), are we [the school] able to afford that?</u> (SI-2, September, 2006)*

There was another concern that if, during the inter-group activities, the St John's students were frightened by the appearance of the disabled children, this might lead to problems being created for the school by the parents *"If the parents complain to us (about the project), are we [the school] able to afford it?"* (SI-2, September, 2006).

The project evaluation interview demonstrated that the teachers had a common concern regarding the appearance of the visually impaired students. Further, the teachers saw the visually impaired students as having relatively low self-esteem, so they expected that it was up to their students to "help" or contribute to the visually impaired students:

> *TA:* *Yes, I think I've learnt a lot myself...at the early beginning of the project, I really thought that we, including <u>our students, should "help" the visually impaired students</u> ...in fact, I thought they had relatively <u>lower self-esteem</u>,*
>
> *TF:* *...I feared that my students were shocked by these special students, especially <u>their appearance</u>. On the day of staff development, I was actually surprised by the <u>visually impaired students' appearance</u>...*

TE: I was so worried...I was afraid that our students would get frightened of these Special Students, especially their appearance. (SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)

In order to minimize the risk of failure, the school teachers wanted to nominate "appropriate" students (so called by the teachers) to participate in the ME Project to avoid any possible embarrassment which might be created by the students' responses.

TF: I was afraid that my students would be shocked by these Special Students, especially their appearance. So I planned to choose some kind-hearted and well-behaved students to join the project; at least this would minimize any embarrassment that might be created...e.g. careless whispers or screaming... (SI-11, Final Evaluation, Late May, 2007)

7.2.2 Teachers' Inability to Implement Integrated Strategies

In my study, the teachers of the SST discovered that the teachers were unskilled in catering for learner difference. On the other hand, multicultural education had to be implemented under pressure of the government and the mission of the school board. Fortunately, the leaders of St. John's understood that a person's perception could probably be modified through human interactions. So the school principal and the curriculum officer needed to suggest strategies to motivate the whole teaching team to engage in the ME Project.

CO: [Repeating her viewpoint] so we can introduce the visually impaired students' daily living patterns to our students, and give appropriate lesson, such as a kind of counselling to our students...Oh yes, giving CORRECT [she stressed] information or counselling is good for our students, so that they would have appropriate information about the blind students...Only after all these things have been done can we launch the ME Project... (O-4, September, 2006)

The supervisor understood that his new principal and the curriculum officer were reluctant to become engaged in the ME Project, so he arranged a school visit to Edith's for the school's Student Support Team, and he initiated an internal meeting with Edith's administrators in early September, 2006. It was a critical event for the SST, for the team members discovered that Edith's had already established a periodical exchange with a local international school and so the visually impaired students were ready and welcomed learning with other students. The teachers' hesitation about multicultural education started to disappear. This change in attitudes towards and understanding of the "different" students by the principal and the curriculum officer was uncovered in the second staff meeting. The SST came to this meeting with the agenda of discussing the details of the ME Project with the teachers.

7.2.3 Perceptions of the Visually Impaired Students

CO: *This is our second staff meeting to discuss the implementation plan of the ME Project... and we have to decide which forms and which students will be selected [for the project]?*

TC: *Do the students at Edith's have difficulties seeing?*

CO: *Yes, they have poor vision; the worst are totally blind.*

P: *Both, (they're) totally blind and have no vision.*

TD: *So how can they talk to our students?*

P: *Why NOT? They can TALK!*

CO: *[laugh] Yes, they can talk ...*

TC: *Can we get to know more about them? Honestly speaking, we have an impression that the SP students are disabled, so we should have something to take care of, especially if we need to contact them during the project.*

P: *In fact, they are ABLE.... We could see them WALK PROPERLY.*

CO: *Yes!! (We have seen that) they're acquainted with their school, every chair, every desk.... They visit external organizations occasionally... I think [looking at the principal] so they have no problem to have the school visits on the project. But, I'm afraid*

that, if they come to our school, every one of us may need to have to offer some assistance to them [looking at the principal for confirmation]. (O-6, October, 2006)

From the above comments, it is clear that the teachers had preconceived ideas about the Edith's students. On the other hand, the principal and the curriculum officer started using more positive utterances to introduce the special children; for example, they used words such as, "with low vision", "[they] can TALK", "[they] are ABLE", and "WALK PROPERLY". All these utterances are used to stress the abilities of the visually impaired students.

Though the two curriculum leaders (the principal and the curriculum officer) had a better understanding of the special students, the curriculum officer was still using, *"I think"* and *"I'm afraid that"* and kept looking at the principal for support. The two leaders were not yet fully self-confident about and not yet fully supportive of the ME Project.

7.2.4 Incorrect Judgments by the St. John's Students

The teachers' prejudices and discriminatory attitudes make them underestimate their students' abilities and as a result the students' learning opportunities may not be exploited, in turn undermining the teacher-student relationship. The abilities of the students at St. John's were mostly underestimated. As most of their colleagues, the principal and the curriculum officer thought that their students were too dependent and not ready for providing help or assistance to others, something clearly evident in their use of the word "weak" many times to describe their students' abilities. In the ME Project, the teachers had to reconstruct their judgements of their students, and grant learning opportunities to a group of students that was formerly negatively commented on as "weak" and "inappropriate".

"Our students are weak"

In the extract below, the curriculum officer legitimizes her discouraging judgements of her students; she claimed that her students were spoiled and not ready to

work with the Edith's students. However, as stated in Table 5.3, the students at St. John's had obtained higher scores in the social and affective domains of the official APASO test (an official instrument to measure students' affective and social skills) when compared with the general Hong Kong norms. The survey findings showed that St. John's students are relatively more self-confident and independent compared with the students at most of the local primary schools. Meanwhile, the principal had not corrected the prejudice of the curriculum officer but reinforced her pre-conception.

> *CO:* *After we reviewed our last year students' APASO findings... we collected the data and analyzed them again, didn't we? Their learning attitudes were ok but they've shown weaknesses in... [CO looked at principal for his further confirmation]*
>
> *P:* *... self-discipline*
>
> *CO:* *Oh yes, their self-discipline and their willingness to learn to give service to the community are weak."(SI-1, August, 2006)*

The vice-principal had the same negative impression about the primary four students.

> *VP:* *Our current P4 students are rather weak in self-management and* (they're) *too self-centred. (SI-2, September, 2006)*

In addition to these three school curriculum leaders, the other teachers were also not confident about their students, for they thought that they were too passive and self-centred and sometimes naïve.

> *TC:* *Our students, particularly P4, are the weakest in our school; they have no emotional control or learning ability, they require others to take care of them, so if you want me to suggest a form, I would not recommend P4 students, they're inappropriate to* [be selected for] *the project...*
>
> *TD:* *I'm worried that our P4 students are too naïve, disobedient and self-centred; they may say something bad and hurt the Special Students. (O-6, October, 2006)*

With reference to this issue, the SST played the role of working partner to encourage the teachers to provide equal learning opportunities to those "weak(est) / naïve / disobedient / self-centred" students as they had been labelled. For example, the curriculum officer started referring to the school's visions and mission and using the words "we" and "our" as ways of persuading the teachers to accept the ideas of the ME Project.

> *CO: [takes another pause] I think we're not going to select only students with high language proficiency, but we will try to provide an opportunity to the low achievers. It's also our school's vision and mission. Our students could benefit from the Project, we believe that is so not only for our students, but also the Special Students. (O-6, October, 2006)*

7.3 Turning Barriers into Opportunities

In the two previous sections, I have addressed barriers to implementing multicultural education at the school. In this section, I will present the changes that the school staff experienced during the development and implementation of the ME Project. It was found that the school had turned barriers into opportunities for change, thereby enhancing a multicultural learning environment.

7.3.1 Reconstructing the Concept of Students' Abilities

As noted in Table 4.2 and Appendix IV, which illustrate the four different stages of the ME Project, there is an "Exploratory Stage", which involved two crucial meetings of the teachers and students at the two schools. The most important one was the staff professional development visit to Edith's in October, 2006 (O-7), which had brought about a very significant change in the teachers' perceptions of the potential of the special and ordinary students and thus of the value of the project. The teachers reported that the ideas exchange with Edith's teachers (SPTs) had prompted them to reflect on the meanings of education. After the teachers of St. John's had listened to Edith's teachers sharing of their experience, St. John's teachers' confidence in the value of the ME Project had increased, and they started to believe that it was only teachers who

could take the lead to provide all students with learning opportunities through multicultural education. At the end of the study, the teachers agreed that all students could benefit provided that their teachers were willing to give them equitable learning opportunities.

> *TE:* *Exactly. I have the same feeling as Miss TD. The visually impaired students are kind and have excellent language skills; maybe because they're blind they have to develop stronger language ability for communication. They're really wise; they're amazing ...*
>
> *TH:* *Ah, I'd like to share a story... of what happened on one of the school visits, where one of the blind students acted as a "tour guide" of Edith's. My students followed him and walked along the library corridor. The students found that an excellent student's writing was posted on the wall, which was in Braille and with English captions. In fact, my students could read the English texts... Very impressively, without hesitation...the blind students were moving their little fingers from left to right across the embossed letters on the page and read the Braille script aloud for my students. After he had finished reading, I was so surprised to note that, without my instruction, all my students clapped their hands and showed their appreciation to the blind students. You know, this was the first time I could see my students were fully appreciative and showed heartfelt thanks for the work of others. (It's proved that) <u>both groups of students could improve if we (teachers) gave them the opportunity</u>. (SI-11, Final Interview, Late May, 2007)*

This school visit was seen as a valuable exploration by the SST in that it strengthened the confidence of the team to run the ME Project. The following extract shows that the selection of students had been an issue in the school that was much argued about, with some teachers considering selecting students who were self-centred but with better family background and thus better suited to integrate with the special

children, and at the same time, the SST suggesting that teachers choose the "trouble makers".

> *CO:* *...About the matter of student selection, some teachers chose those selfish and wealthy students and would like them to learn how to care for others. That's fine. We [SST] provided the teachers another perspective for consideration, suggesting they choose the "TROUBLE MAKERS", the students who are naughty, disobedient or have behavioural problems, so they may eventually learn discipline, we believe. (SI-9, February, 2007)*

On the other hand, in an interview the curriculum officer claimed that many of her colleagues were still worried about the students' performance, so they were inclined to select the good and well-behaved students to take part in the ME Project. Holding the belief that "*the weakest students would benefit from the [experience of the] project, in terms of social skills and learning motivation*", the Student Support Team decided to make the final decision for the teachers and selected a group of "weak" and low achievers to integrate with the Edith's students.

> *CO:* *We could not keep arguing about the issue of student selection (for the ME Project), since the teachers were inclined to choose good students with better academic achievements and who were obedient. However, as the SST members agreed that the weakest students could probably benefit, in terms of social skills and learning motivation, from the project...at last, we (the SST) have made the final decision for the teachers. Those students who were reported to be selfish, disobedient, dependent and low achievers could also be chosen to take part in the ME Project. (SI-10, March, 2007)*

At this exploratory stage, and under the influence of the school's mission and the experience sharing with Edith's teaching staff, the teachers did not choose only students with good academic achievements to join the project. Instead, the school selected the students according to their willingness to be part of the ME Project; their personality, especially having a positive social attitude; and their parents' consent having been given.

These factors were re-defined as the dominant factors determining a student's "appropriateness" for the ME Project.

7.3.2 Awareness of the Meanings of Multicultural Education

At the beginning of the ME Project, the school staff were confused in their understanding of multicultural education; their reluctance to accept the reality of the diversity of the school population; and their expectations of school education. At the end of the study, the ideas of the ME Project were well received by the teachers and the meanings of education had been reconstructed as well. As discussed in Section 6.1.2, the school had created a frame of equity pedagogy for the teachers to re-interpret the meaning of education and to make decisions about what a teacher can and should do. The curriculum officer made the following comment when she evaluated the ME Project in May, 2007:

> *R:* *Do you have any expectations of changes in belief from this project?*
>
> *CO:* *Honestly speaking, I DO have a personal gain from this project; I'm sure that <u>my initial thoughts towards the disabled students were incorrect</u>. [R: Can you tell me more?] Sure, at the very beginning, though the project sounded meaningful, <u>my original conceptions of the disabled students were that they were handicapped, completely disabled, and they were waiting for our assistance</u>...In fact, this is a kind of "DISCRIMINATION". [...] So surprisingly, on the first student inter-group activity on a visit to Edith's, it was really really AMAZING to see that a visually impaired student could play our selected prayer after he had practised for two days. You know, that student had not attended any piano exam or had any formal training at all. After that, I could see that other visually impaired students could have better reading skills, as many of them are good speakers and wonderful listeners... All these experiences have strengthened my belief that although these students are visually disabled, they are bright at heart. (SI-10, March, 2007)*

The curriculum officer's self-reflection led her to confess that her "*initial thoughts towards the disabled students were incorrect*", and as shown in her comments throughout the study, she expressed that the special children were "blind", had "low self-esteem", were "completely disabled" and needed help. All these comments constructed a sense of discrimination against another social group. Only after the ME Project had been fully implemented did the conceptions of the curriculum officer change significantly.

7.4 Chapter Summary

Chapters 6 and 7 have answered the two major research questions, namely, what are the strategies used to overcome the barriers against promoting multicultural education in a local mainstream school setting. In this chapter, the barriers to promoting multicultural education in a local mainstream school have been discussed, such as initial resistance of the school staff, parents' expectations of school education, underestimations of the abilities of students of diverse backgrounds, and lacking relevant training for multicultural education. The research findings have demonstrated how the teachers and St John's school took up particular comments and interactions regarding disability and special needs. In Fairclough's (2005) words, "organizations are socially constructed" and "the organizational texts and interactions have constructive or constitutive effects" in participants' perceptions of matters (Fairclough, 2005, p.915). In this sense, as was shown in the school staff's comments, individuals engage in conversations or interactions with particular intentions in mind and may secure preferred outcomes (Fairclough, 1992). My study shows that after the teachers had actually engaged with the ME Project, deeper understandings of their students and of the Edith's students were gained. I believe that the findings are useful for planning appropriate measures, if required, to support the enactment of multicultural education in the future. In Chapter 8, recommendations will be made that go beyond the doing of research, extending to the implementation of multicultural education, in HK in particular.

Chapter 8 – Conclusions and Recommendations

In this thesis, I have demonstrated a journey of change of how a primary mainstream school promoted equitable learning opportunities through a self-initiated ME Project. The school set up a whole-school environment to mobilize the entire school to create a multicultural environment and to improve equitable learning opportunities for its students. The study has demonstrated a lively transformative change taking place through the teachers' construction of shared understandings through interactions, and through the strategies that they enacted to implement multicultural education in their school.

Data were collected by a series of qualitative case study methods such as document analysis, observations and semi-structured interviews. Through an in-depth analysis of the research findings the study sought to throw light on two major areas: (1) the ways in which multicultural education is socially constructed and enacted by teachers in mainstream schools through participants' interactions, and (2) the strategies that foster implementation of multicultural education in a local school to overcome any barriers to change.

In this chapter, I outline my contributions to knowledge and to promoting positive change in Hong Kong education. A key, over-arching conclusion is that taking a whole-school approach to developing multicultural education is essential for a school to uphold the principle of providing equal opportunities and full participation for all students. This chapter is organized into two major sections: Firstly, I outline the contributions of the study in Section 8.1. Secondly, in Section 8.2, I make recommendations for future development of promoting equitable learning in schools.

8.1 Contributions of the Study

The most significant contribution of my doctoral work is that the findings from the case study primary school, and its ME project in particular, provide a sound basis that is both theoretically and empirically informed, for schools to develop and implement education for diversity. This is important in the Hong Kong educational context where government policies identify equitable learning opportunities as a key goal, while schools struggle to take account of these policies in a context where there is a focus on standardised teaching and exams. To date, there are no other studies of this kind.

A range of Hong Kong government policies direct schools towards providing teaching and learning to ensure equal opportunities and full participation for all students. Thus, for example, under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, all ordinary schools have to admit students with special educational needs. At the time I am finalizing the thesis, there are about 500 primary schools and 300 secondary schools that have adopted a school-based policy of integrated education in the school year of 2008-2009 (EDB, 2009). These mainstream schools are given a cash grant that is based on an assessment of student needs in the school. Ensuring that 'No Child is Left Behind' is not easy. At present, there are about 73% and 27% students with SEN studying in ordinary schools and special schools respectively (Wu, 2008). The core issue is that the espoused value of equal opportunities to learn appears to clash with the prevailing key educational goal of most schools that tend to emphasize competition and selection of students. Obtaining high academic achievement in public examinations is seen as the key to career success and the path to climb up the social ladder by many parents and teachers and even the students themselves. The system of selection and competition contradicts the idea of educational equity, as the focus on academic success fosters strong competition among schools and leaves little space or interest for cultivating a multicultural culture.

A second contribution of this research is that it provides further understanding of the complex meanings of diversity and multicultural education through an engagement with relevant literature. In particular, the discussion should be useful for Hong Kong education authorities in clarifying relationships between, for example, disabilities and learning difficulties and other kinds of diversity. At this time, there is ambiguity and some confusion in relation to the ways 'difference' is described, and this leads to problems in thinking about and implementing something called 'multicultural education'.

This thesis challenges this current, educational context and its discourses. Unless there are fundament al changes in values and perspectives, or even an upheaval in education, it is difficult to perceive how equitable learning opportunities could become a reality in Hong Kong. Through this investigation of education policies, multicultural education theories and local school situations, and with a focus on how a local mainstream primary school makes multicultural education possible, I offer a way forward for better understanding diversity in education, and for future development of multicultural education.

8.1.1 Contribution Towards Implementing Multicultural Education: Taking Up Educational Reforms

The study demonstrates that school staff have nothing to fear from the new educational policies, and that a committed school leadership can turn seemingly unattainable policy directions into practice that is positive and effective. The teachers of St. John's took advantage of the government policies that encourage schools to make initiatives in curriculum and instructional accommodation to support all students' learning. The school acted in the spirit of policies such as "one curriculum for all" and the whole-school approach. As a consequence, St. John's teachers applied their pedagogical and learning activities to accommodate different learning needs – a shift from a focus on academic merit and exams.

Given the student diversity in contemporary regular classrooms, teachers can no longer adopt one single teaching approach for all students if they are to be responsive to government directions in education. The ME project showed that promoting learning equity and participation of all students involves changes. These changes range across change in attitudes, beliefs, behaviour and actions. The teachers at St John's were confronted with all of these and moved through fear and resistance to more positive ways of thinking, and different ways of acting.

8.1.2 Contribution Towards Implementing Multicultural Education: Bringing Together Theory and Practice of a Whole School Approach

The argument for, articulation, and example of a whole-school approach to promoting equitable learning presented in this study can be seen as an exemplar of a local school approach to implementing change. The research into the ME project, examined through a theoretical framework where a whole school approach is seen as essential, presents both individual factors (e.g., a teacher's attitude to and belief in multicultural education) and organizational factors (e.g., a school's vision and pedagogies) together as significant in producing multicultural education. Effective preparation of teachers in pedagogical design; a culturally responsible curriculum; support from school leadership; and the teaching of inter-group interaction, are all vital. In order to examine how multicultural education is constructed and practised by a school and its teachers, the theoretical framework centring on four domains, namely: (I) School Policy and Leadership; (II) Equity Pedagogy for Student Learning; (III)

Professional Development; and (IV) Facilitation of Student Inter-group Learning that was developed and used in this study, is a helpful heuristic for educators – both managers and teachers.

8.1.3 Contribution Towards Implementing Multicultural Education: Beyond the ME Project

St John's has taken up the challenge of implementing educational reforms and has developed a whole school approach to change. The ME project is the manifestation of an uptake of government policies in one place for a specific time. However, I argue that there are potentially on-going effects in terms of beliefs and behaviours in relation to multicultural education for St John's (and for other schools). Four major impacts of the journey of change follow that show the teachers of St. John's have been able to break deep-rooted beliefs and practices. I suggest that these impacts have implications for future developments.

First of all, leadership is often conceptualized as someone having sole authority. The implications of this study are relevant to school leaders, who are in a position to support promising efforts. The ME project demonstrates that the school leaders are critical components in the development of an equitable education system which facilitates teachers applying effective learning strategies to catering for student differences. Leadership bears an important responsibility in removing barriers that impede the instructional and relational work of teachers to improving equity and students' learning performances. In order to establish a whole-school environment that has positive attitudes to students' diverse learning needs, shared leadership and ongoing communication with key senior staff are essential to guide rather than order direction and change.

Second, the ME project offers a new definition to the teachers' role in improving equity and achievement as well. Many teachers perceive their role as implementers of school changes. My study reveals that teachers should not accept a powerless or passive position in relation to educational change. The ME project demonstrates that teachers can become pivotal drivers of change. St. John's created a positive multicultural learning environment in which the teachers recognised and became responsive to their students' different learning needs and styles. As a result, the teachers are able to figure out how to make their students' learning enjoyable and meaningful. The implication of

this study is that teachers should be masters of implementation, collaboration and communication.

Third, the ME project has demonstrated the effectiveness of integrating professional partnerships in implementing educational change. It is seen that the teachers teamed with school leaders, students and other school professional members to create time and structure for collaboration. The teachers participating in the study commented that they found the school visit to Edith's was enlightening. Further, the participation in the ME project increased their involvement in decision-making processes outside the classroom, and fostered collegiality and collaboration amongst the teachers. Besides, teachers have an important role in nurturing students and appreciating their challenges and needs in their lives, and in offering support.

Fourth, efforts to foster student engagement and voice are also evident in the ME project. By providing students with opportunities for using their decision-making abilities and social skills in the multicultural curriculum, these factors have a far-reaching impact on the students; for example, the groups of "disadvantaged" students could become active in their civic life of their communities once they had developed a sense of belonging. The study shows that when the students have opportunities to develop their potentials and benefit from learning, they are able to feel positive about their own selves. Students also have a chance of recognizing the varying talents of each person and mutual respect could then follow.

The changes that occurred at St John's do not stop at the end of the life of the project. The ongoing impacts of the project on the teachers, leaders, students and organisational life of the school are beyond the scope of this study. However, the four kinds of impact described above would seem to be substantial enough to have further ramifications. The focus on competition, selection of students and exam-based teaching and learning is still a feature of Hong Kong schools, and no doubt St John's as well. However, the drawing out of these impacts and their implications for further change provides an alternative way of thinking about education that focuses instead on education for all.

8.1.4 Contribution Towards Understanding Multicultural Education: What Multicultural Education Is

One finding from the comprehensive review of the multicultural literature that I conducted was the realization that the ways diversity is conceptualized in Hong Kong educational discourses leads to ambiguities and confusions. I make a contribution to knowledge and understanding of multiculturalism and multicultural education in the Hong Kong context.

The study describes a special project that made use of an inter-group learning exchange experience between groups of special students and mainstream students. To signal its promotion of learning equity, St. John's called the project a Multicultural Education Project. However, as discussed in Chapter 1, Hong Kong neither has a policy of multicultural education nor are there authorized definitions in use of terms such as "diversity", "diverse learning needs", "special education needs", "learning differences" and "multicultural". I have used the term "multicultural education" as a comprehensive term to encompass all kinds of difference discussed in this thesis notwithstanding that there are differentiations to be made between multiculturalism, disabilities and learning difficulties or needs. Furthermore, I discussed in the literature review that schools are discourse communities that involve members from a variety of cultural backgrounds, beliefs and actions, which are potentially constructed or built up around prejudice, serving to normalise the values of the dominant society as well as leading to patterns of inclusion and exclusion. Thus, although the concept of multicultural education found in the literature about Western education systems is not matched by definitions in Hong Kong, through a discussion of definitions, concepts and ideas some further clarification of kinds of diversities and how they might be understood in pedagogical reforms could emerge.

8.1.5 Summary of Contributions

The study presents evidence of a quality multicultural curriculum, which encompasses teachers' reconstruction of beliefs and pedagogies, the impact of strong leadership, collaborative school structures, emphasis on staff development, establishment of educational partnerships and student-teacher interactions. Furthermore, the study confirms that putting multicultural beliefs into practice is an on-going process

of encouraging transformative change of several factors, such as teacher-student relations, pedagogy or instructional strategies, teachers' professional roles and school policies. As a whole, multicultural curriculum reforms involve changing of practitioners' perceptions, behaviours and knowledge.

I believe that the results of my study will provide workable solutions to promote more equitable learning opportunities and multicultural education in schools. The contributions of my study have been mentioned above, but as this is a small-scale, self-funded study, there is much room for further improvement. In the next section, recommendations are made for directions and blueprints for future development in the local public school setting.

8.2 Recommendations for Future Development

The study records a transformative process of multicultural education in a local mainstream primary school and its special school partner. It provides an exemplar of multicultural education, showing that such education best takes place within a normal school setting that accepts, encourages and respects students with diverse educational needs. The study also demonstrates that multicultural education can be successfully implemented in a whole-school approach when the four organizational domains work together. In contrast to Figure 5.1, in which I illustrated the isolation in which the four organizational domains formerly worked at St. John's, in Figure 8.1 I illustrate the collaborative working relationship of the four organizational domains as a result of a transformative process of multicultural education. This diagram shows that a transformative process of multicultural education in mainstream schools can be fostered by strong leadership, dedicated school policy, adequate professional development training and external support, and facilitation of students' positive learning.

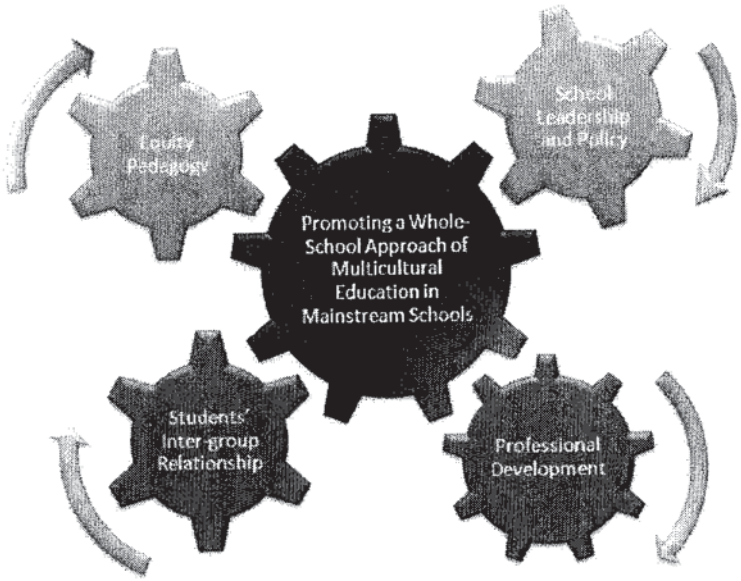

Figure 8.1 Momentum of multicultural education

As illustrated in Figure 8.1, launching multicultural education in mainstream schools is an ongoing process, where trust and interactions are the motivating forces (shown by arrows in Figure 8.1) of this momentum of multicultural education.

8.2.1 Granting Autonomy to Schools in Curriculum Development

As stated in Chapter 1, the education authority promotes the idea of "one curriculum for all" and two whole-school approach policies as major directions in catering for students with diverse educational needs. Local schools are then given autonomy by the government to develop practices for promoting equitable learning in schools. The research site sets a good example to local schools as St. John's has made full use of this autonomy to re-structure the curriculum for promoting multicultural education. My study explicates that instead of authoritarian rules and regulations, adopting flexibility in policy implementation is helpful in curriculum development in schools.

8.2.2 Multicultural Leadership

The case study showed that multicultural education is not simply a policy but a way of thinking at a school, and thus building up an effective multicultural leadership is a significant issue for schools that aim to help all teachers and students accept equitable ideas and practices. St. John's indicates that a strong leadership maintains issues of equity learning at the heart of the school's educational mission. Besides, in order to build mutual trust with a school team, school leaders should model for their colleagues how to establish positive learning communities in their classrooms. As shown in the findings, sharing leadership and inviting communication among colleagues are the most effective ways of organizing a group of teachers to work together in a shared belief.

8.2.2.1 A Shared Leadership

The two school leaders had successfully created a culture of shared leadership at St. John's. Shared leadership means leaders are willing to transform the school culture to deliver greater team collaboration, higher teacher expectations of students and improved student achievement. Everyone is responsible and accountable for leadership within his or her area; good ideas are then generated for change. At St. John's, shared leadership does not assign tasks to teachers; instead, it was the best path to harness the expertise, ideas and effort of everyone involved. Teams make decisions by consensus after all participants have voiced their opinions and support for any change. At St. John's, the supervisor and the principal were the initiators of the ME Project; they started negotiating with Edith's early in October 2005, and then took a role in giving directions regarding the ideology of equity learning for all students. However, the day-to-day actions or interventions were put on the shoulders of the teachers who were key to the success or failure of the change attempted. As a result, shared leadership brought success in handling problems, threats and change through encouraging the sharing of ideas among the team. This belief in shared leadership recognised the teachers as the main actors in the change process and encouraged them to voice their concerns freely. The teachers' professionalism was respected, and as a result, the teachers were willing to become positively engaged in changing the school.

8.2.3 Systematic and Continuing Teacher Development Programs

The focus of promoting multicultural education should not solely be on the learning needs of the students; it is also important to get teachers ready for promoting equity pedagogy. I agree with Banks (2006) who emphasizes that as a teacher is in the best position to protect students from discrimination, s/he is then an important variable in a student's formal learning environment (p.318). In today's schools, an increasing numbers of students of diverse backgrounds as well as disabilities are being educated in mainstream classrooms. It is critical then that mainstream teachers entering the profession are prepared to meet the needs of these students (McLeskey et al., 1998). In order to maintain equal educational opportunities, it is crucial that teachers have an attitude of not viewing students stereotypically regarding their academic and physical abilities or their socio-economic status. Hence, a school should devote some effort to facilitating its teachers becoming reflective practitioners with a clear vision of their role. It is important to note that, to create a supportive environment in a school, professional training programs should involve both administrators and teaching staff.

8.2.4 Mutual Trust Mediates Change

This study makes it clear that the teachers' initial resistance to change was not an indication that change would be impossible to accomplish. Teachers' initial resistance stems from natural fears and confusion about how change might affect their work. Resistance is, by definition, a response to an impending change that will have a personal impact; it would not arise without efforts being made to bring about change (Fullan, 1982; Karp, 1984). The findings of the study reveal that to overcome resistance, human interactions, including discussions, are found to be an effective way of reconciling differences among groups. During the course of the study I could see changes occurring in the conceptions by teachers of multicultural education and of students with diverse needs through the interactions among the school staff. The teachers at St. John's eventually moved beyond reluctance and puzzlement to working to transform themselves and the school to serve all their students well.

There are two steps in building mutual trust that will help the future development of equitable learning. First, the school authority should be able to establish conversations among the teachers who have to face and accept diversity in education,

and to confirm that the teachers can make a difference to education outcomes. In this study, the leaders of St. John's understood that if they wanted to get the project done, the leaders first needed to obtain the teachers' support by gaining their trust in the direction of the planned development, their colleagues' professionalism and so the students' potential.

Second, the school has to establish a personal and professional journey of the teachers toward greater awareness of student diversity. For example, the school leaders of St. John's initiated discussions within the teaching team and organized a professional visit to Edith's; these helped the teachers to reflect on their role, and supported them in trying out strategies for establishing positive learning in the school.

8.2.4.1 Collegial Exchanges

To promote multicultural education in the future, it is worth examining closely the teaching practices of multicultural education in the mainstream schools. Advocates of multicultural education should be aware of potential resistance by the teachers who are to implement a proposed change, and accept it. The impact of any proposed change is always exacerbated when information about the change process is not provided. School efforts must address the fears of school staff through initial collegial exchanges focused on personal reflection. It is essential to develop future teachers' views of multicultural education as a positive conception of diversity. It is noted that efforts to support the refinement and expansion of multicultural learning activities are best achieved through the development of a collaborative ethos and practice in schools. Collegial exchanges and mutual support systems in a school's organization will best serve the needs of students and teachers.

8.2.5 Networking with Like-minded Schools

In this study, St. John's and Edith's have become legendary through their collaborative promotion of multicultural education. The study reveals that frank and deep sharing of opportunities between the two schools brought surprisingly positive outcomes. According to the research findings, the teachers' positive change of attitude was strengthened by a staff development activity in October 2006. The teachers of St.

John's remarked that this school visit to Edith's had been an important step in the evolutionary process of making the school multicultural. The professional development programs promoting multicultural education help teachers to understand the complex characteristics of diversity and increase learning opportunities for all students. The teachers become sufficiently knowledgeable to use culturally responsive activities, resources and strategies to organize and implement instruction. To enhance the sustainability of multicultural education, a school with a multicultural vision can organize teaching experience exchanges and relationships for learning to create a climate of intellectual development and a caring community with a shared educational purpose. Ways of maintaining a school network could be in the form of participation in network meetings, summer institutes, teacher and student forums, and visiting other organizations.

8.2.6 Curriculum Adaptation

As mentioned in Chapter 3, equity pedagogy is a dynamic instructional process that applies a transformative approach to multicultural education. As part of this process, teachers must become aware of the need for dismantling those existing school structures that foster inequality. A multicultural school is recommended to formulate attainable goals and objectives for multicultural education. Students with diverse educational needs may be tactile, kinesthetic learners, with hands-on instructional activities employing several senses making learning more meaningful for them (Curtin, 2006; Kline, 1995). Taking the current case study as an example, authentic tasks with an aesthetic learning experience are believed to be a pathway to enhancing equitable learning. The teachers in the current case study deliberately assigned students different authentic tasks for the inter-group activities in Music and Visual Arts lessons. Furthermore, teachers designed authentic tasks with aesthetic learning elements that would help students develop their artistic potential, broadening their musical and cultural horizons. As shown in the study, through demonstrations, educational games, simulations, field trips and other activities, authentic tasks facilitate students having more opportunities to be engaged actively in the learning process. Students with diverse learning needs benefit immensely when they have the opportunity to interact with people, participate in activities and manipulate objects and equipment; multicultural teachers may then utilize a variety of authentic teaching approaches.

8.2.6.1 Alternative Methods of Student Assessment

Assessment is an indispensable part of the learning and teaching process. Formative and alternative assessments can help teachers adjust teaching methods or contents in accordance with students' performance. At the time of my study, the teachers designed different learning tasks that were of interest to the students and aroused their curiosity. As a result, the students were found engaging in and achieving through the learning tasks. It is recommended that a multicultural school apply alternative methods of student assessment. Such methods should be oriented toward analyzing and improving, not castigating or applauding, the multicultural components of the school (Banks, 2006, p.337). Schools may apply different modes of assessment to identify students' strengths, and devise suitable curriculum and teaching strategies for students based on the assessment results. Teachers are then required to be able to design and use several modes of assessment, for example, dictation can be so individualized as to enhance the student's understanding of his/her own progress (self-comparison). Teachers may also assess the student's learning outcome through questioning, assessing student's performance in project learning, and student's learning portfolios. Self-assessment and peer assessment are also encouraged so that students will learn to assess their own and their peers' work against given criteria. All these alternative methods of assessment help teachers to gather more accurate and comprehensive information, and use this information to diagnose students' learning.

8.2.7 Fostering Positive Student Learning

As the findings at St. John's showed, students' learning characteristics play a prominent role in influencing teachers' ideas and practices regarding multicultural education. Hence, teachers in multicultural schools have to gain adequate knowledge about students' inter-group relationships and the skills of enhancing them. The setting up of peer learning groups to provide better communication among students is suggested.

8.2.7.1 Cooperative Learning Groups

Cooperative learning is an instructional strategy that is supported by a wealth of research and has been found to be highly effective in multicultural and multilingual classrooms (Slavin, 1994; Vaughn et al., 2000). In the case study, grouping was found effective in motivating students to participate in learning. To promote the future development of multicultural education, I believe that a multicultural curriculum should help students understand and appreciate their personal and their peers' backgrounds by forming cooperative learning groups.

8.2.7.2 Grouping Strategies

I recommend that teachers apply cooperative grouping strategies such as those employed by the teachers of St. John's to their students' learning. At St John's, first, the teachers arranged for one student with a disability to be paired with two to three ordinary school students in each peer group. This arrangement follows Johnson and Johnson (2002), who argue that in cooperative learning, students are usually placed in a group which is comprised of four or five students working together towards a common goal. Next, the teachers deliberately allocated students from the two schools of approximately the same age and similar interests to the same group. According to (Johnson and Johnson, 1989; Snowman and Biehler, 2003), this creates a relatively even distribution of students of different abilities as well as different educational and emotional needs. As students collaborate and cooperate with one another, they develop cross-cultural understanding and stronger interpersonal friendships than they would by working alone.

8.2.7.3 Peer Tutoring

According to both the literature and the findings of my study, peer tutoring is effective in promoting communication, motivating students and helping learners to attain higher levels of achievement while developing multicultural friendships in multicultural classrooms (Saravia-Shore and Garcia, 1995; Snowman and Biehler, 2003). Peer tutoring helps teachers make sure that students have someone to accompany them and personally explain the work in a way that is suitable to them; to provide more

opportunities to talk about and to practise what they have learnt; to provide more opportunities for asking questions when they are confused, without fear of being embarrassed in front of the whole class; and to have someone to encourage them to continue learning (CECP, 2005). Therefore, peer tutoring is recommended for a future multicultural curriculum as it helps students, including those with learning disadvantages who are always overwhelmed by a sense of lack of control of their destinies, to develop effective social and civic action skills, which are useful skills for their future (Ogbu, 2003).

8.2.8 Encouraging Parental Involvement

Parent participation is considered to be a vital component in the education of students with special educational needs (SEN), schools should include parents' perspectives because they are one of the primary stakeholders in the success of promoting learning equity (Soodak, 2004; Yssel *et al.*, 2007). Home-school cooperation should be encouraged because participation of parents of students with SEN in school organizations such as parent-school associations can greatly facilitate the promotion of equal opportunities. It is suggested that schools can invite parents to the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meetings; organize parent-volunteers activities to assist their students' study and recreational programmes in the establishment (EDB, 2008a).

8.2.9 Attainment for All

The study reports the teachers' efforts to produce equitable opportunities and learning success for their students. In the school year 2009/10, there is academic re-structuring of the local secondary school level curriculum. Under the new education structure, like all ordinary students, students with SEN will receive six years of primary education, three years of junior secondary and three years of senior secondary school level. In order to promote students' whole-person development and life-long learners, the new secondary education reform aims at nurturing students' higher order thinking mindset, creativity, and communication skills (Suen, 2009). As students are expected to learn independently, which presents a hurdle for students with disabilities, especially those with intellectual disability. Moreover, students with an intellectual disability

commonly need more time to complete their studies than mainstream counterparts (Tsui and Chiu, 2009). Parents and special education practitioners complained that the actual learning needs of the students with SEN would eventually be ignored in the mainstream senior secondary school system (Tsui, 2009). Therefore, to address the issue of promoting equal opportunities for all, it is recommended that there should be a concern with providing learning success and appropriateness of learning pathways for students with SEN.

8.2.10 Summary of Recommendations for Future Development

A multicultural curriculum is able to help both educators and students develop a better sense of self and of human life. Educators will be able to reflect and rethink the meanings of education, and students will be ready to build up accurate self-identities and improved self-concepts. For the above reasons, I recommend that a school which aims to promote multicultural education requires clear visions and decisive actions to create strong leadership, systematic and continuing teacher development programs, equity pedagogy, to foster positive learning attitudes in the students, to advocate home-school cooperation, and to assure learning success when enhancing accessibility to mainstream curriculum for all students with diverse needs. In the last section of this chapter, I emphasise the conclusion that a transformative and whole-school approach to multicultural education is the most appropriate way to promote learning equity in Hong Kong schools. I believe strongly that my study will make a contribution to future development and that my findings will have implications for policy makers when it comes to promoting multicultural education in schools.

8.3 Conclusion

The goal of my thesis is to provide a comprehensive understanding of multicultural education from the teachers' perspectives at school level. By observing teachers' interactions and practices, this study reveals that all the organizational domains, namely, school organization (e.g. leadership, policies), teacher roles (e.g. personal background, professional training) and student factors (e.g. background, ability), interact to shape a multicultural curriculum as practised by teachers in the school.

The study demonstrates that a school plays a prominent role in structuring its own practices to provide equitable learning opportunities for students. To some extent, St. John's has become a role model in identifying exemplary practices for teachers' future participation in a heterogeneous world. It has demonstrated how the teachers worked well with an increasingly diverse student population, and how the school successfully developed multicultural education in local mainstream curricula.

My study perceives teachers' resistance as a natural part of the change process. By the same token, collegial discussions help teachers to work as a team and become willing to work outside the boundaries of their teaching habitus. It was observed at St. John's that, at the very beginning of the study, the teachers perceived the local integrated policy as an "add-on", giving additional care to students who needed more attention in class, but that it was not "the whole" picture or their "mission" to provide equitable learning to all learners. As demonstrated in Figure 8.2, a transformative change in their conception of multicultural education was recorded in the study, with the teachers' understanding of multicultural education shifting from providing educationally disadvantaged students with the ability to face adversities; to giving all students adequate knowledge to accept students' diverse educational needs or potentialities; to promoting care and support for the needy through community services; and ultimately to providing multicultural education, the latter being defined as ordinary students being integrated with students with diverse needs in a common and equitable learning environment.

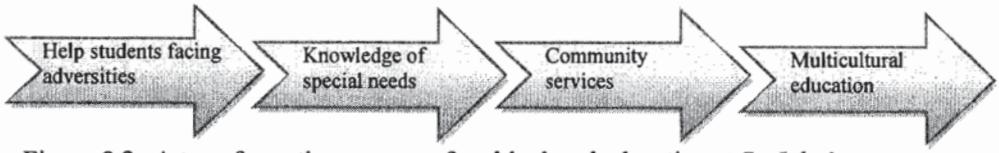

Figure 8.2 A transformative process of multicultural education at St. John's

Therefore, the ME Project of St. John's can be regarded as a starting point on the journey of educational change in the school and as an exemplar for local mainstream schools. It has provided significant learning experiences for students regardless of their physical ability, gender, religion or socio-economic status.

Forming a Multicultural School Work Team

The study makes clear that interactions transform and reproduce collaborative work relations; a careful intervention of the school authority successfully helped the team to remove barriers and gave support to their multicultural practices at St. John's. I believe that to promote equitable learning opportunities in other schools, a whole-school or organizational approach to multicultural education is best for introducing educational equity concepts to the teachers and students. Further, staff development training or networking with external schools is a significant move for the teachers, as it confronts any issues of stereotyping. All these help the teachers to design diversified and equitable learning pedagogies to improve students' opportunities to learn.

Mutually Beneficial Education

In addition, a whole-school approach to multicultural education helps schools to promote mutually beneficial education. That is, as the case study shows, there is a significant change in the teachers' conceptions of student diversity. The mainstream teachers commented that they learnt much from the experience of interacting with Edith's teachers, that it made them rethink the value of education and arrive at the understanding that it was about exploring students' potential. On the other hand, the students were able to explore aspects of their own culture, share their knowledge with one another and discover meaningful ways of learning to make connections with their personal lives and their peers.

Concluding Remarks

To conclude, this study adopts a constructivist approach to respond to the major concerns of diversity in Hong Kong schools. It reveals the work of a group of teachers to produce an appropriate curriculum and pedagogical choices for educating diverse student populations, and their commitment to work toward a more just and equitable society. The case study provides evidence of multicultural education transforming education progressively in a comprehensive and transformative process of developing a learning environment that provides education for all. I believe that my study will be significant in the development of local education, as it is the first to investigate how multicultural education is socially constructed and enacted by teachers through organizational, collegial and student-teacher interacting factors shaping the ways in

which a multicultural curriculum is constructed and practised by teachers in a local mainstream school.

Last but not least, I speculate that multicultural education at St. John's will be a successful example of such a philosophy, helping teachers and educators connect to the concepts of diversity, such as educational equity, cultural capital and the co-curriculum, and ultimately to the goal of building inclusive learning communities in the future. The implementation of the ME Project confirmed that teachers and school leaders need to make a firm commitment to work progressively to address issues of diversity, social justice and equity in sustained and procedural ways. I draw the conclusion that when mainstream schools try to adopt and sustain multicultural education, schools may need to assume a new responsibility, that is, they have a role in providing socialization practices for cultural diversity, which is an integral part of maximizing equality of learning opportunities and, more broadly, enhancing human dignity.

Appendices

Appendix I – Participant Observation Guide

This participant observation guide was designed with reference to the basic research question, "How is multicultural education enacted to improve equitable learning opportunities in a mainstream primary school?" The goal of this observational guide was to understand what and how factors operating in teachers' social contexts interact to produce and shape their constructions and enactments for ensuring that students are given equitable learning opportunities.

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1. What school organizational factors (leadership and school policy; equity pedagogy; professional development; student inter-group activities) are functioning to influence the teachers' constructions and enactments of multicultural education? How does this occur?

2. What are their major concerns for multicultural education?

3. How did teachers' conceptions and practices vary during the study?

4. Why do the teachers have this reaction or these responses?

5. How is multicultural education practised in this mainstream school?

6. Would the students have profited from having a multicultural learning experience within an integrated learning environment where they would read literature, write and have support from multicultural learning activities?

7. What can be learnt from the study to improve equitable outcomes for all students from the multicultural education activities?

Appendix II – Lists of Interview Questions

Project Planning Stage (April – Early October 2006)

*Questions for the Student Support Team Members

Background Questions

1. What is / are your position (s) in the school?
2. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
3. What is / are the main subject(s) you are now teaching?
4. What is the school vision?
5. Is there any screening system of students?

Role of Student Support Team in relation to School Development Focus

1. What is the focus of the Student Support Team?
2. What is the role of the Student Support Team in relation to the School Development Focus?

Features of Multicultural Education Project

1. What are the special features of the project?

   a) rationale; b) objective; c) teaching and learning activities; d) evaluation/ assessment

2. Which class levels are the project designed for?

Factors that promoted the development of Multicultural Education Project

1. How valuable is the Multicultural Education Project?
2. What is your role in this project?
3. Is the project compatible with your own values and the value of your subject?
4. Are other teachers in your school aware of what your group members are doing?
5. Are the teachers supportive?
6. What is your view of using a whole-school approach in promoting the project?
7. Have your encountered any difficulties or challenges when implementing

the project?

8. What are your strategies in handling these difficulties or challenges?

Expected impact of Multicultural Education Project

1. What is the expected impact of the project on your school and the students?

Exploratory Stage and Implementation Stage (October 2006 – March 2007)

*Questions for the Student Support Team Members

School Policy or Culture / Leadership

1. How is the year strategic plan (multicultural education) organized and implemented in the school?

2. What is the major concern of the school this year?

3. Would all students benefit from the proposed strategic plan? How?

4. What is the school vision?

5. Why would third parties also be involved in the strategic plan?

Equity Pedagogies / Innovations

1. What kinds of pedagogies are going to be used?

2. What kinds of assessment are going to be used?

Professional Development

1. What is the feedback from the teachers?

2. How could the school get the teachers ready for the project, especially for curriculum adaptation and curriculum integration of the four key learning areas and integrated education?

Student Learning / Peer Support

1. What is the rationale for one of the school development plans which is called "the student as a curriculum designer"?

2. What will be involved in motivating student learning?

3. As there are different group activities in the strategic plan, how are we to enhance students' relations through inter-group activities?

Evaluation Stage (May 2007)

*Questions for the Student Support Team Members

1. What have the teachers learnt from the multicultural learning project?
2. What can be learnt from the study to improve equitable opportunities for all students?
3. How did understandings lead to collaborative action?
4. Would the students have benefited from having multicultural learning experience within a multicultural learning environment with support from the project?
5. Have you changed the view / modified the way of evaluating a student's ability? How do you interpret a "good" student?
6. What were the barriers (if any) to implementing suitable strategies for the program?
7. What is/are the strategy(ies) adopted by the school to mobilize the school teaching team to construct shared understandings?
8. Would the students be more ready to accept students with diverse educational needs if placed in a self-contained classroom?
9. Overall speaking, how do you evaluate the program? Who has benefited from the project?
10. Will you support the project to be maintained in the future?

Appendix III – Coding Guide for the Study

Domains	Coding Keys	Literature
I. School Policy or Culture / Leadership		
I.1	A collaborative school team – respect teachers as professionals.	Janney *et al.*(1995); Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007u, 2007x)
I.2	Top-down leadership (activities were planned according to school policy)	Janney *et al.* (1995); Huberman and Miles (1984)
I.3	Diversity is an asset – work together for the benefits of all students.	Banks *et al.* (2001); Flavell (2001)
I.4	Involve teachers in the design of an innovation.	Huberman and Miles (1984)
I.5	There is a partnership between the school and parents.	EDB (2007a, 2007b)
I.6	The whole team has high expectations for all students.	EDB (2007a, 2007b); Gelzheiser *et al.* (1997)
I.7	Total school environment/ a whole-school approach to education for all	Banks *et al.* (2001); Booth and Ainscow (2000); Vaughn *et al.* (2000); Klinger *et al.* (2001); EDB (2007a, 2007b); Sindelar *et al.* (2006)
II. Equity Pedagogies for Student Learning		
II.1	Teaching context to promote equity and a concern of others.	Banks *et al.* (2001)
II.2	Innovations should be smaller in scope, and place fewer demands on teachers.	Huberman and Miles (1984); Janney *et al.* (1995); Sindelar *et al.* (2006)
II.3	School activities are responsive to developing an understanding of difference and student diversity.	Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b); Banks *et al.* (2001); Flavell (2001)
II.4	Working together around issues of mutual concern issues	Salisbury *et al.* (1995)
II.5	Active facilitation of social interactions – students are actively involved in their own learning.	Salisbury *et al.* (1995); Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b)
II.6	Multicultural teaching strategies: acceptance, time, confidence, courage, guidance	Salisbury *et al.* (1995);
II.7	Assessment adaptations	Gelzheiser *et al.* (1997)
II.8	Curriculum adaptation for learning and teaching	EDB (2007x); Gelzheiser *et al.* (1997)
III. Professional Development		
III.1	Approaches to mutual understanding to reduce barriers to student diversity – require relative information to handle more complex situations.	Kozleski and Jackson (1993); Janney *et al.* (1995); Flavell (2001); Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b); Sindelar, *et al.* (2006)
III.2	Have an open mind (Personal History & Experience).	Janney *et al.* (1995);
III.3	Staff expertise is fully utilized.	Huberman and Miles (1984); Booth and Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b)
III.4	Interpersonal Supports – gaining advice from professional peers to overcome teachers' anxiety in the face of new change; requiring necessary resources and training to handle more complex situations.	Fullan (1991); Giangreco *et al.* (1993); Janney *et al.* (1995); Salisbury *et al.* (1995); Klinger *et al.* (2001); Vaughn *et al.* (2000); Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b)
III.5	Teachers' anxiety and perception to change (staff seek to remove all barriers to learning and participation in school)	Fullan (1991); Giangreco *et al.* (1993); Janney *et al.* (1995)
IV. Student Inter-group Learning / Peer Support		
IV.1	Supported social participation, peer acceptance and friendship	Banks *et al.* (2001); Flavell (2001); Kozleski and Jackson (1993)
IV.2	Collaborative learning and problem solving – students help each other	Johnson and Johnson (2002); Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007u, 2007x)
IV.3	Grant students autonomy.	Salisbury *et al.* (1995)
IV.4	Cooperative grouping strategies are based on enhancing students' ability to participate in learning activities	Salisbury *et al.* (1995); Gelzheiser *et al.* (1997); Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b)
IV.5	Students are motivated to learn.	Booth and Ainscow (2000); EDB (2007a, 2007b)

Appendix IV – Research Schedules and Findings

Stage	Date	Research Method (Code)	Details	Time (mins)
PHASE 1 - TRUST BUILDING WITH INTERACTIONS (PROJECT PLANNING STAGE)	April 2006	Observation (PO-1) of internal meeting of school's Student Support Team (SST): supervisor (S), principal (P), curriculum officer (CO), activity officer (AO)	P explained that after collaborative discussions with different teaching teams, it was decided that major theme in school's three-year strategic plan would be "Moral and Civic Education", and that the school was joining a Multicultural Education Project (ME Project) in next academic year.	30
	May 2006	Observation (PO-2) of internal meeting of SST in Edith's meeting room	First preparation meeting of ME Project between the two schools	60
	Aug 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-1) with P and CO	School's Background and other Information	20
	Sep 2006	Observation (PO-3) of internal preparatory meeting of SST at research site: S, P, vice-principal (VP), CO, AO, social worker (SW)	Teachers' conceptions of and preparations for ME Project. Teachers show some initial resistance to integration.	60
	Sep 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-2) with P and CO	School's ME Project in current academic year	60
	Sep 2006	Observation (PO-4) of internal meeting of SST and the Edith's principal (SPP), SPVP and SPSW at Edith's.	Confirmation meeting of ME Project between the two schools. Fixed project schedule and worked out details.	60
			Matters on student selections to join the ME Project.	20
	Late Sep 2006	Observation (PO-5) of internal meeting of SST and the teachers	Discussion of implementation plan of ME Project. Sets out school's vision of ME Project.	30
	Late Sep 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-3) with CO	CO mentioned that teaching team was still unclear as to details of implementation. List of questions compiled asking for suggestions of SPTs (Table 6.1).	25
	Oct 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-4) with P	Whole-school professional development of multicultural education chaired by SP professionals planned before launch of ME Project, to gain exchange of experience between the two schools.	30
	Oct 2006	Observation (PO-6) of internal meeting of SST and all school teachers	To confirm details of school visit to SP on 31 Oct. List of teachers' concerns faxed to SP. In order to learn more about teaching Edith's students (SPSs), the teachers of St. John's requested to have the opportunity to observe classes at Edith's.	45
PHASE 2 - APPRENTICING IN THE INTERACTIONS OF EQUITY ISSUES (EXPLORATORY STAGE)	Oct 2006	Observation (PO-7) of the school visit to Edith's, which involved whole teaching team of research site. This professional development event was chaired by the SPTs.	Professional development program. Detailed information of multicultural education gained; teachers made contact with the visual impaired students.	120
	Nov 2006	Observation (PO-8) of pre-education workshop for Ss was held at St. John's.	Pre-education workshop for Ss at St. John's, a sharing session to gather basic understanding of the visually impairment students.	60
PHASE 3 - TRANSFORMING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES (IMPLEMENTATION)	Nov 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-5) with P and CO	Follow-up interview on matters of the normal students' participation in ME Project. I was told that the general feedback of students about ME Project was welcoming.	25
	Mid Nov 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-6) with CO about selection of students.	SST provided guidelines to teachers for consideration; these sought to choose students who are naughty or have behavioural problems.	20
	Late Nov 2006	Semi-structured interview (SI-7) with CO	Finally, school got its 'hands dirty' by interfering in selection of lower achievers.	20
	Nov 2006	Observation (PO-9) of Kick-off Ceremony: S, all Ts, SPTs, Ss and SPSs were involved.	Kick-off Ceremony was also the first student inter-group activity of ME Project. Ss had prepared a list of questions prepared to ask SPSs.	60
	Dec 2006	Observation (PO-10) of CO, six class-masters of St. John's (TC-TH), Ss, SPTs and SPSs	Second student inter-group activity of ME Project. Ss became more energetic and willing to share their learning experience.	60

Stage	Date	Research Method (Code)	Details	Time (mins)
	Jan 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-8) with CO	Interview for interim evaluation of ME Project	25
	Feb 2007	Observation (PO-11) of CO, St. class teachers, Ss, SPTs and SPSs	Third student inter-group activity of ME Project. Ss were eager to know more about their peers' (SPSs') ways of living, their school lives, and hostel lives. They wanted to keep in contact with one another through emails and were looking forward to getting instant feedback from their peers. Ss had shown they cared about their peers' feelings.	60
	Feb 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-9) with CO	CO said that both their students and their teachers were very appreciative of being able to visit Edith's. She was negotiating future activities with the CO of the special school (SPCO).	30
	Mar 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-10) with CO and principal	St. John's teachers allowed their students to suggest topics of interest on another school visit.	25
PHASE 4 - ENGAGING A TOTAL SCHOOL APPROACH (EVALUATION)	Mid April 2007	Observation (PO-12) of internal project review meeting of SST and the whole teaching team from St. John's	Meeting held by SST as final review of ME Project to obtain feedback from teachers and to plan next step in implementing multicultural education.	90
	May 2007	Observation (PO-13) of school review meeting of students who had participated in ME Project. Review was uploaded to school web blog.	School conducted a small, scaled focus group interview with selected students who had made proposals at previous teacher meeting (PO-12) and reviewed their comments on multicultural education	45
	Late May 2007	Semi-structured interview (SI-11) being final interview with SST	To collect concluding views of SST about multicultural education after ME Project had run for a year.	40

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