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EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSION



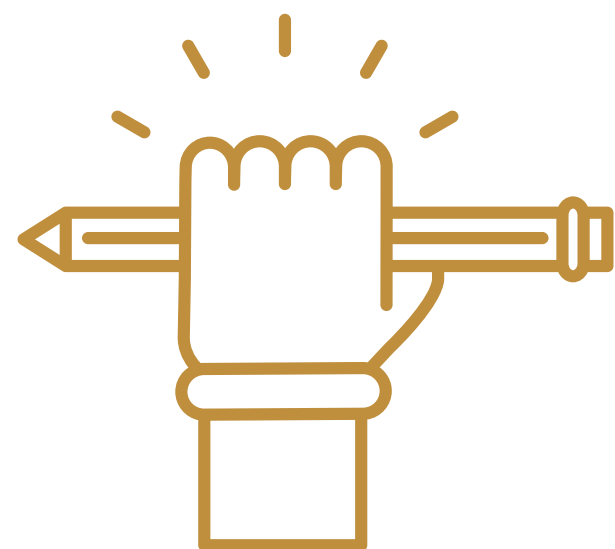
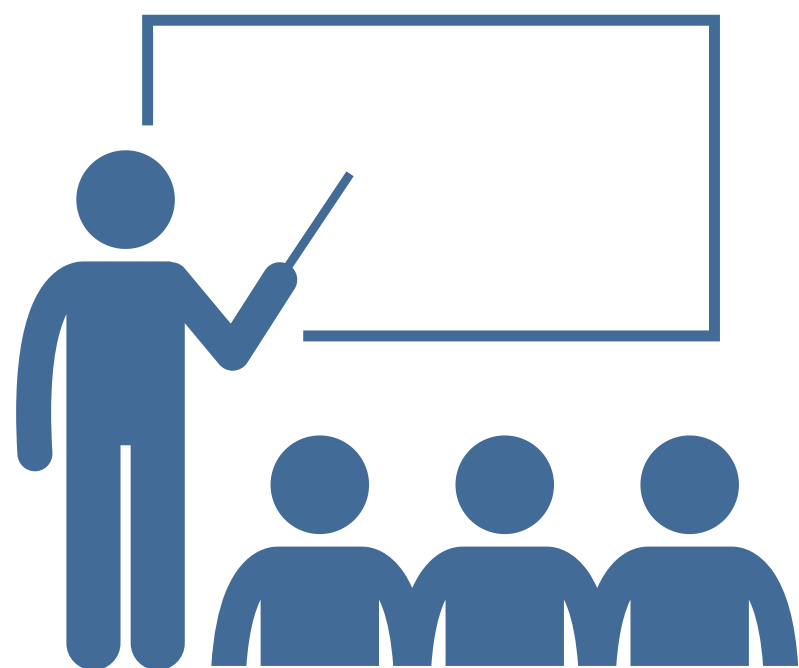
香港教育大學
The Education University
of Hong Kong



卓越教學發展中心
CENTRE FOR EXCELLENCE IN LEARNING AND TEACHING

Study on Challenges, Effective Policies, and Best Practices of Ordinary Schools in Educating Students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong

29 June 2023



Objectives of the study

(i) to review literature and research materials on practices and strategies for providing integrated education (IE) to students with special educational needs (SEN) both locally and overseas



(ii) to assess the understanding of school principals, school administrators, and teachers regarding the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), the Code of Practice on Education under DDO, and students with SEN

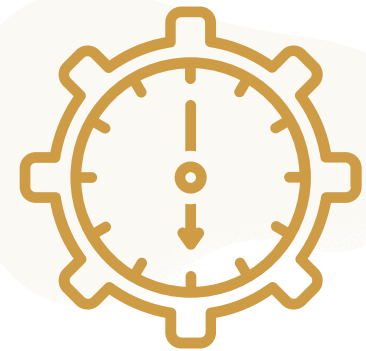
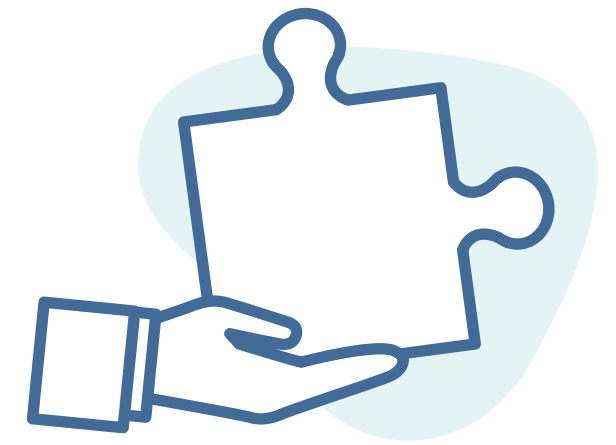


(iii) to collect the views of school principals, school administrators, and teachers in ordinary schools on implementing IE for students with SEN



Objectives of the study

(iv) to explore the challenges faced by ordinary schools in implementing IE and supporting students with SEN



(v) to evaluate the effectiveness of government policies in promoting IE and providing equal learning opportunities for students with SEN

(vi) to identify good practices initiated by in-school professionals to achieve IE, support students with SEN, and provide them with equal learning opportunities through case studies



(vii) to make policy recommendations based on the collected data and information to ensure that students with SEN can get access to and receive fair treatment in the mainstream school system.

Background

October 2020 – November 2021
due to COVID-19 pandemic



Questionnaires

Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO), school principal and teachers were invited to fill out the questionnaire

Ordinary Schools

141



60 primary schools



81 secondary schools

704

Primary school
teachers

828

Secondary school
teachers

In total=

141	141	1,532
Principals	SENCOs	Teachers

Background

Purposive sampling

June 2021 - December 2021



Focus group interviews



Individual interviews

15 primary schools

& **12** secondary schools

#Half of them were “relatively successful schools”, while the other half were “relatively less successful schools” in IE implementation.



28 Professional support personnel

(**15** from primary schools & **13** from secondary schools)

#including social workers, school counselors, educational psychologists, clinical psychologists, and speech therapists

15 individual interviews with primary school SENCOs

16 individual interviews with secondary school SENCOs

10 parents of students with SEN in primary schools

10 parents of students with SEN in secondary schools

15 individual interviews with primary school principals

12 individual interviews with secondary school principals

IN
TOTAL

||

106

Background

June to July 2021



Case studies

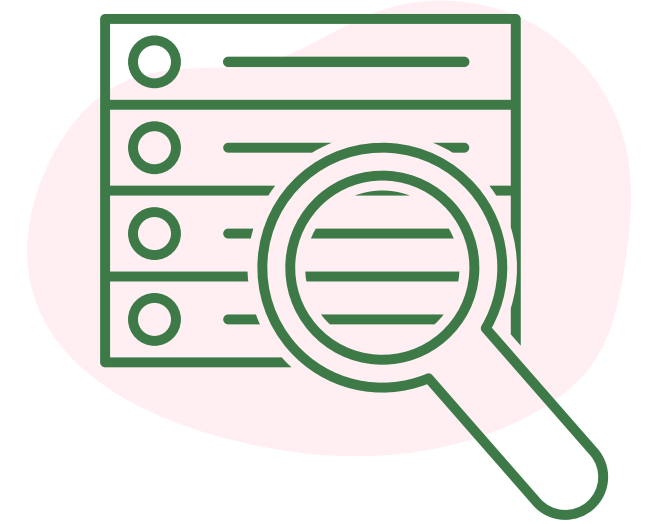


8 schools
with relatively successful implementation of IE
(**4** primary schools and **4** secondary schools)

Purpose: to identify good exemplars of IE in primary and secondary schools and the key factors for the success and obstacles in achieving good practices of IE.

Literature Review

Successful governing factors affecting the implementation of IE include comprehensive support programmes and the use of integrated databases to deepen parents' understanding of their children's growth.



Emphasis should be placed on teacher professional development, with teacher training helping frontline teachers deal with daily teaching challenges.

An inclusive society relies on the tolerance and acceptance of students with SEN and parents, and strengthening mutual trust and understanding among different stakeholders.



Key Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

i) Understanding towards DDO and Code of Practice on Education

All three stakeholder groups (school principals, SENCOs, and teachers) admitted their understanding of DDO and Code of Practice on Education, but overall, teachers had a lower understanding than SENCOs and principals.



Agreed that they understood **DDO** and **Code of Practice on Education**

over **90%** of the interviewed primary and secondary school principals (**91.5%**) and SENCOs (**92.9%**)

Among teachers, approximately **60%** (**58.6%**)



Understanding of **IE**

The average agreement level of the description of IE among primary and secondary school principals and SENCOs was **3.01**, indicating their overall agreement on the description of IE

The average agreement level among teachers was **2.88**





Keying Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

ii) Current Practices and Evaluation of Integrated Education in Schools



Taking care of students with **Intellectual Disability (ID)** 


Primary school SENCOs (**66.7%**) > Secondary school SENCOs (**52.5%**)

Taking care of students with **Speech and Language Impairment (SLI)**  **Hearing Impairment (HI)** 
Physical Disability  **Visual Impairment (VI)** 

Secondary school SENCOs > Primary school SENCOs.

#The differences were between **3** and **15** percentage points.



Handle students with **Intellectual Disability (ID)** 

Primary school teachers (**35.1%**) > Secondary school teachers (**29.4%**)

Handle students with **Mental Illness (MI)** 

Secondary school SENCOs (**83.5%**) and teachers (**39.3%**) > Primary school SENCOs (**55.9%**) and teachers (**11.2%**)

Handle students with **Hearing Impairment (HI)** 

Secondary school teachers (**37.6%**) > Primary school teachers (**27.9%**)

Key Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

ii) Current Practices and Evaluation of Integrated Education in Schools

- The three stakeholders had an overall good understanding of SEN type classification
- Principals (87.1%) and teachers (76.1%) had relatively limited understanding of the inclusion of Mental Illness as a category of SEN.



- SENCOs and teachers pointed out that they felt quite stressed when facing **students with ASD or students with AD/HD.**



- While taking care of students with MI, the average stress experienced by SENCOs was significantly higher than that of teachers, and secondary school SENCOs perceived highest (3.38).

Primary school SENCOs were under the greatest pressure when supporting students with SLI with the average scores of 3.27, and 2.71 for secondary school SENCOs.



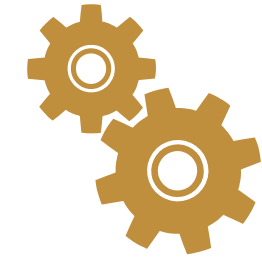
Noticeably, **35.0%** of SENCOs and **21.8%** of teachers in primary schools thought that low achiever is one of the SEN types.

Key Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

ii) Current Practices and Evaluation of Integrated Education in Schools

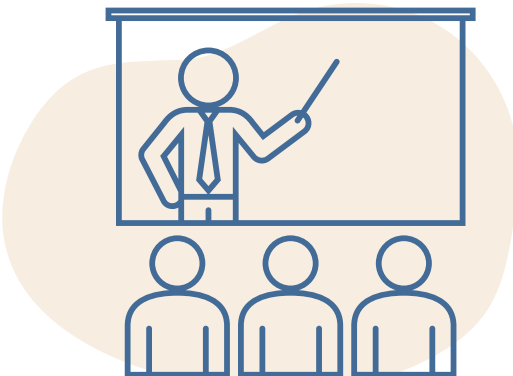
The priority of services or measures to cater for the individual needs of students with SEN (In both primary and secondary schools):

"Curriculum/Assessment Accommodation"	87.9%
"Employing Teaching Assistants"	87.2%
"Providing Professional Treatment and Consultation"	84.4%
"Employing Support Teachers"	84.4%



"School-based Curriculum" was less likely to be introduced in secondary schools (**40.7%**) than primary schools (**71.7%**) for **30** percentage points

"Setting up Individual Education Plan" was less prevalent in secondary schools (**56.8%**) than primary schools (**75.0%**) for around **20** percentage points.



"Small Class Teaching" was less likely to be implemented in secondary schools (**46.9%**) than primary schools (**73.3%**) for around **25** percentage points.

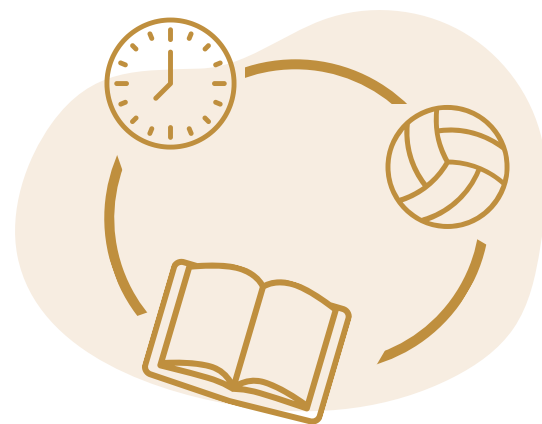
#Secondary schools did not provide services or measures to cater for the individual needs of SEN students as much as primary schools in general.



Key Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

ii) Current Practices and Evaluation of Integrated Education in Schools

Over 80% of surveyed principals (**81.6%**), teachers (**85.3%**), and SENCOs (**85.8%**) agreed that the most difficult aspect of implementing integrated education was **the tight teaching schedule / heavy teaching workload**



Compared with their counterparts in secondary schools (**77.8%**), principals in primary schools (**86.7%**) perceived tight teaching schedule/heavy teaching workload as the most challenging.



Over **70%** of principals (**70.2%**) and SENCOs (**70.9%**) expressed that the administrative work brought about by IE was heavy.



68.8% of the teachers surveyed considered the lack of manpower as the second difficulty in implementing IE.

Key Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

iv) Evaluation of Integrated Education Policy Effectiveness

Schools believed that the Learning Support Grant (LSG) had provided resources for schools to employ different professional support personnel and purchase professional support services.

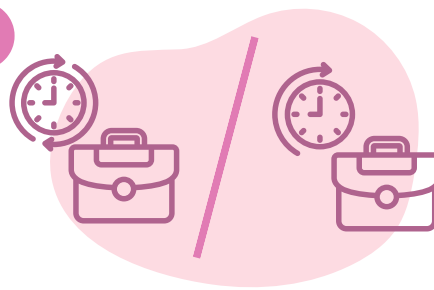
Principals thought that the helpfulness of LSG:

1



Purchasing external professional services (91.5%)

2



Employing full-time and/or part-time teaching staff (85.1%)

3



Full-time support staff (78.7%)

➤ Both primary and secondary schools deployed LSG mostly on **purchasing external professional services** and **employing full-time and/or part-time teaching staff**.



Principals thought that the setting up of the post of **SENCO** was the most effective support measure with the overall mean score of **3.48**

(3 represents that the policy and support measures are helpful).



SENCOs considered that the **promotion of School-based Educational Psychology services** and the **provision of more systematic and adequate teacher training** were the most effective support measures with the mean scores of **3.48** for both items.

Yet, teachers considered **adding the post of School-based Speech Therapist** as the most effective support measure with the highest mean score of **3.21**, while primary school teachers rated a higher mean score of **3.24**.

Key Findings of Questionnaire Surveys

v) Current Practices of Home-school Cooperation in Integrated Education

Home-school cooperation in integrated education is gradually improving, but still faces some difficulties.

Preferred **means of communication** between schools and parents:



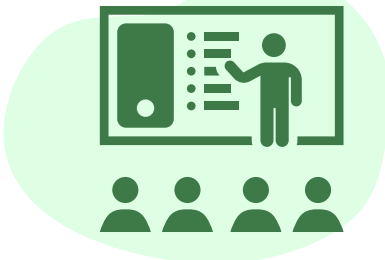
Phone calls and other instant messaging channels (92.9%)



Communicating face-to-face on Parents' Days (90.8%)



Arranging professionals to contact parents (88.7%)



Arrange parental seminars/workshops
Primary schools (65.0%)
Secondary schools (43.2%)

Difficulties in catering for the needs of students with SEN with their parents:

- Parents were busy to support the needs of students with SEN after school
- Parents lack required skills and knowledge of looking after children with SEN

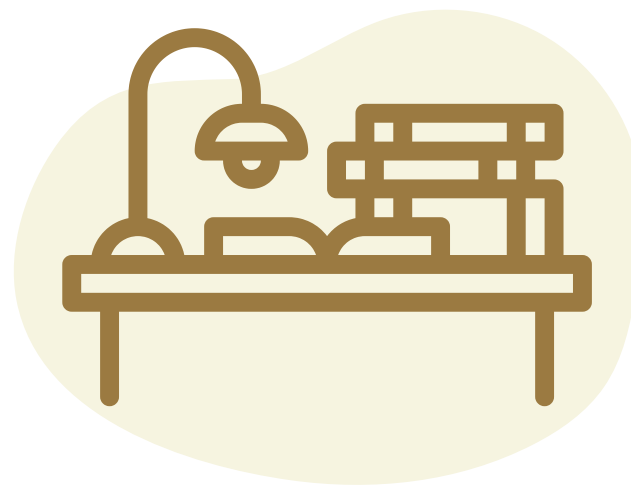


Results of Individual Interviews and Focus Group Interviews



Current Status of Curriculum Implementation (Learning, Teaching and Assessment)

Curriculum plan is too tight



Students with SEN Still Face Unified Public Assessments at Different Stages of Learning

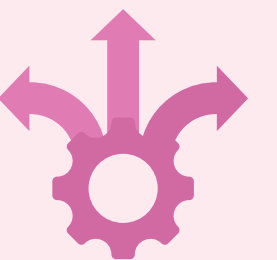


Effect of the Government Continuously Placing Resources in Integrated Education

Overwhelming Functions and Roles of SENCOs



Use of Resources and Restricted Flexibility



Improved Professional Supports and Individual Education Plan (IEP) Arrangements



Facilitating Teacher Professional Development for Integrated Education



Quotes from Respondents

Curriculum plan is too tight

"Our timetable is packed, **completely packed**, and the biggest problem we face is that in a classroom, **the class timetable is very intense, and basically there is no free time.**" (Secondary School Principal)



Overwhelming Functions and Roles of SENCOs



"**The SENCO really has to take care of everything.** I have to follow up on the curriculum, but I can only slowly learn something, and I can't follow up in depth. **I'm just a bridge to coordinate things, such as exam adjustments.** (Secondary School SENCO)

Results of Individual Interviews and Focus Group Interviews



**Impact of COVID-19
Pandemic and Class
Suspension on
Integrated Education
and Inclusive School**

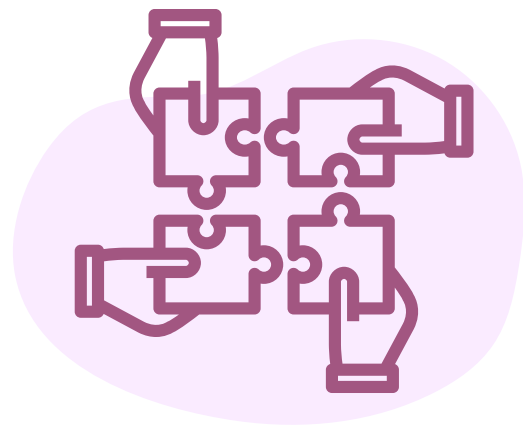
**Challenges to
Students' Mental
Health Status
and Support**



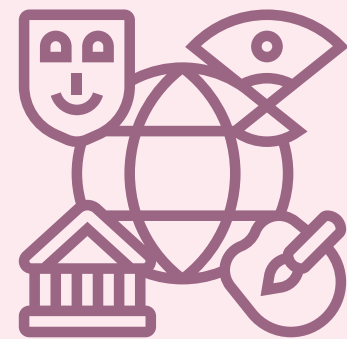
**Cross-professional
Support to Integrated
Education**



**Inclusive Schools Have
Been Developed**



**Current Status of
Parents Taking
Care of Children
with SEN and Home-
school Cooperation**

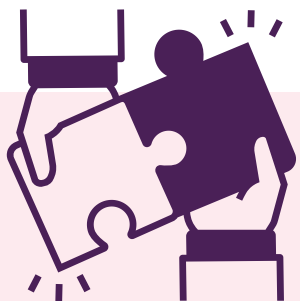


**Deep-seated
Social Norms
and Values**

**Parents Get More
Motivated to Seek Help.
Timely Service Support
Restricted Due to Financial
Difficulties**



**Maturing of Home-
school Cooperation**



**Long-lasting Effects
from Examination-
oriented culture**



**Social Acceptance
Enhanced But Still
Needs Improvements**



Quotes from Respondents

Timely Support Restricted Due to Financial Difficulties

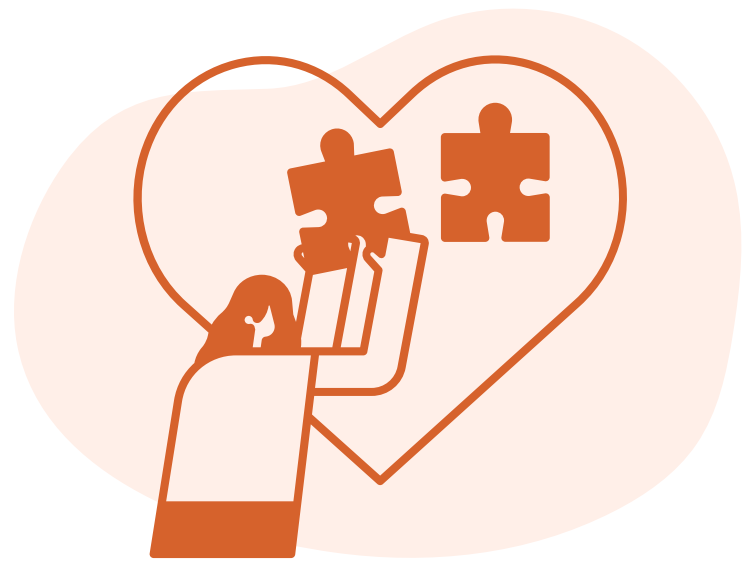
I am a single parent, I know that there are some services available outside, **but many of them are very expensive, so I cannot afford them. The government services are not available to me either because of long waiting time.**

(Parent of a Primary Student with SEN)



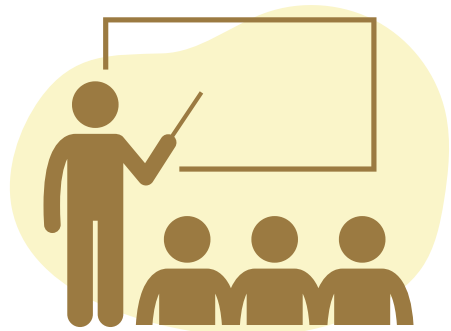
Parents Get More Motivated to Seek Help

"Six years ago, **parents were more conservative about the individual needs of students.** We would take a more proactive role and ask students if they have any learning needs that we can support. But now, **parents are already very proactive** and want you to know about their children's situation so that they can receive appropriate help. (Secondary School School Worker)

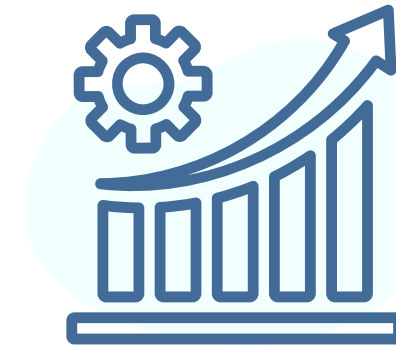


Overview and Characteristics of Integrated Education Implementation in Schools

Adopting Whole School Approach (WSA) to provide support for students with SEN



Small class teaching



Concentration improvement group

After-school tutoring



Social skills group

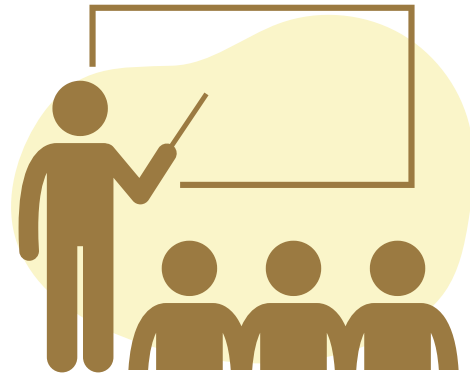


Individual Education Plan (IEP)



Accommodations of homework, curriculum and assessment

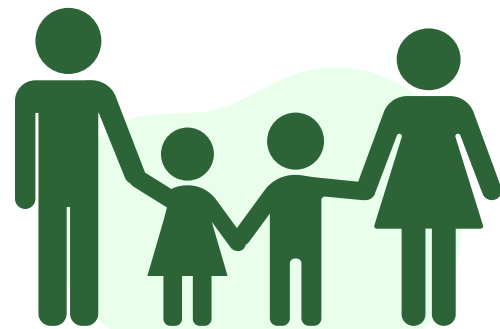
Good Exemplars of Integrated Education in Primary Schools



Small class teaching approach



**Rescheduling teacher's timetable
(more space)**



**Invite parents to join
class activities
(Observation and
interaction)**



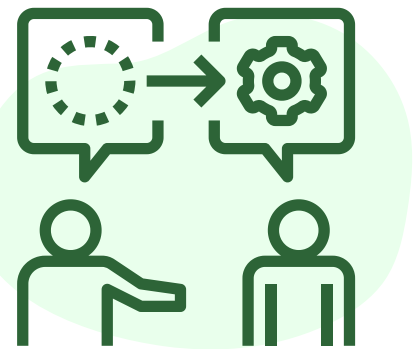
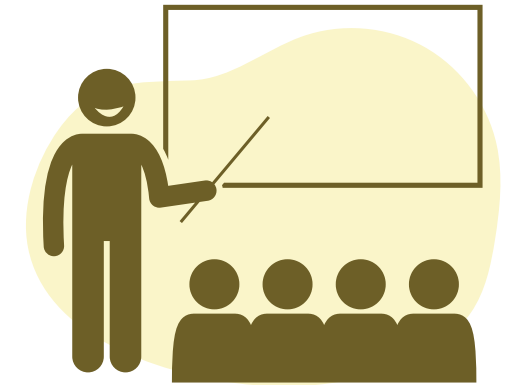
**Schools explain students'
performance with parents to
reduce their doubts and
vigilance**



**Cooperate with professional
groups to provide
comprehensive support**

Good Exemplars of Integrated Education in Secondary Schools

- Pull-out approach through co-teaching (1:4 or 1:5; Teacher:Students with SEN)



- Encourage teachers to participate more in training of IE

- Conduct research to review and improve teaching and learning effectiveness of students with SEN in tier-1 support



- Cross-disciplinary cooperation for whole-person development



Recommendations



Recommendations

1

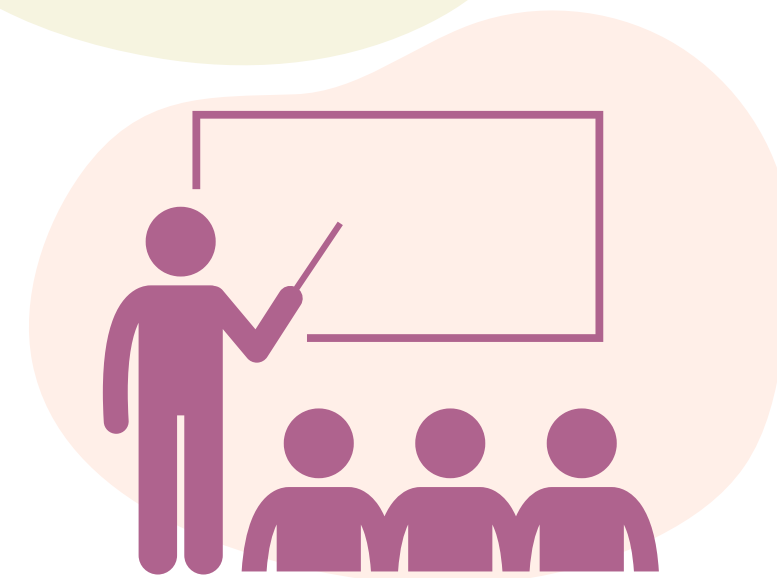
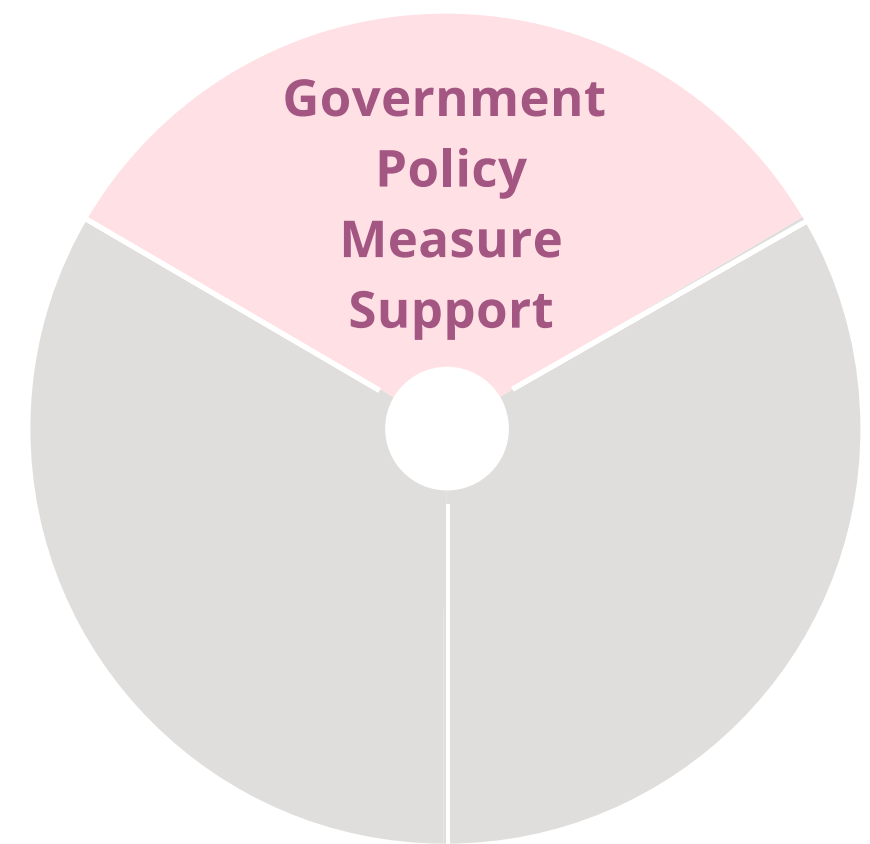
Enhancing the flexibility of current school resource utilization and establishing permanent positions for professional support personnel

- Additional allowance could be given in proportion if too many students with SEN
- Providing relevant funds to hire other professional support personnel to meet the immediate needs
- Setting up permanent posts for professional support personnel
- Allowing schools to use part of the surplus according to the school-based context

2

Implementing small-class teaching and increasing the teacher-to-class ratio in every ordinary school for supporting integrated education

- Adjusting the teacher-to-student ratio in ordinary schools to support IE
- Further promoting small class teaching (20 students per class) to give teacher more space to take care of students with SEN

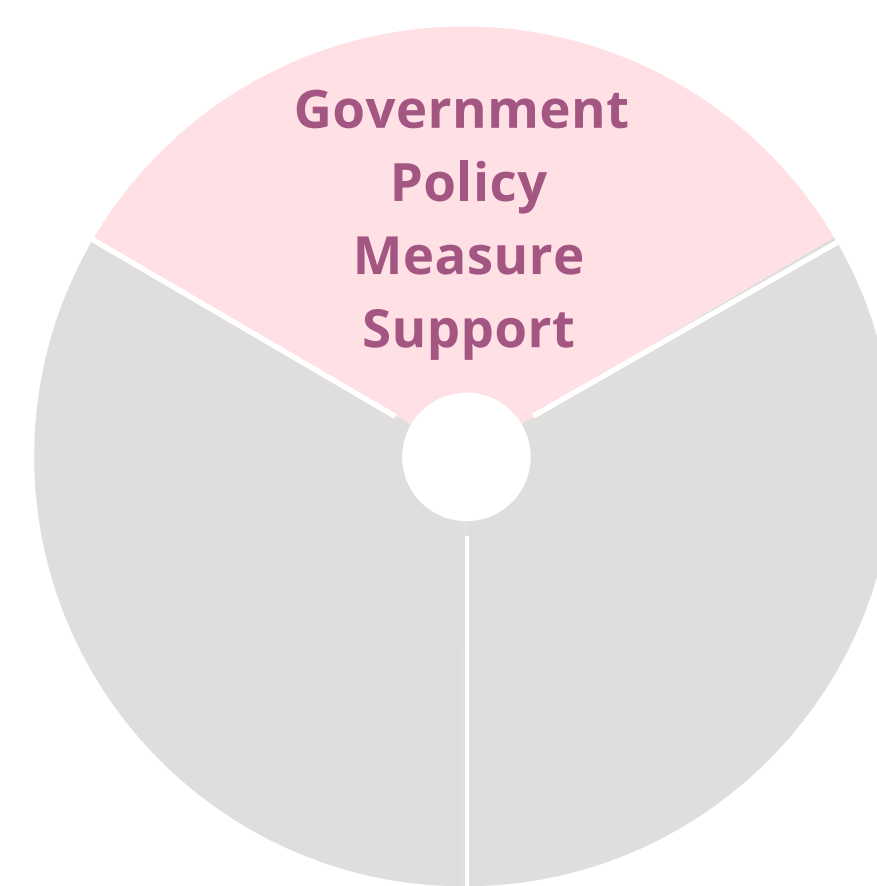


Recommendations

3

Improving teachers' understanding and skills on Disability Discrimination Ordinance, Codes of Practice, and integrated education and strengthening university-school partnerships and professional development

- Increase quotas of in-service teachers' training
- Strengthen University-School Support Programme to provide professional support
- Pre-service training in HK: professional qualification of all teachers
- Tailor-make the teaching materials to meet their respective schools' learning needs.



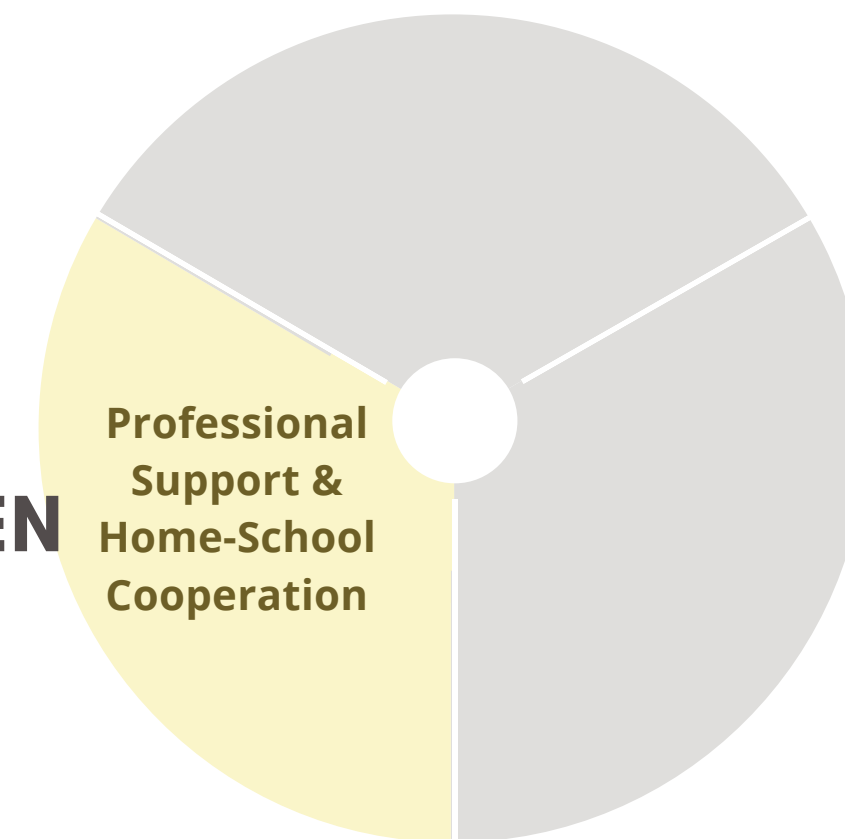
Recommendations

4 Strengthening parent-school collaboration and public and parent education and providing more supports to parents of students with SEN

- Parental education (enhancing acceptance of SEN and awareness towards IE)
- Introducing cash allowance for parents of children with SEN
- Establishing an electronic system for children with SEN
- Establishing a support network for schools, parents, and community support services

6 Establishing diversified support model for students with SEN and a support network for students with SEN and non-Chinese speaking students and parents

- Identifying schools with rich experience to be seed schools of promoting IE
- Developing a seed school to support a specific type of SEN
- Community services can be regarded as a support for students with SEN and NCS together with their parents outside school



5

Strengthening mental health supports to students

- Enrichment of "Student Mental Health Support Scheme"
- Considering "one school, one psychiatric nurse" scheme in long term given sufficient manpower
- Enabling students to be aware of their mental conditions to address the effects from pandemic

Recommendations

7



Setting up a new post with the title “Curriculum Development Master/Mistress (Integrated Education)” (CDMIE)

- To provide significant support for designing school-based SEN curriculum and assessment criteria in ordinary schools.
- To assist schools in implementing differentiated instruction, setting tiered curriculum and assessment content for students with SEN

8

Promoting diversified or alternative assessment methods beyond paper-and-pen assessment

- Reducing “die or live” pressure, fully consider assessing students’ abilities with alternative assessment strategies
- Conducting experiments, practical application of knowledge and learned skills from lesson

9

Strengthening support for SENCOs to reduce their workload

- An increase in the number of school visits by educational psychologists (EP)
- Establishing a cross-professional community of practice for IE
- Sharing more successful experiences and challenges in supporting students with SEN

