

The Government Should Continue to Develop, Improve and Promote Integrated Education for Children

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I. Introduction

In his Policy Address delivered in 2000, the Chief Executive announced that from 2001 to 2004, there would be a gradual increase of additional funding, to the amount of \$50 million, to enable more mainstream schools to promote integrated education in the mode of “whole-school participation”. But since then, the Government has not proposed any other related policies.

Because children with special educational needs only constitute a minority in society, they are always neglected. In school, they are regarded as students who would slow down other children’s progress; while in society, they are seen as a heavy burden to the public. All this is but a reflection of people’s misunderstanding towards children with special educational needs. Therefore, we urge the Government to allocate more resources for civic education, so as to instill in the general public a correct attitude towards these children. We also call upon the Government to improve the education these children receive so that they can integrate into society.

Suggested approach:

1. Civic education should be strengthened by the Government to help the public acquire a correct understanding of children with special educational needs. This can be done through promotion on television and radio, through television programs about children with special educational needs, as well as organizing events such as Integrated Education Week.
2. A standing advisory and supervision body should be formed under the Education and Manpower Bureau in order to improve the structure of integrated education.
3. With regard to the training of teachers, regulations should be made to ensure that all would-be teachers must study subjects on children with special educational needs. Meanwhile, the quality of these subjects should be enhanced to enable the teachers to gain an in-depth understanding of children with special educational needs and to raise teaching quality.
4. More resources should be allocated to schools for attending to children with special educational needs.
5. A long-term policy should be formulated to help children with special educational needs.
6. A value-added integrated education index should be set up to encourage more schools to run integrated education.
7. An award scheme should be set up to commend children and schools that have done well in integrated education.
8. A column of integrated schools should be added to the school selection list for primary and secondary schools. The list should be updated annually so that parents would know better which are the integrated schools.

II. Definition of Integrated Education

Integrated education aims to provide equal learning opportunities to children with special educational needs who possess fair intellectual abilities and are capable of handling mainstream school life. For example, those with hearing impairment and those with mild mental handicap. With integrated education, these children will be able to mix with normal children, and study and grow up in mainstream schools that have been given due support. In this way, they will not be excluded from these schools.

Clearly, integrated education is not merely about placing children with special educational needs in mainstream schools. Prudent planning, an adequate support system and a putting together of available resources are needed to enable integrated education to function at its best.

Therefore, the Government should look squarely at the implementation policies of integrated education to make it work more systematically and efficiently.

III. Background

Since the introduction of the rehabilitation policy by the 1977 White Paper *Integrating the Disabled into the Community: A United Effort*, people from all walks of life have become increasingly aware of this issue. From then on, children with special educational needs were given more opportunities to get integrated into mainstream schools. Also, more and more people have realized the significance and the necessity of enabling these children to receive education in mainstream schools.

The Government reiterated in its 1995 rehabilitation policy “Equal Opportunities and Full Participation: A Better Tomorrow for All” that all children are entitled to have the opportunity to develop their potential to the full so that they can grow up to be active and responsible members of the community. Furthermore, in 1996, the Government enacted the Disability Discrimination Ordinance to ensure that the disabled enjoy equal opportunities in different aspects (including that of education).

In 1997, the Education Department launched a two-year pilot project on integrating children with special educational needs into ordinary schools. The Education Department’s current policy of integrated education encourages schools to adopt a whole-school approach using “School-based Support”, in other words, school should provide services centering around children with special educational needs.

After launching the pilot project, the Education Commission released *Learning for Life, Learning through Life - Reform Proposals for the Education System in Hong Kong* in September 2000. The document stresses the principle of “not giving up on any student”, and insists that appropriate assistance should be given to children according to their different abilities and educational needs so that they can learn in an effective way. In July 2001, the Code of Practice on Education, issued by the Equal Opportunities Commission in Hong Kong in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, began to take effect, thus committing everyone concerned to provide equal learning opportunities to children with special educational needs.

(Source: http://serc.ed.gov.hk/big5/resources/SEN_guide/sen1.htm, Day of Browsing: 1/3/2003)

Equality is the symbol of civilization in a society. It is absolutely necessary for Hong Kong to uphold equality as an overall principle and provide equal learning opportunities to children with special educational needs.

Under the traditional system of special education, which aims to merge into the mainstream, children with special educational needs have to adapt to the prevailing teaching methods and assessment mechanism. If there are subjects which they find difficult to learn, they would be offered exemptions. The criteria of success that the schools used would be to see if these children could catch up with the average normal children.

However, under the current system of integrated education, participation by the whole school is emphasized. Every staff member has the responsibility to create an atmosphere of inclusion, so as to cater to the needs of all children. The school may also amend or expand the standard curriculum in order to meet children’s different requirements. If necessary, teachers will adjust their teaching methods and use special teaching techniques and auxiliary material. The school will actively encourage children to form study groups, take part in peer counseling and make friends. The school will also adjust its assessment criteria so that teachers are able to teach children according to their aptitude and help them develop according to their ability and interests.

(Source: <http://www.secentre.net/big5/information.html>, Day of Browsing: 1/3/2003)

We believe that a systematic and effective integration scheme with whole-school involvement will play a most important role in the educational development of children with special needs.

IV. Benefits and Significance of Integration vs. Consequences of Separation

Integrated education provides equal opportunities in development for everyone, and education is the cornerstone of development. Children with special educational needs can choose whether to study in an integrated school or a special school.

The fundamental spirit of integrated education is “equal opportunity, no discrimination, instruction according to students’ aptitude, and integration of the disabled with the able-bodied”.

The idea of integrated education is to help children with special educational needs to merge into mainstream schools and grow up together with other children. Its aim is to encourage children to mix with their peers and learn from each other, and help those with special educational needs. In the course of learning, those who give help and those who are helped can all learn from each other. The experiment and the actual experience of interaction will help them build up their self-confidence.

Integrated education enables children with special educational needs to enjoy equal opportunities to study, just as normal children do. At the same time provides normal children with an opportunity to relate to children with special educational needs, and to understand that people with different abilities in our society will naturally have different needs.

If we can popularize integrated education, everyone will benefit. To normal children, integrated education enables them to have day to day contact with children with special educational needs – they can learn to communicate with and accept others; they can understand that everyone has equal opportunities in participation and development. In this way, there will be good interaction between children with special educational needs and normal children. Furthermore, integrated education will enable children to understand that everyone is weak in some ways and the important thing is to learn to solve problems. Also, the experience of integration will help them assume a correct attitude towards people with special educational needs, promote personal growth and cultivate in them a sense of responsibility towards society. Normal children in integrated schools think that children with special educational needs have strong willpower, are stable in character and have feelings just like normal people. They can get inspiration from these strong points and learn to get along with others by studying in such schools. Therefore, when they grow up and go into society, they will be much less prone to prejudice against people with special needs.

As for children with special educational needs, integrated education can give them an opportunity to merge into society, for it provides them with choices and opportunities. Not only can they build up friendship and develop a stronger sense of belonging to society, but they can also learn skills from their able-bodied peers, skills that will be useful to them for life. Hence, both their self-image and their quality of life will be improved.

Integrated education can also help promote children’s friendship, create a accommodating culture in school, and foster a harmonious and caring atmosphere. All these should help to integrated education gain proper recognition by the community.

Integrated education represents a positive change in the education system, and leads to the establishment of a new social relationship. By encouraging everybody to take the initiative in caring for others, integrated education proves beneficial to both normal children and children with special educational needs, as well as to society as a whole. Children with special educational needs will have the opportunity to receive a high standard of normal schooling.

Integrated education can help break traditional barriers and outmoded ideology, and can also help establish a society that is tolerant and harmonious. It can facilitate acceptance of other people, and it

gives equal rights and opportunities to both the disabled and the able-bodied.

The aim of the entire process of integrated education is to make people become aware of what is common, instead of what is different, between the disabled and the able-bodied, and understand that everyone has their own strengths and weaknesses. Only by doing so can society nurture as their values equality, responsibility, respect, consideration for others and acceptance of individual differences. If, on the other hand, children with special educational needs are separated from normal children, social discrimination against them will become more serious and the distance between people will become greater. Consequently, misunderstanding will increase, and people will become more and more indifferent to each other. In the end, no one will care for society, or for those in need in society.

In a word, integrated education is important and should be popularized.

V. The Voice of Normal Children and Children with Special Educational Needs

We have recently designed several questionnaires on the motion “The Government should continue to develop, improve and promote integrated education”. These questionnaires were filled out by the parents and teachers of children with special educational needs, these children themselves as well as normal children. According to the statistics collected, although 83% of the parents believe that normal education should meet the needs of children with special educational needs, the majority do not want their children to go to normal schools for fear that their children may suffer from discrimination. In any case, due to the lack of sufficient resources in normal schools, including teachers and supplementary facilities, their children will not be able to get enrolled in normal schools in the first place.

In contrast, both children with special educational needs and normal children would like to receive integrated education. According to the statistics obtained, most children with special educational needs hope to get into normal schools. 75% of normal children, including both primary and secondary school children, are willing to study with children with special educational needs. They think that children with special educational needs are not all that different from them, it is just that children with special needs may have some physical disabilities. Certainly, they are no less intelligent than normal children. Moreover, many normal children know that they should help but not discriminate against children with special educational needs. From these normal children we should learn how to help children with special educational needs; we should learn to understand what they need, and how to get along and communicate with them. All these show that in the world of children there is no hatred, no jealousy, no distrust and no discrimination, instead, there is sincerity and there is candidness. Therefore, it should not be difficult integrating children with special educational needs with normal children.

Children with special educational needs hope that the curriculum can be reformed to satisfy their needs. They also hope that the school would be provided with equipments to help them learn. This would give them confidence to adapt to normal school life. Their opinions reflect that we have overlooked children with special educational needs, and the resources provided by the Government are woefully inadequate.

According to the results of our survey, there is only a very small number of children who do not welcome children with special educational needs to study in normal schools. The reason is mostly that they fear children with special educational needs would slow down their progress and hinder them from reaching the standard set in the syllabus. Some have come under the influence of their parents and have grown up with a deep-rooted bias against children with special educational needs. In addition, some children are afraid of taking care of those children with special educational needs. All these are caused by misunderstanding. In integrated education, children with special educational needs refer to those children who are physically handicapped, visually impaired, hard of hearing, mentally

handicapped, or who suffer from autism. They have no big problem with their studies. If they are given clear instructions in class, they can handle their schoolwork well. We strongly believe that even in normal schools, there must be some children who are weak in learning. Shall we forbid them to study in normal schools then? Definitely not. Besides, children with special educational needs can take care of themselves. If there are proper facilities for them in school, they will certainly not be a burden on others.

Some teachers in special schools say that there is a lack of supporting facilities in their school and urge the Government to allocate more resources to the schools for this purpose. In order to understand the needs of each student better, they propose that the teacher-pupil ratio should be reduced as much as possible and that more teaching staff should be employed. Besides, the pre-job and in-service training for teachers involved in special education is neither adequate nor suitable to the demands of children with special educational needs. Furthermore, they hope the public can have a better understanding of children with special educational needs through civic education. They suggest that the Government allocate more resources on relevant research projects, increase the number of teachers, improve the existing examination system and, if possible, install more facilities in public places to help children with special educational needs.

VI. Pilot Project

1. Background

According to the 1995 *White Paper on Rehabilitation*, children have the right to fully develop their potential so that they can become active and responsible members of the community. At present, many countries are enthusiastic about “integrated education” and are helping the schools to improve their facilities, curriculum design, teaching strategies and assessment methods to meet the needs of different students.

In accordance with the *Disability Discrimination Ordinance, the Code of Practice on Education* was enacted in 1995. As a result, it is now unlawful for an educational establishment to discriminate against a person with disability :

- By refusing or failing to accept that person’s application for admission as a student
- In the terms or conditions on which it is prepared to admit that person as a student
- By denying that student’s access, or limiting that student’s access, to any benefit, service or facility provided by the educational establishment

The afore-mentioned ordinance is just the absolute minimum for the promotion of integrated education. Without sufficient assistance and support, however, what use does the ordinance have?

2. Content of the Pilot Project (1997 - 1999)

In order to explore how to better facilitate students with different abilities to learn more efficiently, a two-year pilot project on integration of children with special educational needs in ordinary schools was launched by the Government in September 1997. Seven primary and two secondary schools participated in this pilot project and 49 students with special educational needs were admitted to these schools.

This pilot project encouraged schools to adopt a whole-school approach to give educational support to students. Five to eight students with special educational needs were admitted by each school. These students were assigned to classes of not more than two class levels so it was more manageable for the school. The project included students with the following types of disabilities: Mild mental handicap, hearing impairment, visual impairment, physical handicap, autistic disorder with average intelligence.

The Government will continue to promote the “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education” in

mainstream schools. The aim of implementing the pilot project was to promote the objectives of integrated education; that is, to foster a school culture where school personnel, students and parents are supportive towards each other. As we have mentioned earlier, schools pursuing integrated education have the following characteristics: whole-school participation, integrated teaching, student-oriented approach, technological support, peer rapport, parent participation.

In general, it is hoped that the spirit of tolerance and inclusion that characterizes integrated education will be fostered – among students, peers, parents and teachers -- in the deployment of resources, and even in society as a whole. Since the pilot project was successful, the government will continue to implement the “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education” in Hong Kong.

In 2001/02, a total of 66 schools, including primary and secondary schools, adopted the “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education”. Compared to the figures in September 1997, when there were only 7 primary schools and 2 secondary schools participating in the scheme, participation had increased by eight times.

	Aided	Government	Direct subsidy scheme	Total
Number of primary schools	24	20	1	45
Number of secondary schools	17	4	0	21
Total	41	24	1	66

3. Resources and Support Provided by the Government

3.1 Funding

A non-recurrent grant of \$50,000 will be given to each participating school to cover expenditure on furniture, equipment and minor conversion work. Besides, a recurrent grant of \$989 will also be given to each target student per year, to cover expenditure on programs and activities for integrated education. In the 2000 Policy Address, the Chief Executive announced that an extra sum of \$50,000,000 would be given to schools at different stages from 2001 to 2004, so as to encourage more schools to adopt the “Whole-School Approach to Integration Education”.

3.2 Human Resources

If a school has admitted 5 target students and has also adopted the “Whole-School Approach”, the school may employ a CM teacher to organize and coordinate the activities of integrated education. If a school has admitted 8 or more target students, the school may employ one more teaching assistant to help the teacher conduct those activities.

3.3 Training

Induction Workshops and a 10-hour school-based training program have been arranged for schools participating in the “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education” for the first time. In addition, the Education and Manpower Bureau has also invited the University of Hong Kong to conduct, twice a year, a 30-hour Introductory Course on Integrated Education, application of which will be open to all school teachers. Territory-wide seminars, workshops and experience-sharing sessions on related knowledge, practical skills and integration strategies will also be organized for the participating schools as well as other mainstream schools.

3.4 Professional Support

Educational psychologists, inspectors, audiologists, senior school development officers, etc. of the Education and Manpower Bureau will provide regular professional support and staff-training activities to meet different needs of the schools.

VII. Related Educational Services

At present, all primary and secondary Government schools provide a range of relevant education services for children with different educational needs. Some mainstream primary and secondary schools provide “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education”, others provide various support services to meet different educational needs of their students.

1. Schools providing “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education”

In the 2002/03 school year, there are about 100 mainstream primary and secondary schools which provide “Whole-School Approach to Integrated Education” for students with mild mental handicap, students who are autistic with average intelligence and students who are hard of hearing, visually impaired, or physically handicapped. These schools adopt the following measures:

- Stipulate school-based policies to support students with special educational needs
- Encourage collaboration between teachers
- Adjust the curriculum, teaching methods and assessment methods
- Organize a systematic Peer Counseling Scheme
- Invite parents to join the “Individualized Education Planning Committee”

2. Other mainstream schools

The following support services are provided by other mainstream secondary and primary schools for students who have special educational needs:

- Peripatetic advisory service and resource teaching service for students with hearing impairments
- Resource teaching service and integrated program for students with visual impairments
- Resource teaching service for students with physical handicap
- Intensive remedial teaching program and resource teaching center for students with obvious learning difficulties
- Adjustment program for autistic students with average intelligence and students with behavioral/emotional difficulties

According to the school category, the Education and Manpower Bureau will provide non-teaching professionals such as educational psychologist, social worker, nurse, etc. to support students in school.

The Education and Manpower Bureau has always used the term “integrated education” whereas many other Western countries and Taiwan, which also have such education programs, call it “inclusive education”. Although both terms can be translated as 「融合教育」 in Chinese, they are significantly different in terms of the initiative involved. The lack of initiative is in fact the major drawback of integrated education in Hong Kong.

Some teachers pointed out that although schools in Hong Kong admit students under the Integrated Education Program, it is the students and their parents who take the initiative to adapt themselves to the schools. This is different from the “inclusion education” in foreign countries where the schools take the initiative to adjust themselves to meet the needs of their students.

Adjustment is needed in basic hardware such as corridors, equipment and environment. Even more important is the adaptation of software such as curriculum re-design, the adoption of alternative assessment methods, and, above all, change in attitudes and beliefs. For instance, in examinations,

instead of written answers, students should be allowed to do drawings or give oral presentations and assessment and grading of these students' performance should vary according to their backgrounds. Indeed, "inclusive education" should be the ideal model of integrated education. However, integrated education in Hong Kong has not achieved any of these goals and is in fact far from being "inclusive".

Integrated education can foster a tolerant and inclusive culture in a cosmopolitan society with a knowledge-based economy, and will play a decisive role in the intellectual development of that society. To preserve the competitiveness of Hong Kong, it is necessary to popularize integrated education as soon as possible. The next legislator will give us some examples of integrated education in Hong Kong.

VIII. Local Examples

Since the implementation of integrated education, there have been annual increases in the number of schools participating in the scheme. Up until the year 2002/03, 110 secondary and primary schools have participated in it and there are a good number of successful examples. The following is the case of Hennessey Road Government Primary School (PM Section).

(Source: <http://hgp.hkcampus.net/sped.htm>, Day of Browsing: 28/2/2003).

Hennessey Road Government Primary School (PM Section) joined the scheme in order to provide a happy learning environment in school for students with special educational needs (SEN students). This was expected to help develop a culture of mutual respect, care and acceptance in the School, and consolidate communication and cooperation among the teachers so as to enhance the team spirit of the School. Since the scheme permitted an extra Resource Teacher to be employed, the School could rely on the teacher to take care of the coordination work such as pre-class counselling, collaborative teaching, the individualized education program and the peer counselling program. All these had efficiently enhanced students' learning.

The School started a "Peer Counselling Program" in 2000. From the Primary Four and Primary Five Rainbow Ambassadors, 6 students were chosen to be peer counsellors. After completing the "training for peer counselling techniques", they started to assist the teachers in conducting pre-class counselling. They acted as "Little Teachers" for the SEN Students. These "teachers" and SEN students were engaged in the sharing and enhancement of their knowledge together. Besides, group games were held regularly among the peer counsellors and the SEN students. Through these collective games, they have learnt to better accept each other and have built up strong friendships. Supporting Learning Groups were also set up to enhance students' learning and integration, and to bring into play the spirit of peer assistance.

The following is the example of CCC Ming Kei College.

(Source: http://ccmkc.edu.hk/resource_school/integrated_education_chi.htm, Day of Browsing: 28/2/2003).

The School has been participating in the Integrated Education Scheme since the year 2000/2001. It has adopted the model of "whole-school participation". The School believes that integrated education can help it achieve its aim – to educate students to care for the needy, to appreciate the importance of sharing, and to serve others.

CCC Ming Kei College has set up an Integrated Education Team. It aims at providing normal education for SEN students, and at encouraging other students to take the initiative to care for and accept others. In order to provide the assistance and help needed by the SEN students and an environment of equal education opportunities for them, the School designed a series of SEN students-oriented measures. In respect of learning, the following arrangements have been implemented:

the introduction of class helpers, alternative examination arrangements, Integrated Education Ambassadors, Individualized Education Planning Committee (IEPC) and tutorial classes. In respect of community integration, a number of activities were arranged: an Integrated Education Day, Easter historic trip, a social skills training programme and regular meetings with students.

Two years after its implementation, the School observed that both teachers and students were able to deal with SEN students with acceptance and care. As for the SEN students, they were provided with the assistance and help they needed so that, like their classmates, they were able to receive equal education opportunities.

In general, CCC Ming Kei College is enjoying success in integrated education in the “whole-school participation” mode. It has helped students learn to care for the needy, to share with others and serve others. One major factor in its success is the series of SEN student-oriented measures. At the same time, the School has managed to provide the appropriate mode of education for individuals of different abilities, and also to implement collaborative teaching.

The next successful example of integrated education in Hong Kong is drawn from the case Our Lady of China Catholic Primary School (AM Section).

(Source: <http://www.cheungmankwong.org.hk/story/storyframe.html>)

Mr Chow is Principal of Our Lady of China Catholic Primary School (AM Section). He believes that education is the first step toward eliminating discrimination among adults against people with disabilities. Therefore, he suggested implementing integrated education in his school and enrolled his teachers in related seminars and training schemes. When they had familiarized themselves with integrated education, the School joined the scheme.

The school admitted 8 SEN students. The form teachers of the classes with these students and other teachers teaching them all shared the same belief as Mr Chow. They did not resist the implementation of integrated education at all. On the contrary, they found the extra resources useful for the School’s development. One of the SEN students had severe hearing impairment. At first, all he had was a standard hearing aid. His mother was on the mainland while his father had to work long hours. The student had very low self esteem. He was not willing to accept others, and yet he was eager to be loved. Before, the School did not have the resources to provide extra help for him. But the situation was greatly improved this year. A very advanced hearing aid had been bought for him. The Resource Teacher followed up with his homework. In addition, he received assistance after class. In the past, he very often missed his assignments. During this school term, however, he did not miss a single assignment at all.

Mr Chow is not worried about his school being labelled as a school of integrated education. Neither is he worried that parents’ misunderstanding might adversely affect student admission. In fact, he has not been challenged by the parents of his students about integrated education. Under the leadership of Mr Chow, Our Lady of China Catholic Primary School (AM Section) turns out to be another successful case of integrated education in the “whole-school participation” mode. The School is able to introduce the appropriate facilities to suit the specific needs of its students and to apply technology to assist integrated education.

The following is yet another successful case of integrated education.

(Source: <http://www.iehk.org/newsletter/news20/index.htm>)

It is a story about a student suffering from Congenital Down’s Syndrome. He studies in Tuen Mun Government Primary School (AM Section). When he started there, his I.Q. was no more than 60-70 and his language ability was relatively weak. He had been admitted into a special child-care centre

when he was two and a half years old. He was transferred to a mixed class when he was three and he did well. He joined the Integrated Education scheme of Tuen Mun Government Primary School in 1999 with his teachers' referral.

At first, things did not quite work out. The Resource Teacher found the boy's behaviour problematic and he was in fact a source of trouble for all his teachers: he would frequently disturb class discipline; he often took away his classmates' belongings; sometimes he even took off his clothes for no reason. About three weeks after term started, his parents requested permission to withdraw him from the School and to transfer him to a special school. But the Resource Teacher was convinced that integrated education would be good for the boy and strongly urged the parents to let their child stay. He adopted a series of counselling measures to make sure that the boy benefited from integrated education. The boy's parents also took time out from their busy schedules and learned from the teachers how to help their son with his school work. All these measures were rewarded by a general improvement in his work and a complete integration into school life at the end of the first school term. The Resource Teacher was glad that the boy could receive education in a mainstream school. Integrated education has helped him develop his potential. His parents are now very supportive of integrated education and insist that he studies in a mainstream school.

We can see that the success of integrated education depends not only on the schools and teachers, but also on the co-operation of parents. The above case is a good demonstration of the importance of parental participation.

The examples above all help to illustrate the characteristics of integrated education, namely, whole-school participation, collaborative teaching, careful attention to individual needs, technical support, peer assistance and parental participation. We can see that integrated education has helped children with special educational needs integrate into a normal life. As the saying goes, difficulties are always overcome by endeavor. We believe that with the concerted effort of the schools, the teachers and the parents, children with special educational needs will definitely be able to integrate into a normal life.

IX. Overseas Examples

Inclusive Education is actually very common. In fact, it has become a trend. The following are examples of inclusive education in other countries:

6600 Heartland is a British web-site for special education. It carries an article by the parent of a child with a certain disability. His child Carson has studied in schools of fully-integrated education since kindergarten. His parents were very keen that his potential could be developed: he was very good at reading, drawing and mathematics. He was also sociable in class. There had been no incidence of mockery or bully brought about by his disability, because there was nothing in what other children saw of him everyday that would induce discrimination. Other children at school took him as their equal. Carson's experience in school helped him acquire full self-confidence to deal with all sorts of people he would encounter later on in life. In the end, Carson's parents also agreed that Integration can achieve its aim. It does good to everybody. We can all benefit from integrated education. (Source: <http://www/geocities.com/Heartland/6600/parents.htm>, Last update: 4/6/1998)

The next case is about a Year Two student in a Taiwan university who is suffering from amblyopia. He has experienced both special education and integrated education. According to him, since the other students of the National Taichung School for the Visually Impaired are all suffering from similar problems, the friendship among them may perhaps be more sincere than that among people without sight defects. They also share a sense of camaraderie because they understand each others' situation well. But the School can get over-protective. It operates like an iron-cage and there is too much control

over their interaction with the outside world. Moreover, although the School is well equipped with free facilities to enhance learning for the visually impaired – Braille books for blind students, books with enlarged words for students with amblyopia, there is no sense of competition among the students. Therefore, the learning environment is not as efficient as mainstream schools. When they go to university, they often find themselves trailing behind their peers.

If he was given a choice, he would prefer integrated education. It is true that the National Taichung School for the Visually Impaired provides good protection for its students, but they will eventually enter society and join the work-force. Those who do not get a place in university suddenly leave a very simple world and find themselves in a more threatening environment. This could cause a lot of anxieties. If they were given more opportunities to interact with people with normal eyesight in their schooling years (and ordinary schools do have the structure of a mini-society), they would be better equipped to adapt to the working world.

(Source: Ts'ai Hsin-che, *The Visually Impaired Looking to the Future*, and <http://audi.nchu.edu.tw/~hongzen/blindview.doc>)

The following is the findings of some research on the implementation of integrated education in the US and Taiwan.

In the US, Wang (1996) offers an overall evaluation of the results of integrated education carried out in Texas for 3 years. Quality Education Initiatives (QEI) are adopted as the criteria for evaluation. The findings are as follows:

1. Ordinary students in the Integrated Class attained scores higher than the national standard model in standardization tests.
 2. No negative learning impact had been produced by SEN students on ordinary students.
 3. Ordinary students in Integrated Classes scored higher than students in Non-integrated Classes in Reading and Mathematics.
 4. SEN students in Integrated Classes showed improvement in their performance.
 5. No difference was shown in the behaviour and classroom performance between SEN student and ordinary students. Both demonstrated appropriate behaviour for their Grades.
 6. There was more interaction among teachers, supporting staff, SEN students and ordinary students.
- (Source: Lipsky & Gartner, *Inclusion and School Reform: Transforming America's Classrooms*, 1997, p.185).

In Taiwan, Wu Shwu-mey (1996) conducted a research on a group of 48 students receiving integrated education in the Experimental Class of the National Hsin-Chu Teachers College, with 24 belonging to the Primary One experimental class and another 24 belonging to the Primary Two experimental class. One third of the students of each experimental class were students with special educational needs of various kinds. The research studies variables including the attitudes of parents and teachers on full integration, the actual situations of classroom learning, students' classroom status, and their attitudes towards the School. The research aims at providing a better understanding of the results of Fully Integrated Education. The results show that parents, students and teachers all see the benefits of Fully Integrated Education to both ordinary and SEN students. Moreover, parents agree with the teaching methodology of Fully Integrated Education. They also recognise that Fully Integrated Education in schools bring more advantages to ordinary students than SEN students.

Integrated education is marvellous for both ordinary and SEN students. It has been discovered in the research that ordinary children are encouraged to show compassion, while SEN students benefit from the stimulation of their peers and achieve better outcomes in the various aspects of their development. But the implementation of this marvellous idea cannot be dependent on legislation alone, it must be backed up by related packages of facilities, a supporting network and resources coordination.

X. Conclusion and Suggestions

The above examples should have provided a fairly clear overall picture of the advantages of integrated education. President, honoured guests, and dear student ambassadors present here today, I move that the motion proposed by our team: “The Government should Continue to Develop, Improve and Promote Integrated Education for Children” be passed so that children with special educational needs could integrate more smoothly into the community.

The foundation for integrated education has in fact been laid in 1999, when the Education Department formally launched the scheme. It is regrettable that the government should have announced, in September 2002, that the number of schools providing integrated education would be reduced because many failed to provide effective service.

Our team strongly believes that it is the responsibility of the government to work for the good of the people and to provide them with equal education opportunities. I quote Article 23 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, “*State Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance, and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community*”. Article 29, too, states clearly that education of the child should be directed to “*the development of the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential*”. Our team wishes to stress that children with special educational needs should be given the same attention.

Of course, some of you here today may have reservations yourself about integrated education. But all that prejudice against SEN students, or ‘aliens’ as they are sometimes called, is probably just caused by human selfishness. Imagine, you are a student suffering from amblyopia. All you need in class is a pair of magnifying glass. You are not in anybody’s way. And yet your classmates sneer at you. Is that fair? All of you here had been students at one time. You would certainly remember how different your classmates were in character and in learning abilities. Would the extra presence of a SEN student in any way affect your enthusiasm for learning?

In view of the local and overseas examples cited above, and in view of the present legislation, schools should make the necessary adjustments for students with different needs. Our team believes that integrated education must go full steam ahead. Of course, supporting measures must also be introduced. And, in order to ensure that the idea of integrated education would be widely accepted and become the prevailing trend in schools, government assistance is indispensable.

1. Strengthen professional training for teachers

At present, there is a lack of professional training for teachers. Courses on integrated education are insufficient, and the contents are inappropriate. The curriculum is too generalized, as it only teaches the basic facts about children with different kinds of special educational needs and about integrated education. Practical and relevant training is inadequate. We have learned that sometimes, teachers keen to study special education have no idea what courses there are on special education. Such a situation must be improved! The Education Department and the Hong Kong Institute of Education need to provide support to teachers by designing pre-job and in-service training courses and on-line distance learning programmes, so that teachers have the means to equip themselves and enhance their self-confidence.

2. Provide more resources

Due to the lack of resources, many teachers have to carry too heavy a workload to be able to prepare tailor-made lessons for SEN students. Government should re-deploy resources in order to support the continuous development of schools committed to integrated education. In addition, The Education Department should organize more training activities on a regional or territory-wide basis, activities

such as workshops, seminars, briefing sessions and experience-sharing sessions. The emphasis should be on helping teachers deepen their knowledge of the requirements of SEN students, of ways of dealing with them, and of the teaching strategies they need to do a good job.

3. Devise a long-term plan for the promotion of integrated education

In his Policy Address delivered in 2000, the Chief Executive announced that from 2001-2004, there would be a gradual increase of additional funding, to the amount of \$50 million, to enable more mainstream schools to promote integrated education in the mode of “whole-school participation”. But what is going to happen in 2005 and after? Rather than a piecemeal approach, the Government must devise a long-term plan for the promotion of integrated education.

4. Introduce compulsory subjects in teacher training programmes

Foundation programme and in-service refresher programme for teachers should include compulsory subjects on the philosophy of integrated education, on knowledge related to special educational needs, and on ways of attending to the needs of individual students. In this way, teachers would be more appreciative of the individual differences of students, and this would help kindle the spirit of “whole-school participation”.

5. Strengthen promotion

To help the public understand more fully the value of integrated education, more efforts should be made to promote the spirit of integration. This could be done through advertisements, information booklets, popular events with Integration as the theme, film stars serving as Integration ambassadors, or even Integration Week. The Government could also organize major presentation ceremonies to commend students and schools for their contributions to integrated education. At the same time, the Government should further publicize the facilities available now, e.g. up-grading programmes for teachers, or supplementary equipment which students could hire.

6. Establish up a standing advisory and supervision body

A standing advisory and supervision committee should be established under the Education and Manpower Bureau to collect the views of families, students, and schools participating in integrated education. A team of inspectors should also be set up to conduct regular inspections of the actual situation of students receiving integrated education in schools.

7. Popularize integrated education

A column of integrated schools should be added to the school selection list for primary and secondary schools. The list should be updated annually so that parents would have a clearer idea of which are the integrated schools. Furthermore, the Government should set up a value-added integrated education index to encourage more schools to run integrated education.

8. Heighten people’s appreciation of integrated education

To heighten people’s appreciation of the true meaning and significance of integrated education, the Government should impress upon the public the positive aspects of the spirit of integration, and take the initiative to create a society where people work together for their mutual benefit.

Our team is firmly committed to the principle of “not giving up on any student” where opportunities for integrated education are concerned. In face of the economic downturn, it is understandable that the media should express concern about whether integrated education is a waste of public money and press for a review of the scheme. But Mr C. Y. Tung, our Chief Executive, has in his Policy Address promised that circumstances permitting, there would be a steady development of integrated education to meet the needs of society and of children with special educational needs. The Government should therefore continue to allocate human and other resources to integrated education so that SEN students can enjoy equal learning opportunities.

We, students from HKMA David Li Kwok Po College, S.K.H. Tsang Shiu Tim Secondary School and two Child Ambassadors, move the motion **“The Government should continue to develop, improve and promote integrated education for children”** be passed.

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