

Project Title : Special educational needs empowerment project for pre-service teachers

Leading University : The Education University of Hong Kong

Participating UGC-funded University(ies) : Hong Kong Baptist University

Project Leader(s) : Professor SIN Kuen-fung, Professor, Department of Special Education and Counselling, Faculty of Education and Human Development, The Education University of Hong Kong

### **Summary of Proposal**

Government statistics indicates the increasing number of students with special educational needs (SEN) in the mainstream primary and secondary schools. Local report revealed that the majority of in-service teachers lacked training in SEN, leading to teacher frustration, ineffective teaching, and the suffering of SEN students and their peers (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2012).

This project therefore aims at strengthening the training in special education in the current Bachelor of Education (BEd) and other undergraduate curriculum in both The Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK) and Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), by constructing a comprehensive and in-depth framework of inclusive education teacher training at different levels. This 2-year project will systematically and purposefully nurture committed pre-service teachers to become competent SEN teachers through a ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ ‘Service Learning Model’. The project will support teacher training in inclusive education, prepare undergraduate students for a SEN-focus career development, and provide them with the necessary service-learning exposure to meet the contextual needs and challenges in inclusive education development.

With the support from the partner Non-Governmental Organisations, special schools, SEN practitioners and scholars, the final project outcome will be a sustainable framework for an effective ‘Service Learning Model’ in SEN. This framework will be possibly integrated as one of the Co-curricular Learning Courses in the University

Grants Committee (UGC)-funded BEd or other undergraduate programs at EdUHK and HKBU for the sustainability thereafter.

### **Summary of Final Report**

Government statistics indicate that the number of students with SEN in mainstream schools is increasing. Local report revealed that the majority of teachers lacked training in SEN, leading to frustration, ineffective teaching, and the suffering of SEN students (Equal Opportunity Commission, 2012). Funded by the UGC Funding Scheme on Teaching and Learning Related Initiative (2016-2019 Triennium), Center for Special Educational Needs and Inclusive of EdUHK and Center for Learning Sciences of HKBU launched the project titled “Special educational needs empowerment project for pre-service teachers”, aiming at strengthening the special needs training for undergraduates in both universities, by constructing a comprehensive and in-depth framework of inclusive education teacher training at different levels. In the Horizontal level, participants attended workshop, guided visit and seminars for exposure to students with SEN. In Vertical Level 1, participants deepened their SEN understanding via training, community service and reflective activities. In Vertical Level 2, participants undertook intensive leadership training in the SEN service providers. The project attracted desirable enrollment at Horizontal Level (N=744), Vertical Level 1 (N=236) and Vertical Level 2 (N=21). It was evident that the activities helped participants acquire knowledge and skills in supporting students with SEN. Participants were able to gain frontline experience and real-life exposure through the designed service learning activities. More importantly, the project systematically and purposefully nurtured committed pre-service teachers to become competent in catering for diversity through a ‘horizontal’ and ‘vertical’ ‘Service Learning Model’. It was concluded that this innovative approach supported teacher training in inclusive education, prepared undergraduate students for a SEN-focus career development, and provided them with the necessary service-learning exposure to meet the contextual needs and challenges in inclusive practices. The team disseminated widely the outcomes and deliverables in high education sector locally and internationally. It was recommended that the mode can be integrated into Co-curricular Learning Courses in undergraduate programs for the sustainability thereafter.