“A Never-Ending Ensemble” Inclusion in an International Special School in Hong Kong

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ABSTRACT

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Inclusion in an international special school was the main focus of this research. As inclusion has been advocated by the government in Hong Kong since 1977, many schools have adopted inclusive education into their policies and practices. The purpose of this study is to identify how inclusion is understood, made into policies and implemented in an international special school setting.

A mix-qualitative method was conducted via a two-months observation period. Observational, documentation and interview data were collected and analysed using the thematic analysis method. Inductive thematic analysis was conducted first and followed by theoretical analysis. The *index for inclusion* was used to analyse the inclusion implementation of the target schools.

Positive inclusion policies and practices were identified. However, other negative issues were pinpointed and were found closely related to the societal background of Hong Kong. The lack of vocational support, cultural influences on parental expectation and teachers' attitudes were found as the main causes regarding the implementation of inclusive education.

The elite education system and the emphasis on qualification were identified as contributing factors to the practical issues of inclusive education implementation. Therefore, suggestions regarding community support, teacher training, and parental education programme were advised according to issues identified from the research. The direction of future studies was suggested. One of the possible study areas would be inclusive education in mainstream international schools in Hong Kong.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Special School, International School, Hong Kong

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APR	Additional Resource Provision
ASDAN	A curriculum programme for special education needs students
BTEC	A curriculum developed by the Business and Technology Education Council
EA	Educational Assistant
EB	Education Bureau
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education (National Curriculum in UK)
IB	International Baccalaureate (International Curriculum)
IEP	Individual Education Plan
LD	Learning Disabilities
LSC	Learning Support Centre
SEN	Special Education Needs
SST	Special Support Team
PE	Physical Education

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Inclusive Education in Hong Kong

Inclusive education has been advocated in Hong Kong since 1977. Since the start of the development of inclusive education in Hong Kong, many of the policies and guidelines for inclusive education were influenced by global conventions and documents. For example, the government of Hong Kong has adopted the index for inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) for its inclusive education guidelines. Therefore, the inclusive education development in Hong Kong will be presented after a brief discussion of the development of inclusive education at the global level which could help present a holistic picture and a more comprehensive understanding of the development of inclusive education in Hong Kong.

One of the most significant global development of inclusive education started in 1994, when the Salamanca statement was published (UNESCO, 1994). It was named as one of the most influential documents in the field of special education (Ainscow & César, 2006). Inclusive education was stated in the Salamanca statement as "*… the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; …*" (UNESCO, 1994, p.ix). The emphasis of inclusive education continued and was repeatedly mentioned in various international organisations such as the World Education Forum, UNESCO and UN in last the two decades (Polat, 2011). One of the most recent developments in inclusive education is the 2030 agenda for sustainable development in 2015. In this agenda, a total of 17 goals were created and one of the goals (SDG4) is quality education which was defined as *"[e]nsure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"* (UN, 2015). The targets stated under SDG4 focus on inclusive education for all, boarded the scope to include more diversities such as gender, socio-economic status, and race.

Since the emergence of the concept of inclusive education from the early nineties, the advocates of inclusive education have been developing the idea of inclusive education from physical integration of students with disabilities to mainstream school to catering to all kinds of diversities of student, while

simultaneously building and expanding the social constructive model of disabilities (e.g. Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2011; Armstrong, Armstrong, & Spandagou, 2010; Loreman, Forlin, Chambers, Sharma, & Deppeler, 2014). According to Loreman et al., (2014), inclusion was primarily been a concept for special education until recently the concept expanded and included all kinds of diversity of children. A similar view was also identified in a book written by Armstrong el at. (2010) which they described as *"[i]nclusive education has grown out of the system of special education…"* (Chapter 2, p.9). They also emphasised the advocates of inclusive education have challenged not only the "*simple dichotomy of mainstream and special education"* (Chapter 3, p.3) but also the boundaries of "normality". Therefore, inclusive education has transformed special education to education for all and also the view on disabilities and diversities.

Regarding the definition of inclusive education, many studies have identified the difficulties in providing a concrete definition (e.g. Armstrong, el at., 2010; Loreman et al., 2014; Mitchell, 2005; Shyman, 2015). Armstrong el at. (2011) argued that the context of social policy and education of various nations is highly diverse and therefore inclusive education should be looked *"internally and yet globally interconnected"* (p. 30). Mitchell (2005) also stressed that the forms of inclusive education implementation *"have a strongly local flavour"* (p.3) and that available resource varies in different nations which affect the practice of inclusive education. However, Mitchell mentioned that *"[a]lthough there is no universally accepted definition of inclusive education, there is a growing international consensus as to the principal features of this multi-dimensional concept."* (p.4). To conclude, there is not a solid definition of inclusive education that should apply globally as it should be adapted to the local context, a global consensus should be made to ensure a unanimous effort to achieve education for all.

With the global influence on inclusive education, Hong Kong also adopted inclusive education as the main focus of its special education policy. The concept of inclusive education was first mentioned in a government document released in 1977. *"[D]isabled children will be encouraged to receive education in ordinary schools."* (Hong Kong Government, 1977, Section 4.2c) was mentioned however concrete policy was not released until 20 years later, in 1997, when a 2 years

integration pilot scheme was launched in seven primary schools and two secondary schools. Even though the concept of inclusive education was mentioned in government documents since 1977, the transition from integration to inclusion occurred around 2003, 5 years after the end of the initial pilot scheme, when three crucial policies were issued which brings Hong Kong closer towards inclusion (Poon-Mcbrayer, 2014). The first policy is that parents have the right to place their SEN (Special Education Needs) children in neighbourhood school despite the severity of the disability of the child. Following by adopting the index for inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) and opening up quota of integrating schools which allows all schools to participate freely with funding incentives, this started the inclusion practice in Hong Kong.

The Education Bureau (EB) offered different funding incentive since 2008 and in 2014, a guide named "Operation Guide on the Whole School Approach to Integrated Education" (Education Bureau, 2014) was published with detailed document (compared to older version of documents) concluding, updating and explaining all the policies regarding inclusive education. In the document, it clearly stated that the dual-track model is adopted which emphasised the simultaneous practice of both special schools and the inclusion of SEN students to mainstream schools. Eleven chapters in the operation guide stated clearly regarding the 3 Tier-system, Whole School Approach, Student Support Team (SST), Assessment Accommodations and Home School Cooperation. As there are many 3-Tier systems in different countries, to clarify the meaning of the 3-Tier system, it was defined as the following,

> *"(a) Tier-1 support – quality teaching in the regular classroom for supporting students with transient or mild learning difficulties;*
>
> *(b) Tier-2 support – "add-on" intervention for students assessed to have persistent learning difficulties, including those with SEN. This may involve small group learning, pull-out programmes, etc.; and*

(c) Tier-3 support – intensive individualized support for students with severe learning difficulties and SEN, including drawing up of an Individual Education Plan." (Education Bureau, 2008, p.1–2)

With the release of the 212 pages operation guide, it has provided many detailed instructions to schools regarding the implementation of policies and standards of practices which shows the increase in the determination and support from the government to execute inclusion.

Although inclusion has been advocated and implemented for more than three decades, arguably the situation is still far from the global standards. Recent studies have identified practice-policy gaps regarding how reality is in inclusive schools (e.g. Chan & Lo, 2017; Forlin, 2010; Hue, 2012; Kwan & Cheung, 2017; Qi, Wang, & Ha, 2017; Poon-Mcbrayer, 2012; 2017; Wong, 2017). From these studies, we could have some insights into how the reality is regarding the application of inclusive policies and the reality of SEN students. These studies looked at the issues from the different stakeholders such as different subject teachers, social workers, school guidance counsellors, principals and parents of SEN and non-SEN students which provided various perspectives regarding the implementation of inclusive practices.

According to a study conducted by Poon-Mcbrayer (2012) regarding the policy-practice gap of inclusive education implementation in Hong Kong, ten parents of students with learning disabilities (LD) were interviewed and problematic issues were identified from the study. It was suggested that students with LD were denied their chance to choose their preferred subjects in secondary school and the reason behind was the schools are concerned about these students would lower the average performance of the schools. Other types of problems were also identified such as failure of schools to provide proper support and the lack of parent participation. School failed to inform parents what service they are entitled to and all the parents have reported none of the children received any form of Individual Education Plan (IEP) which is stated in the policy. It was also reported that 90% of the parents were not involved in any SST meeting which

mandated parent participation in the policy. This study shed some light on the reality of the implementation of policies.

Other than schools, the general views of society also have an impact on the execution of policies. One of the obstacles preventing the implementation of inclusion is the emphasis of fairness and discipline of society. A study looked into the view of guidance counsellors and they expressed the dilemma they are facing when balancing between fairness and providing support to SEN students as under Confucianism influence on education in a Chinese based society, fairness, obedience and discipline are heavy emphasised (Hue, 2012). Similar views are also found in the perspective of parents of children without SEN, it was mentioned that it is unfair to students without SEN that SEN students caused disturbance of discipline and delayed teaching progress (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2012). Physical education (PE) teachers also reported that parents of non-SEN students do not want their children to be in the same class with SEN students (Qi el at.,2017). From these views, one could see how fairness is stressed instead of accommodations and empathy which shown that not only school personnel but also the public needs to be educated regarding the value of education for all and the broader meaning of inclusion.

The social development of SEN students is also one of the main focuses of inclusive education. Numerous studies have reported the problems regarding the social development of SEN students (Lam & Phillipson, 2009; Equal Opportunities Commission, 2012; Qi el at., 2017; Wong, 2017). It was found that SEN students are often the subjects of bullying and teasing and the unwillingness of non-SEN students to socialise or cooperate with SEN students (Qi el at., 2017; Wong, 2017). According to a quote from a SEN student from Wong (2017), "*My classmates mocked at me, forced me to enter a female toilet, and robbed me of money. I am so scared to go back to school and prefer to stay at home … I have thought of committing suicide.*" (p. 379). Regarding teacher-student relationships, it was also found that due to the lower academic achievement of SEN students, they were identified with the highest in alienation and poorest in the teacher-student relationship (Lam & Phillipson, 2009) and perceived their teacher as unfriendly. (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2012). According to Wong (2017), five out of seven ASD

(Autistic Spectrum Disorder) students were punished by teachers even as the victim of bullying. This study also stressed failure in supporting the social and emotional growth of ASD students is because of inexpert social workers and inadequately trained teachers (Wong, 2017).

1.2 International Schools in Hong Kong

The above studies identified some discrepancies between the policies and the implementation of inclusive education in government or aided schools (Chan & Lo, 2017; Forlin, 2010; Hue, 2012; Kwan & Cheung, 2017; Qi el at., 2017; Poon-Mcbrayer, 2012; 2017; Wong, 2017). However, it was suggested by Ng (2011) that international schools generally have better resources, more autonomy and more selective admission which is considered "a better standard of education" (p.125) by parents.

There are generally three types of schools in Hong Kong. Government schools, aided schools, and independent schools. Both government and aided schools are funded by the government and aided schools are initially founded by religious or other sponsoring organisations. However, there was not much difference between government school and aided school in terms of government funding and curriculums. However, independent schools generally are free from local education policies and curriculums as they are private schools. They have more freedom in their pedagogical practices and choice of curriculums. International schools are under independent schools and were founded to serve the expatriate community (Yamato & Bray, 2002).

However, more parents started to enrol their local children into international schools in the recent years due to the belief of international school offers better education (Ng, 2011) and the distrust of local syllabus and educational ethos (Yamato & Bray, 2002). According to a study conducted by Ng (2011) regarding reasons behind local parents sending their children to international schools, she has found that parents believed that international schools focus on the holistic development of students, rather than prioritising solely on academic achievements which were the case with local schools. Local schools also believed

to be highly examination-oriented and teacher-directed and students were stripped away from their childhood by homework and examinations. Even though international schools are highly praised by local parents, the tuition fees of international schools are substantial that only affluent families can afford which created the concept of elitist education in international schools. With the oversubscription of international schools, a "mutual selection" occurred which resulted in a segregated environment in international schools with the influx of socially privileged students (Ng, 2011).

As the quality of education of international schools is highly valued, the inclusive practices in these schools should also be closer to the international standards of inclusive education. A study conducted by Chan and Yuen (2015) confirmed the above assumption. They have conducted a case study in an international school that is well known for its whole-school approach in Hong Kong. With the total number of more than 1700 students that come from more than 45 countries, around 200 students are diagnosed as having mild to moderate SEN. According to the case study (Chan & Yuen, 2015), there are many positive practices identified from subject school. One of the main differences between this international school and other mainstream schools is parental involvement. Parents were involved in the meetings, corresponded with the teachers, and designed the IEP for every student with SEN. Curriculums and assessments are modified according to every students' abilities. For example, students with difficulty in reading would be offered a simpler task and different learning materials and assessments will also be adjusted accordingly. The school also offers an "alternative route" for students which focuses more on life skills than academic achievements and a "vocational foundation diploma" can be offered to students with server SEN. This study provided a great opportunity to understand inclusive practice in one of the international schools in Hong Kong. However, practices may vary from school to school and thus we cannot use a single study to generalise inclusion practices of international schools in Hong Kong.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study aimed at understanding how inclusive education is interpreted and practiced in an international special school environment in Hong Kong. With the reputation of the high quality of education and abundant resources in international schools in Hong Kong, inclusion practices could be closer to the global definition than local schools according to past studies. With the segregated nature of the special school and the higher severity of disabilities of its students, it would be very interesting to see how inclusion is understood and implemented in such an environment. There were many studies in the past conducted focusing on inclusion implementation in Hong Kong. However, most of them focused on inclusive practices in mainstream government schools (e.g. Chan & Lo, 2017; Forlin, 2010; Hue, 2012; Kwan & Cheung, 2017; Qi el at., 2017; Poon-Mcbrayer, 2012; 2017; Wong, 2017), this study will be able to provide a new perspective as the focus was on an international special school which was regarded by locals as *"a better standard of education"* (Ng, 2011, p.125).

The interpretation of inclusive education has a significant effect on its practical implementation. Therefore, the research task of this study is to explore how inclusive education was understood, interpreted and practiced in the target international special school. To complete the research task, the school practices were studied in three aspects, environment, inclusion definitions, and its implementation. This study used a multi-qualitative approach with an ethnographic perspective to ensure the inclusive culture of the school is thoroughly represented via ethnographic observations, interviews, and thematic analysis. According to Spradley (1980), *"[e]thnography is the work of describing a culture"* (p.3) which by doing so allows readers to experience the inclusion culture and have an in depth understanding of how different factors intertwined and created the form of inclusion in the target schools.

As this study included an ethnographic approach of data collection and qualitative interview research methods, the structure of this study started with a general introduction of the inclusion background in Hong Kong. It is followed by the methodology of the study which included the technical information of how the study was conducted. After that is the findings of the study which

categorised the findings of the study into five categories. The five categories are environmental, conceptual and practical understanding of inclusion, attitudes of teachers and obstacles towards inclusion implementation which would be presented with observational, interview and secondary data systemically. The study is then continued with the discussion session where the Index for Inclusion (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) would be applied to the findings in an attempt to provide understandings and evaluations to the inclusive practice of the target schools. A discussion regarding issues identified from the analysis would be explored with supporting literature and a short session of practical implication would be included to promote and improve the quality inclusion in the target schools. Finally, trustworthiness of the researcher would be discussed.

2 METHODOLOGY

Below is the description of target schools of the study, data collection procedures, information regarding data that were collected and the ethical perspective of the study. All the names of school names and informants mentioned are replaced with pseudonyms to ensure the anonymously of the schools and the informants.

2.1 Target Schools

As I aimed to study a special school in Hong Kong and its inclusion practice, I looked for different special schools online and found School X where there was a volunteer opportunity. I emailed the vice-principal and expressed my interest to be a volunteer during May and June of 2019. This working period was also my internship course work for the university. I was on a Skype call in February with the vice-principal for an interview and I expressed my interest in collecting data for my thesis during my volunteering period. She was very welcome to the idea and therefore I was officially accepted as a volunteer and a researcher in School X for a period of 2 months, from 2nd May till 28th June 2019. We met again on 2nd May before I started my internship and she briefly introduced the school to me. In addition, we discussed and agreed on the data collection process and the ethical aspect of the procedures.

During the two months internship period, I mainly worked with Vanessa, the class teacher of Class A and the two EAs, Sara and Alex. My working duties were mainly the same as the EAs, I would act as the extra adult in Class A who helped students with course works, daily duties such as changing for swimming classes and prepared class materials. Due to my research interest, I was assigned to all the inclusion sessions of students in Class A. I was able to observe most of the sessions. However, I missed some of the sessions due to short of staff and I was needed in School X.

The target school is School X and this school is an international special school in Hong Kong. The school is under a school organisation which is one of the largest providers of English international private schools in Hong Kong.

There is a total of 22 schools under the school organisation. Other than providing administrative and financial support to schools, it also determines main school policies and protocols. All the schools are highly involved and have frequent collaborations and school events together. School X started in the 1980s with only less than 10 students. Nowadays they house around 70 students with different disabilities, from physical to learning and behavioural disabilities. Students age from five to nineteen. There are three classes in the primary section, three in the secondary section and one class with students with severe physical disabilities. Each class size varies but none of the class has more than ten students. Students are assigned into different classes according to their age and ability. Students with similar age, ability, and disability are more likely to be put in the same class. There is one main class teacher in every class and two to four Education Assistants (EA). The number of EAs are mainly determined accord to the severity of the disabilities of students in the class.

As School X is a special school, inclusion sessions mainly occurred outside of School X. School Y is one of the key mainstream schools that partnered with school X to offer inclusion sessions for students from School X. Therefore, School Y was included as part of this study. School Y provides secondary education to 1,800 students age eleven to nineteen. Within School Y, there is a part of the school that is allocated for SEN students, the Learning Support Centre (LSC) where inclusion for students from School X mainly occurred.

2.2 Ethical Considerations

After reviewing ethical guidelines from the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK, 2012), there were nine guidelines that emphasis on the inform consents from participates and organisations. Integrity and accuracy on the data collection process and the reporting of findings are also stressed while avoiding plagiarism and conflict of interest of researcher are also pointed out by the guideline document. The procedures to ensure the ethical practice of the data collection will be discussed in this section while the trustworthiness issue regarding the study and the researcher position would be discussed in the later chapter of this

study. Regarding permission to collect observation data from students and School X, I obtained the consent from the vice-principle of School X and the class teacher of Class A. I offered to the vice-principle regarding issuing an inform consent to all the parents of students in Class A and she expressed that it was unnecessary. Regarding the anonymity of the school and the students, she stated I could release the school name and she emphasised only on using pseudonyms for students. After considering the identifiability of my informants and schools, I have decided to apply pseudonyms to all the schools and informants mentioned in this study.

All the observations were conducted under consent from all the informants. All staffs and students of School X and the LSC of School Y were aware of my position as a researcher and the observations as part of the data collection process of this study. If any of them expressed their refusal to participate in any part of the data collection process, I would not include any data related that informant in any of my field notes or interview transcripts. None of the informant deny in participation and therefore all the field notes and interview transcripts were included in this study. All the handwritten field notes and electronic copies of the field notes were kept under discretions and were destroyed after the data analysis process.

In respect of the interview procedures, I expressed my interest in interviewing eight key informants during the second week of June. All of them indicated their interest in participating in my interviews. Due to scheduling issues, six interviews were conducted. All six key informants were informed of the purpose of the study and understood that all the interviews were voluntary and unrewarded. Before the interviews, I asked permission to use my phone to record the interviews and explained that the recording would then be deleted from my phone and saved on a cloud drive which I am the only person who has access to. I also explained to all the interviewees that the recordings would be destroyed immediately after the study and I would be the only person to have access to all the recordings during the data analysis process. All the recordings were then transcribed by me and printed out for data analysis. There were also secondary hardcopy documents that were provided to me from staff in the target schools. I

have the sole access to all the printed materials. All electronic and hard copies of the transcripts are kept discreetly, and all the copies of the transcripts were destroyed after the study. To ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, all the transcripts were sent to the interviewees via email to review.

2.3 Qualitative Approach

The main approach of this research was a qualitative approach that followed the ethnographic guideline for data collection. As the purpose of this research was to understand the inclusion practice in the target school, "*Ethnography is the work of describing a culture*" (Spradley, 1980, p.3). The inclusive practices of target schools are viewed as a form of culture and therefore, the ethnographic approach could allow the use of thick descriptions to report the implementation of inclusion. With the use of thick descriptions, the practice of inclusion was described. In addition to describing a practice, as mentioned by Spradley (1980), "*The essential core of ethnography is this concern with the meaning of actions and events to the people we seek to understand.*" (p.5) Other than focusing on describing the practice, it was also important to look at the meanings and reasons behind the inclusion practices and underlying phenomena that are influencing people's actions and beliefs. Therefore, the ethnographic approach was adopted during the data collection process. Observation, locating key informants and interviewing key informants followed the ethnographic approach.

However, due to the nature of the internship, a compete ethnographic study was not able to be conducted as the position of the researcher was not fully adopted due to the internship job duties during my data collection period. Thus, observation data was not the main data source in this research unlike most of the ethnographic research. However, observation data was used for describing the environment of the school and to formulate interview questions. Ultimately, most of the data used during the analysis were from the interviews from key informants and secondary data and thus qualitative method would be more suited to describe this research.

2.4 Data Collection

2.4.1 Observations

I was assigned to Class A by the vice-principle and I spent my internship period in Class A working as an EA. In the first few days of my observation, I mostly stayed in the back of the classroom observing and was trying to understand the class routine. Once I understood the daily operation of the class, I started to participate more and was heavily involved in the class activities by the end of my second week in School X. I always had my notebook with me and would try to write down my field notes quickly as I was working at the same time. However, there are some circumstances I was unable to have the notebook which I would then write down the notes according to my memory after school. For example, during swim lessons as I was in the swimming pool with the students. Therefore, my field notes in School X were not always as detail as I would like it to be. There was total of 15 pages of jotted notes of Class A which was then tidied up and typed as field notes. The total time I spent in Class A was around 200 hours.

As I mentioned my interest in the inclusion practices, I was provided the opportunity to observe all the inclusion sessions of students of Class A. These inclusion sessions mainly occurred in School Y and I observed twenty-five lessons during my two-month period. I went to most of the inclusion lessons other than around seven lessons I missed due to my work duties in School X. There were also other unofficial inclusion sessions such as birthday parties of students in both School X and School Y. These sessions were also observed and taken notes of. During these lessons or sessions, Sara, the EA of Class A would always accompany students of Class A according to school regulations. Therefore, my role as an EA reduced and I had the opportunity to take up my role as a researcher and observed the lessons. Therefore, my field notes regarding inclusion sessions were more comprehensive and detailed comparing to my notes in Class A. There was total of 25 pages of field notes for inclusion sessions occurred in School Y and I spent around 40 hours in LSC of School Y.

According to Spradley (1980), the ethnographic research cycle consists of three observation steps. Starting from the descriptive observation follows by

focus observation and then selective observation, these three observations will continue until the end of the study and works as a cycle. My study applied this strategy with the start of my descriptive observing of School X. My focus observation occurred when I was assigned to Class A. However, descriptive observation of School X did not stop as Class A is still part of School X and I was still constantly observing incidents that happened outside of Class A. When I focused my observation to inclusion lessons of Class A students, I was conducting narrow observation which emphasised on the inclusive practice due to my aim of this study.

2.4.2 Informants

My student informants were students of Class A of School X and students in the LSC centre of School Y. There is a total of eight students in Class A and they aged from thirteen to seventeen. Nicholas, Theresa, and Yvonne were on the autistic spectrum and Ethan and Ayla had intellectual disabilities. Ada and Samantha were with general developmental delay, behavioural and emotional issues while Benjamin had selective mutism. Out of all eight students, only Ada, Ethan, Benjamin and Nicolas had inclusion sessions in LSC in School Y. Ada went to LSC the most often as she was on her transition period. She was going to start her new school year in LSC in School Y and therefore she started to attend more of the LSC class as part of her transition plan. Regarding students in LSC in school Y, as I do not official had any arrangement with School Y, therefore, I was only there as a supporting staff for inclusion sessions of Class A. I met with the students that attended the same classes with students from Class A during inclusion sessions. There were five main students that I mainly had classes with, and they are ranging from fifteen to eighteen years old. They are Lucas, Sam, Liam, Bruce, William, and Kelvin.

As for teachers and staff informants, I interacted mostly with the class teacher and EAs of Class A, the vice-principle of School X and six teachers who taught in inclusion sessions in LSC of School Y. During my first month of working in School X, I was searching for adult key informants who could provide native insights. According to Spradley (1979), locating key informants for

interviews should always consider their enculturation to the culture, current involvement, and adequate time. Therefore, I considered these factors and located eight main informants. Due to scheduling issues, only six informants were able to complete the interviews. All six informants had worked for more than two years in the schools with two of them worked more than fifteen years in the school.

2.4.3 Interviews

The six key informants who completed interviews were: The Education Assistants of Class A, Sara; The Class A teacher, Vanessa; The Vice-principal of School X, Catherine; The head of student development of School X, Carly; The Chinese teacher of LSC in School Y, Ms. Smith and the ASDAN teacher of LSC in School Y, Ms. Johnson. School personnel in School X were addressed by first names while teachers in School Y were addressed by last names as Mr. or Ms. Therefore, the aliases of the teachers were assigned according to the daily practices of School X and Y. All the interviews were conducted in June except for Ms. Johnson's interview which is conducted at the end of August when the new school year started. All of the interviews were conducted in School X and School Y. Four of the interviews were conducted in classrooms with students on-site while they were occupied with schoolwork and two of the interviews were conducted in the staff rooms of the schools. The language used during all the interviews was English with three of the interviewees speak English as mother tongue and three others speak Cantonese as their mother tongue. However, all of the interviewees use English as their medium for teaching and therefore, they are all very proficient in English. The duration of the interviews ranged from the shortest 23 minutes to the longest 46 minutes. All the interviews are then later transcribed in English and resulted in a total of 52 pages (Font is Times New Roman with 12 size and 1.5 line spacing). All the conversations were transcribed excluding pauses, intonation, and emotion of the interviewees.

The interviews were all semi-structured interviews with some themes set before the interviews. All the interviews started by asking the background of the staff and followed by questions that were related to the prepared themes. The

themes were inclusion meaning in personal perspective, how inclusion was explained and implemented in school level, challenges of inclusion implementation and other factors that affect the implementation of inclusion such as parents and socio-economic background of students, the example questions of each theme are as the following:

What does inclusion mean to you personally?
What does inclusion mean and how was it implemented in this school?
What are the challenges faced when inclusions are implemented?
Any other factors that affect the implementation of inclusion?
e.g. parents, private school, socio-economic background of students, etc…

The above are only example questions rather than set questions that were asked in every interview. As the interviews were informal conversations between me and the interviewees, the prepared themes and questions were merely there to support the interviews. All of the interviews followed the flow of the conversation and not all the themes were covered in all the interviews.

2.4.4 Documents and Secondary Data

Documents and secondary data were provided by staff members of School X. Both the class teacher of Class A, Vanessa and the head of student development, Carly, provided me with some documents. There was a student profile, a student inclusion timetable, a document of inclusion policy and a school calendar for my references. Total length of all the documents were 14 pages.

A student profile includes basic information regarding students such as name, age, nationality, and language(s). It also includes student strengths, interests, behaviours, areas of development and programme proposal (e.g. Inclusion). Along with the profile, a timetable for the inclusion of that student was also provided for my reference. This timetable was the one for the student him/herself for reference. I was also provided with a student inclusion placement which detailed the placements of all the students who were in the inclusion programme. The document includes names of the students, the mainstream school they were

going to, the class(es) or programme(s) they were attending in the mainstream school and responsible supporting staff for the student. I was also provided with a guide for "integration programmes" (as shown on the document) which was dated back in 2015 which consisted of introduction, procedures and various forms and checklists that should be filled when a student was participating in integration programmes. However, it was mentioned by key informants that they were in the process of creating a new guideline when data collection was conducted. A school calendar was also provided for my reference regarding school days, holidays and special events.

2.5 Data Analysis

The main analysis implemented was the thematic analysis. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), it is one of the most widely used analyses in qualitative research for the inductive approach of data analysis. It is a method that identifies, analysis and reports patterns within data which rooted from the constructivism epistemology (Vaismoradi, Turunen, & Bondas, 2013). Therefore, the focus of the analysis was to *"reflect reality and to unpack or to unravel the surface of reality"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.81) from the perspective of the informants. One of the main reasons to choose thematic analysis was due to its flexibility. As it does not depend on any pre-existing theories, it allows the inductive analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) that was needed in this current research as the aim of the research is to make sense of practices from the perspective of the informants. Therefore, thematic analysis was chosen as the data analysis method.

The process of data analysis lasted a total of four months from transcribing data to reporting. After the data was transcribed, I started with familiarise with the data by rereading all the material I had. After the initial stage, I started the manual preliminary coding by starting to write down general codes. For example, when looking at meanings of inclusion, any statement includes any direct or indirect describing of inclusion should be coded. Such as the positive definition of inclusion (what is inclusion), the negative definition of inclusion (what is not inclusion), positive and negative emotion expressed associated with inclusion,

practical definition of inclusion (e.g. academic, social, vocational, community events, mainstream school settings, etc.). Many of the codes regarding the meaning of inclusion were not found after the question "what inclusion means to you?". However, they were mostly found when key informants were describing a specific student or a case that described indirectly how they were defining inclusion in both practical and conceptual level.

After coding all the data manually, all the codes generated were written on a mind map which formed a visual presentation for organising similar codes and themes were generated. In the initial stage, there were less themes created. However, throughout the process of rereading the data and reanalysing existing codes and themes, more refined themes with fewer overlapping codes was resulted. For example, meanings of inclusion resulted in three themes which are conceptual, practical and successful outcomes. Some of the original codes such as "emotion related inclusion" were reorganised and were allocated under the theme of teachers' attitude. One example of the coding hierarchy is shown below in Table 1. It is an example hierarchy for the meanings of inclusion. The first level themes are conceptual, practical meaning of inclusion and successful outcomes of inclusion. In the second level under practical meanings, two themes were found which are academic and social practical meanings of inclusion. The third level of codes were three different types of practical meanings of inclusion in the social level which are recreational activities, social events, and PE, Art, and Music classes.

TABLE 1. Example of coding hierarchy

Meanings of inclusion		
First Level	Second Level	Third Level
a) Conceptual meanings		
b) Practical meanings		
	1) Academic	
	2) Social	
		i) Recreational Activities & Social Events *"Examples of social integration include joining recreational activity sessions, assemblies, concerts, project work sessions, excursions and discussion groups."* *(School guide, p.1)*
		ii) PE, Art and Music Classes *"Stacy is accessing a social placement. She goes for the more creative subjects so art or music …"* *(Carly, p.1)*
c) Successful Outcomes		

Subsequently, the reporting stage of analysis started to begin. Although the coding scheme was formed, there were some changes made to the themes and codes to ensure that the findings session followed a logical and systematic structure. By putting the coding scheme in writing, the process helped me to realise and discover overlapping codes and ensure that all the data that were reported are related closely to the purpose of this study. For example, there was a part of the interviewed that discussed the inclusion implementation in the UK as some

of the key informants worked in the UK. However, as these data were not related to the research question and thus were taken out from the findings session. After finishing reporting the result, I reviewed some of the past literature that studied inclusion implementation in Hong Kong to gain more sensitivity towards the issue. Then, the raw data was reread to ensure that there was no mistake with the coding scheme, or any subtle finding was overlooked.

Regarding the process of literature review during data analysis, there were contrasting views according to various studies (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tuckett, 2005). It was stated that the literature review process could enhance the sensitivity of the researcher which could allow research to notice subtle themes in the data (Tuckett, 2005). In contrary, Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested that the inductive approach of analysis should avoid literature review in the early stage of analysis as it could "narrow analytic field vision, leading you to focus on some aspects of the data at the expense of other potentially crucial aspects." (p.86) As suggested, as this current research heavily relied on the inductive approach and focus on the way of sense-making of key informants, reviewing literature should be avoided until the last stage of theme refinement. Reviewing literature acted as a step to ensure there was no subtle cue left out from the data and that the themes matched with previous research. Issues regarding the trustworthiness of the research will be continued in the discussion session.

After the initial inductive thematic analysis was conducted, theoretical analysis was conducted according to the themes found in the inductive analysis. Applying *Index for inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) to the findings, a secondary theoretical analysis was conducted to evaluate the findings according to the *Index for inclusion*. *Index for inclusion* is a tool to evaluate the inclusion practices of target schools according to three dimensions. The framework of index for inclusion were applied to the inductive findings and the inclusion practice in target schools were analysed.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Physical Environment of Target Schools

3.1.1 Surrounding and Outdoor Area of School X

The location of School X was positioned in a high-class residential district in Hong Kong. There were around ten primary and secondary schools located within walking distance to School X. Some of the schools in the same district were known for their academic excellence and were considered as renowned schools in the city. All the schools were built along a hill and on the top of the hill is School X and School Y. As it was an affluent neighbourhood, public transports connection to the district was quite limited. Many of the staff of the school had to take a taxi together from the nearest metro station to get to the school. I took a bus to school every day and the bus stop is right under the hill, next to a private residential estate. Summer in Hong Kong was really hot and even the walk to the school was only around ten minutes, walking uphill under the heat was still physically demanding. I would be covered in sweat by the time I reach School X. On my way, I would usually pass by the school buses of School X driving to the school. There was a total of four school buses of School X and most students would arrive school by school buses. Students who do not take the school bus usually go to school with their domestic helpers or being driven to school by drivers. I would sometimes cross paths with some of the students walking to school. However, during the two months, I had never seen a parent walking to school with their children, only one grandmother from my observation.

Walking up the hill reaching school X, I would first have to walk past the parting lot of School Y which was not a big parting lot, fitted around ten cars. Then, there was a gate blocking a driveway that was open most of the school time. However, one of the school staff would always be around the gate and non-school personnel would have to register before they can pass through. After the gate was the driveway which was immediately connected to School X. Along the driveway, there was a little planting area and an iron bar fence surrounding the school. On the other side of the driveway was a little outdoor playground in front

of the school building. There were two adjustable basketball stands located on one of the edges of the playground. The playground was around half of a standard basketball field and at the far end of the playground was the driveway which extended to School Y. Because of the driveway, the playground was not a perfect rectangular shape but more like a triangle. Surrounding the playgrounds were some pots of plants and benches which limit students from exiting the playground and the playground was the only outdoor space of School X.

3.1.2 Inside of School X

The entrance of School X was located next to the playground. The doors were locked and only staff with electronic keys and staff in the reception can open the door. During school opening time, the doors would stay open until all the buses had arrived and the principal and school staff would be waiting by the entrance and greet all the arriving students every morning. Opposite to the reception, there was a couch next to the entrance and many helpers would be seated there and waiting for students to get off school at around 2 p.m. every day. There was also an indoor hall right next to the reception which were mainly used for sports and theatre purposes. Next to the hall was the Sensation Cafe where students operated a small tuck shop and also acted as the staff lounge. Along the hallways there were wallboards that display photos of excellent students of the year, graduating students of the year and excellent works done by students such as writings or artworks. On the ground floor, there was also the art room, three primary classrooms and one classroom for students with severe physical disabilities which was housing two students. All the signs next to all the rooms specified the name of the room in both English and braille to ensure accessibility of the school. There was a total of four toilets on the ground floor, two were allocated for female and male staff respectively and two were allocated for female and male students respectively. The student toilets were disabled toilets which also included a changing room area in both toilets. Right beside the stair, there was another door which connects to School Y. This door was frequently used by students who were going to School Y for inclusion sessions. This door was always locked and required an electronic key to unlock it.

On the second floor, there were three secondary classrooms, library, gym area, home learning room, music room, therapy rooms, therapist offices, nurse room, vice-principal office and a small conference room for staff meetings. All the doors of the rooms were locked with passwords and only staff members knew the password. Classroom doors were usually open for easy access to students unless there was disturbance coming from the outside which then doors would be closed for students to concentrate. The gym area was located at the end of the hallway and as there not much space, some of the equipment were put in the hallway outside of the gym room. Due to safety, students would only be allowed to go to the gym area with adult supervision. Next to the gym area was the library and inside the library, there is a little space blocked by some panels which acted as the music room. There was no chair or table in the library and the floor is carpeted. Students usually seated on the floor when reading or using the library. Next to the library was the home learning room, there is a kitchen and laundry area in the home learning room. There was a dining table in the middle of the room and students could seat and enjoy their food after cooking classes. The therapist offices were located opposite the home learning room where the physical, speech, occupational therapists and their assistants worked. The door of the therapist room was always open, and students were usually welcome to go into the office and communicate with the therapists. Next to that was the vice-principal's office and the conference room. If the vice-principle was in the office, her door was usually open as well. The nurse office was generally closed but the nurse was usually inside the room. At the end of the other side of the hallway was the physical therapy room which was a padded room filled with different swings and cushions which allowed students to exercise different muscles and explore their sensations. There was a total of four toilets allocated on the hallway similar to the ones on the ground floor. Inside of the staff toilets, pictorial instruction of simple sign language hand gestures was stuck on doors of the toilet stalls. The wallboards next to the classrooms usually showed the course work of students of the current term and wall boards next to the therapy room shows practices related acceptable behaviours. There were also pictures of students in various events hanging alongside the hallway. As there were not many obvious

physical adjustments in the school for physically disabled students, I did not have the impression of being inside a special school when I was walking around the school. Students were able to roam quite freely around the school. The only restriction was the two doors that exit the school which was constantly locked throughout the day.

3.1.3 Class A

Class A was located on the second floor, the third classroom on the left. Each of the classroom was designed differently according to the needs of the students. For example, Class B usually accommodates students with behavioural problems and thus, was designed with many cubicles. I was told that it was to ensure students were not easily disturbed and distracted by other students in the class. Class A usually houses students with higher cognition functioning and therefore, was designed as open space. There was a total of three tables, two cubicles, and four computers as the general set up in Class A. The tables were usually located in the centre of the classroom and each table was surrounded by three to four chairs. Some of the chairs were specially customised chairs for specific students. The tables were C-shaped tables which allows one teaching staff to seat in the middle of the C-shape while students seat around the C-shape. The table surface was also a marker board that allows students and teaching staff to write on freely. During lessons, students usually would be divided into three groups, according to their ability, and then seated accordingly by the three tables. Vanessa, Sara and, Alex would then each take a table and help students with their course works as a focus group. On the side of the classroom, there were two cubicles which were designed for more concentrated individual work. There were four computers in the back of the classroom which would be used for classes and break times. Teaching staff had control over the usage of computers and students needed to ask permission before they can access the computer. By the door, there was a two-seated couch which is used quite freely by students when they wanted a place to relax. The teacher's table and her computer were located next to the smartboard, in front of the classroom. Class A was actually the first class to be equipped with a Smartboard as they were considered to be the highest

functioning class and thus, was trusted with the first smartboard as a trial to see if it should be implemented to the whole school. Next to the smartboard was a traditional whiteboard with students' daily schedules shown with pictures indicating the classes and times. Surrounding the class are some cupboards that were filled with various educational materials and sensory toys for students to play with during break time. There were eight iPads for students to use during classes which are controlled by the teaching staff. Students were not allowed to have free access to iPads. In general, Class A was a nice small classroom designed to fit eight to ten students. The resource was abundant in terms of the furniture in the classroom, educational materials and, electronic equipment.

3.1.4 School Y

School Y was located right next to School X. Both schools shared some of the driveways and a parking lot. However, as School Y was a mainstream secondary school and one of the oldest international schools in Hong Kong which was found in 1894. In the adjacent location, there was a foetus school of School Y, School Z, which is an international mainstream primary school that housed close to 900 students. The campus of School Y was quite impressive regarding its space and facilities. There was a standard football pitch as one of the outdoor fields of the school. Surrounding the football pitch was a nature trek for running. There was also a 25-meter swimming pool, two full-size tennis courts, three basketball fields, an indoor sports hall, and two gym rooms in the school. Other than sports facilities, there was also a very spacious dance studio surrounded by floor to ceiling windows overlooking the residential buildings around the school. There is also a theatre room on the same floor with a fully equipped sound and lighting system. There is a total of five block buildings in School Y while three of the buildings were with five floors and two of them were with three floors. All the buildings were very modern and well-designed. The main building was the exception as it kept the historical features of the building and the foyer of the school was very classical and had many display cabinets filled with hundreds of trophies from various student competitions.

As I was mainly worked in School X, therefore, I was not able to access many of the facilities in School Y. As I walked with students from Class A to School Y, I would sometimes have the feeling of getting lost in School Y as there were so many buildings and classrooms. School Y gave the impression of a classic prestige upper-class private school with its spectacular school facilities.

3.1.5 LSC in School Y

LSC (Learning Support Centre) was where Class A students attended most of their inclusion sessions. It was a space located around 200 meters away from School X and in the underground level of a small building in School Y. There was a total of six classrooms in the area designated for LSC students. When I was accompanying students from Class A to go to LSC for inclusion sessions, we would first go through the back door of the school, with Sara, as she was the one with the key to unlock the door. Then, we would walk pass a 100-meter alley between School Y and School X which would lead us to the open area next to the cafeteria of School Y. On our right, there was a concrete ramp leading to a lower level of a building which was the location of the LSC. Walking down the ramp, there was a little open space between the classrooms which was a semi-open area. As it was summer when I was there, the temperature could be quite hot in that area even with two wall fans working. There were some wall boards there along the area. However, as they are located in the open space, some of the boards looked quite old and dusty. The boards were displaying photos of LSC students participating in school events such as sports day and the Christmas party. There were also some plastic lockers with the name of LSC students on each of the lockers. Next to the lockers was a table tennis table which the students used quite often during break times and sometimes even during sports classes. There were two bigger classrooms on the left and three smaller classrooms on the right and a male and a female disabled toilet. At the end of the area, there was a planting area along the iron bar fence of the school. As it was a semi-open area in the lower ground level with plants surrounding half of the space, there were quite a lot of mosquitos around the area and inside the classroom and even a cockroach was found inside of a classroom.

Classrooms in the LSC were quite basic. They were similar to traditional classrooms with long tables and chairs. The biggest classroom would fit around twelve students with three students on each table. There was a whiteboard and a roll-up projector screen in the front of the classroom. There are some cabinets in the back of the classroom to store teaching materials and student works. Most of the academic classes would be conducted in the LSC area. However, for other classes that require other facilities, students would go to the corresponding part of the school to attend those classes. For example, during a performance class. The teacher would first gather the students in the LSC area, then they would proceed together to the dance studio or the theatre together as a class.

3.2 Meanings of Inclusion

Due to the divided definition of inclusion across different contexts, understand how inclusion is viewed and understood would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the inclusion in this context by the key informants. Therefore, the meanings of inclusion would be examined from three perspectives, conceptual definition, practical definition and successful outcomes of inclusion.

3.2.1 Conceptual Definition

All the key informants were asked questions regarding the meaning of inclusion during their interviews. After reviewing all interview scripts and school documents, inclusion was conceptualised in five perspectives. At the end of this session, Table 3 illustrated supporting quotes for the five perspectives.

Reaching One's Full Potential

"… providing equity of opportunity to maximise their [SEN students'] potential" (Integration programme guide, p.1)

One of the definitions of inclusion is that students are provided the opportunity and resources to reach their full potential. Phrases like "maximising

potential" or "reaching full potential" were frequently stressed by key informants regarding inclusion definition and it was also found in school documents. The emphasis was on that inclusion should be able to provide opportunities, support and learning environments that enable students to reach for their full potential.

Access

"For me, it means everyone has the chance to be part of everything … is open to everyone to try." (Carly, p.1)

The definition of inclusion was focused on access. The key informants suggested that inclusion should be about providing the opportunity to SEN students to access and participate in mainstream classrooms and other learning environments that are limited from SEN students. It focuses on the opportunity of access which inclusion should ensure that SEN students have an equal chance of participation as mainstream students. Therefore, inclusion was defined as the process of bridging the difference of access between SEN students and mainstream students.

Inclusion according to the ability of students

"[It] is true inclusion because we are looking at the ability and including them in the classroom with everyone else." (Ms. Smith, p.4)

There were also views regarding if inclusion should be practiced with the consideration of the ability of students. It was emphasised that students would be able to achieve the learning goals and feel included in the classroom when the abilities of both SEN and mainstream students were taken in consideration. It was also mentioned abilities of students should match with their inclusion placement, with less abled students, the LSC setting could be more suitable than mainstream classrooms. By physically placing an SEN student in a mainstream classroom with no regard f his/her learning outcomes was not defined as inclusion,

rather by ensuring the placement is the right fit for the SEN student both academically and socially, is considered as true inclusion, according to the key informants.

Human right perspective

"I think it [inclusion] is fundamental" (Catharine, p.3)

Inclusion was also mentioned on a human right level as it was viewed by the key informants as a basic human right which should be entitled by everyone and this view was not limited to SEN students or people with disabilities, it should be applied to the whole society as it focuses on embracing diversity, expend the lens to a broader concept than people with disabilities, to diversity. Therefore, inclusion was defined as a human right that emphasis on equal right and embracing diversity.

Changing societal views on people with disabilities

"[Inclusion] is about enabling others to see that [each person can make their contribution] and for us to lead the process of enabling that." (Catharine, p.4)

It was stated that inclusion was defined also as the process of society to view people with disabilities as capable and contributing people. This definition focuses on the conceptual changes that inclusion could bring to society. Inclusion was defined as a social movement that leads to the process of destigmatisation and empowering people with disabilities.

TABLE 2 Example quotes of the conceptual definition of inclusion

Reaching One's Full Potential
"I think it [inclusion] means that students are given proper support to achieve their best potential" (Ms. Johnson, p.2)
"Is make sure they [SEN students] are in a learning environment with peers with suitable level with them that can allow them to reach their full potential." (Carly, p.1)
Access
"[H]elping them access things that they can't access here [School X]." (Vanessa, p.2)
"It is not appropriate for them to come here [School Y] because they can't achieve, when you know they can't achieve and you still put them in the classroom, I don't think that is inclusion" (Ms. Smith, p.4)
"Inclusion is for special school kids and try to bridge them to learn more about, I guess blend in more with the mainstream." (Sara, p.1)
Inclusion according to ability of students
"It [inclusion] has to be according to ability or they can't succeed [academically]." (Ms. Smith, p.8)
"…who are more capable can go for inclusion and so then they won't feel so segregated." (Sara, p.1)
"It needs to be the right setting, like the learning support environment where the classroom is smaller, and they got sort of one to one direct teaching." (Vanessa, p.2)
Human Right Perspective
"I think is just including people who are different levels…" (Sara, p.1)
"Inclusion is about embracing diversity." (Catharine, p.4)
Changing Societal Views on People with Disabilities
"[Inclusion] is about empowering. …allowing each person to make their contribution." (Catharine, p.4)

3.2.2 Practical Definition

The practical definitions of inclusion will be discussed in the following session. It is essential to examine how inclusion was operationalised in the context to be able to truly understand how inclusion is practiced. According to interviews and school documents, inclusion was defined in two aspects, academic and social aspects. By having these two practical aspects defined according to the data, it would also be able to clarify the practical meaning of academic and social inclusion that will be mentioned later in the findings session.

Academic

Referring to the school guide of integration programme, Academic inclusion was defined as the following.

"Academic integration may involve closely adhering to accredited study in specific subject areas or with an agreed reduced commitment to coursework and/or exam." (p.1)

According to Carly, heard of student development in School X, academic inclusion is also defined as,

"There are different types of inclusion here. For our most able students, academic students, they have inclusion opportunities in other schools under the same school organisation. For example, Mitchell has an [academic] inclusion placement in a mainstream school … he accesses science, math, and literacy but much higher level than his peers here are at." (p.1)

According to Vanessa, students could also have access to academic inclusion when the subject was not offered in the classroom.

"… [inclusion] is helping them access things that they can't access here. Especially in this school. For example, I can't offer Chinese to Benjamin. I don't have that skill …" (p.2)

Referring to the above data, it was mentioned that academic inclusion aimed for students who have the higher academic ability. Since their ability had

excessed the curriculum of their SEN settings, the aim of academic inclusions is to provide opportunities for students who had the academic ability to achieve more by providing placements in a more advance learning environment. Therefore, the practical definition of academic inclusion focuses on students who are more capable academically and provide them with placement in LSC and/or mainstream schools to access more advance and diverse academic subjects that were not offered in the SEN settings.

Social

According to the school guide for integration programme, social inclusion was defined as the following,

"Examples of social integration include joining recreational activity sessions, assemblies, concerts, project work sessions, excursions, and discussion groups." (p.1)

According to Carly's interview,

"Stacy is accessing a social placement. She goes for the more creative subjects so art or music … She goes for the purpose of able to be among mainstream peers and learn how to act socially and make friends." (p.1)

Sara also expressed similar views during her interview, she mentioned

"…[Ethan's]mum only wants for the social aspect, not so much for academic. …that's why he is in social inclusion. [PE and art classes were his inclusion programme]" (p.5)

Therefore, recreational activities and social events are considered the main forms of social inclusion according to the document of School X. However, PE, music and art classes were also defined as part of social inclusion by both Carly and Sara. With the two examples provided, both students were categorised in the social inclusion programme when they were participating in PE, music, and art subjects. Although these classes were school lessons during school time, as fewer

academic skills (such as reading and writing) were required to participate, they were considered as part of social inclusion.

3.2.3 Successful Outcomes of Inclusion

During the interviews, many key informants mentioned successful outcomes of inclusion while they were defining inclusion. Positive results of inclusion were stated as part of the definition of inclusion. Key informants described the benefits of inclusion in various aspects of SEN students. Therefore, the findings of successful outcomes of inclusion as part of the definition of inclusion are presented according to five perspectives, academic, emotional, social, vocational and impact on society.

Academic

From the academic perspective, successful inclusion outcome was defined as understanding the potential and strengths of individual students and provide a suitable placement that would further develop their strengths with adequate supports provided to ensure effective learning in a mainstream school environment.

"…he is really good at music. He did his GCSE [UK academic qualification] music, he got a B or something which is good. But he wouldn't be able to do a IB [international academic qualification] music for example because he doesn't have the ability to do independent research or write a paper." (Ms. Smith, p.6)

It was also mentioned without the appropriate syllabus and qualification, SEN students would not be able to achieve the learning goal which was gaining the qualification in the above example. Therefore, ensuring the students studied a qualification with suitable assessments would be one of the factors that contribute to successful academic inclusion.

"… they are in this [mainstream] class or they sat at the back, they don't learn anything, they don't understand. That's not inclusion, … No, it needs to be the right setting, like the learning support environment where the classroom is smaller, and they got sort of one to one direct teaching." (Vanessa, p.2)

From the above quote, it highlighted the importance of taking the academic ability of SEN students into consideration and matching it with a suitable learning environment where SEN students could participate and learn equally with other classmates in that learning environment. It was stated that without a suitable environment, SEN students would not be able to perform any learning from that environment.

"Sometimes their [LSC students] abilities are so wide, without help, without resource, is really hard to manage. I could have somebody that's fluent and somebody who don't speak any Chinese and that is very difficult." (Ms. Johnson, p.5)

This also emphasised the importance of support in order to achieve successful outcomes from inclusive education. As the academic ability of students could vary, support is one of the most essential elements for an effective learning environment.

Emotional

The emotion of students was mentioned very often when successful inclusion outcomes were discussed. Emotion aspects of students were explained regarding the adverse effect of inclusion, the self-esteem of SEN students and the effects of the special school environment in helping students with emotional issues.

"He has to put so much work, he was so stressed. He got to face that result and he got to face that piece of paper that telling him the grade he got. That's defeating." (Ms. Smith, p.8)

According to the above statement, successful inclusive education takes into account the emotional wellbeing of students as well as the academic ability of the student. Placement in a mainstream classroom could be stressful for SEN students. If the placement was mismatched, it could lead to adverse results to students' self-esteem and mental health.

"The reason why she came to us mainly is that her anxiety level was so high that she was not able to learn in a [mainstream] classroom environment. So for here [School X], they come … and get everything sorted and deal more with her social-emotional side of things and then we are getting her to the point where she is ready to learn and ready to be part of the environment [mainstream classroom]." (Vanessa, p.9)

One of the other aspects of emotion of students was if students were not coping in mainstream classroom emotionally, by allocating them in a special school environment where the learning environment is more relaxed, it could act as a transition period where students have the time and space improve emotionally and behaviourally and gradually adapt to the mainstream classroom again.

Social

Social inclusion is one of the main focus of inclusion which is the peer interaction between SEN students and mainstream students. Successful social inclusion could contribute to building social skills and even create social identities for SEN students.

"… [Class A] they are a lovely class, but they are not the high functioning kids, socially they are not, they are mainly isolated, isolated play. And Ada really craves that social interaction, but she wasn't getting it from anyone here [School X]." (Vanessa, p.9)

This statement stressed the issues encountered by SEN students who have a higher social ability. As they were situated in a special school environment,

their peers might not be able to provide that social interaction needed to develop social skills, sense of community and belonging. Therefore, successful social inclusion should take into account the social abilities of the students and provide the right settings for social skills to develop.

"She has got the social identity. She feels like she is part of the group, the learning support community [LSC]. Some of her social development comes from her peers [in LSC] … they need it to come from each other if they are able to process that." (Vanessa, p.2)

With inclusion, students were able to place in a peer group with other students who have similar social functioning which could be instrumental to the development of social skills and a sense of belonging. It was explained in the above statement that an SEN student was able to gain social interaction and create a social identity during her inclusion sessions which were one of the successful social inclusion examples mentioned by teachers.

Vocational

Effective inclusion extends to the outside of the school and into the community. It was mentioned that successful inclusion should continue in higher education or workplace for SEN students.

"… who is very high on the autistic spectrum. He is non-verbal and he doesn't read. And as his mum said, he is the perfect confidential shredder because you can give him anything to shred and he can't read. He can't talk about it, but he loves shredding and he will shred hours and hours and end. So, we have been looking for a vocational placement for him after he graduates and just one hour a week, would augment his life plan. It would give him some meaningful. He loves work placement." (Catherine, p.5)

It was argued that SEN students with high severity of disabilities could contribute to society in their unique way, in the above case, was being a confidential shredder who shreds confidential documents for companies. Due to the nature

of his disability, he would be fully capable of the job placement. It was also mentioned that the student enjoyed work placements. Having a work placement for him even one hour a week would provide purpose to his life. Therefore, successful inclusion should also take into account the vocational aspect of students and ensure that the inclusion process continuous after they leave basic education and have a smooth transition to vocational training or placements.

Impact on society

Successful inclusion should benefit more than just SEN students, it should also benefit the whole school, the community or even the whole society.

"That's also a very nice opportunity for the [mainstream school] students. So it has that kind of reverse inclusion as well." (Carly, p.2)

Reverse inclusion was mentioned as mainstream students learn to interact and socialise with SEN students. When inclusion occurs, mainstream students also benefit from learning about diversity and acceptance. By providing the opportunity, it normalises the concept of SEN students and provides the opportunity for understandings and even friendships to form. According to Vanessa, *"[It] is that lack of understanding which leads to ignorance." (p.5)* Therefore, by providing the opportunity for understanding, it could reduce the stigmatisation towards people with disability.

"It is encouraging more organisation to consider what our students can offer." (Catherine, p.5)

Vocational placements could also affect how organisation in society view people with disabilities. By providing the opportunity for SEN students to work in organisations could provide these students a chance to demonstrate that they are also capable people. In addition to enabling SEN students, it also could alter societal views on people with disabilities as able and contributing people.

Therefore, successful inclusion benefits more than the disabled community, it also benefits society as a whole to become a more acceptant society which celebrates diversity and respect every individual.

3.3 Inclusion in Practice

This section continues with how inclusion was practiced in various ways. As there were three clear levels of the school environment, School X, LSC in School Y and mainstream schools (School Y and other mainstream schools), the practice of inclusion was highly related to the interactions between these 3 levels of school environment. Therefore, this section will be reported according to different levels and how the inclusive was implemented in these schools.

3.3.1 School X

LSC inclusion

Inclusion that occurred in School X mainly had two placements, either LSC of School Y or to other mainstream schools. For inclusion in LSC, there were mainly two types, academic and social inclusion. For academic inclusion, students of School X would go to LSC to attend more advance subjects that were not offered by School X. Academic inclusion was most frequent for a student in School X who was on the transition period. A transition period was offered to students in School X who would be transferred to LSC full time in the next academic year. Ada in Class A was on the transition period and therefore had the highest frequency of inclusion sessions of all the students in School X (according to the student inclusion schedule). According to the inclusion schedule of Ada, she had around five inclusion lessons and two social sessions where she spent in LSC every week. As LSC was only for year ten (14 years old) or higher, other students in School X that are younger than year ten would attend mainstream school inclusion. Therefore, only another student in Class A from School X, Benjamin, goes to Chinese lesson as it was not offered at all in School X. He would go for one lesson per week.

For social inclusion, the PE class of LSC was offered to students in School X to join. Ethan in Class A went for PE lessons once every two weeks in LSC. According to Vanessa, Class A teacher, she planned to have five students in Class A to go for PE inclusion in the next academic year. Therefore, the number of students who will be going to LSC for social inclusion could be higher in the coming year. Class A students were also invited to attend some of the social events in LSC. During my stay in Class A, there were two events in which the whole Class A went to LSC. One of the occasions was a birthday party of a student in LSC, Liam. All of Class A students were invited to LSC for some food and social time for around half an hour after lunchtime. Vanessa, Sara, and Alex (two EA of the class) came with all the students and also participated in the party. The second event was a dance performance of LSC which Ada was part of the performance. Therefore, Class A was invited to the theatre of School Y to watch the last dress rehearsal of the performance.

For an inclusion session to start, class teachers of school X are responsible for initiate the request and process. For Ada's case of transitioning, Vanessa initiates the process by contacting ARP (Additional Resource Provision) which was consisted of specialists and educational staff from the school organisation. The process was described by Vanessa as, "*I proposed an ARP this time last year for Eva. She has had her first panel and observation at term one. … Once it goes on with the ARP panel, these 20 people on it from different schools and settings and head of inclusion and the educational psychologist and they sit around and discuss and basically they decide as a term the right provision." (p.8)*

The team from ARP observed Ada in Class A and in LSC and evaluated her level of needs and later decided Ada was best suited in LSC and therefore launched the transition programme for Ada to gradually transition to LSC.

Mainstream school inclusion

Regarding academic inclusion in mainstream schools, there were four students in School X going to other mainstream schools for academic inclusion. All the placements of the four students were in three different mainstream schools which were located more than half an hour drive from School X, all the transports to the mainstream schools and coming back to School X were provided to students by School X. All of them would go for half a school day per week to attend math lessons and one student also attend English lessons. All the students in academic placements in mainstream school also had social inclusion sessions on the same day they were in school for academic lessons. They were arranged to access lunchtime or playtime in mainstream school classrooms.

Social inclusion to mainstream schools mainly had three types, individual student access, class access, and social events. For individual students, one student had a placement in a mainstream school for art lessons, playtime and lunchtime for half a school day every week. There were three students provided with a PE placement in School Z, (foetus primary school of School Y) All the three students had one PE class every week. For class-level inclusion, one class (Class B) in School X would go for a programme named "Book Buddies" in School Z. According to the interview with Carly,

"… the whole class go over and involve with a book buddy activity. So, they go once a week and have a class with School Z and that class we have got 8 students rotated around so each student pairs with a Class B student and they go for a meeting session and then each term they swapped. So, every child in School Z has a chance to be a buddy with students in the Class B." (p. 2)

Therefore, the social inclusion programme was cooperation between a class in School X and a class in School Z which pair up students in Class B with a student in School Z as a book buddy. They would have the session in the library of School Z and students in pair would read together. As there were only eight students in Class B, students in School Z would rotate each term to make sure each of student in School Z had a chance to participate and students in Class B got to meet with more mainstream students.

There were two special school social events I observed during my observation period. One of the events was a dance showcase of the school organisation where all the 22 schools under the school organisation sent different teams of students to perform various kinds of dance performances. Eight students of School X were chosen to perform a small dance number in the performance. Their parents were invited to watch the performance. As it was an evening event, other students in School X watched the video recording of the performance. Another event was an art exhibition that included artworks from the 22 schools under the school organisation. All six classes in School X created one artwork each and were exhibited among all the other artworks in the exhibition. All the classes of School X attended the exhibition which was in a mall in the city centre.

Regarding launching academic and social inclusion programme in School X, Class teachers had to take the initiative to suggest a placement when they noticed there was a need that could not be met for that student in School X. Then, a meeting was called between the class teacher and head of student development to discuss a suitable placement and the IEP goals of that student. According to Carly, head of student development in School X, she described as "*So it will start with a discussion with the class teacher and the class teacher will then talk with me and then we will talk about what is the student's strengths and areas that will benefit from an inclusion placement and what sorts of placement they could access. Also, need to take in consideration their behaviour, their IP [Individual Plan] goals …" (p.2).* After that would be matching the need of the student and the availability of placements. If a placement was successfully found, then a review meeting would be conducted at the end of the placement to discuss the effectiveness of placement and the follow-up programme for the next term.

3.3.2 LSC of School Y

Inclusion for LSC students was focused on the School Y mainstream classrooms. As I do not have access to these sessions, all the information was gathered from interviews with teachers of LSC, Ms. Smith, and Ms. Johnson. Vanessa was a teacher in LSC for two years before she became the Class A teacher of School X

two years ago. She was able to provide some of the insight regarding the inclusion practice in LSC. Ms. Smith had been working as an LSC teacher for 17 years while Ms. Johnson had been working as a mainstream and LSC teacher for 15 years.

Inclusion in LSC was separated into two types. LSC was the learning support service for more severe SEN students while another type was individual support. According to an interview with Ms. Johnson, she described LSC as following,

"So, then we have a small class like this [two students were in the class, working on their schoolwork]. With three to four students and they will do what they can access. For some students, Chinese exam for example will do no qualification at all. They just have the experience of it. Others will do a few years and do the foundation certificate for secondary school." (p.2)

She then described the support of individual needs as below,

"So if it[students in individual support] is level one [of the three-tier system], the class teacher differentiates and if it is a level two, some of them may only do one language and when others do language, they might get support from LSC [pull out session]. Depends on what the student needs, just giving them what they need. … So, if they need more time, give them more time. If they need an explanation, give them different ways of explanations." (p.4)

From the above quotes, the main difference of students in individual needs and in LSC was their placement. Students in individual needs were placed in a mainstream classroom while students in LSC were placed in a small separated classroom with EA support. Curriculum wise, students in individual needs were following the mainstream students' curriculum which they still have to participate in the matriculation examination while LSC students were provided with different options for examinations and certifications.

Regarding social inclusion, tutor time was a session between teachers and a group of students from different years. They would gather in a classroom which is a time for the tutor teacher and students to socialise. All of the students were

assigned to a tutor group. Therefore, students in LSC would be included in these tutor times which last 20 minutes per session every day. According to Ms. Smith, tutor time was "*… the time to socialise and you don't need to have that academic ability. So, they* go *in, they can socialise, and they know other people." (p.9)* Other than tutor time, LSC students were also welcomed to join school sports teams. One of the examples was also mentioned by Ms. Smith,

"*Like Sam and Lucas [students in LSC], they join the school running club. I know they both do Frisbee. When they get to represent the school during competitions, they [Sports Coaches] see their skills with everyone else in the team so let's say Lucas isn't as good as the others so he didn't get picked [for the school team]. Sam did get picked." (p.8)*

They usually underwent training with the mainstream students and If they were qualified to be in a school sports team, they would have the chance to participate in competitions representing the school. Therefore, there are mainly two opportunities for LSC students for social inclusion. Tutor times were more regular and accessible for all the LSC students while sports teams were dependant on the interests and abilities of students.

3.3.3 School Y and Other Mainstream Schools

Inclusion was not a single direction in School X where SEN students participate in the mainstream school environment. Inclusion was also possible to be practiced in the other direction as mainstream students go to School X and initiate the interaction between SEN students and mainstream students. According to the interpretation by Vanessa, "*But then for other schools, inclusion also means collaborating, so having events where we invite other people." (p.3)* During my observation period, I observed four occasions where mainstream students came to School X. The first occasion was Math Day. Math Day was an event created by students of School Y as six groups of students came up with different types of Math games. The event was located in the indoor hall of School X and there were the six math games was hosted by School Y students. All the classes of School X took their turn of going to the hall and participated in the games with guidance from students from School Y. There was another occasion where a class of students from

School Y made some sensory toys as part of a school project. They brought the toys from School Y to Class A for students in Class A to test the toys and give them feedback about the toys. All the students in Class A tested all 3 types of toys and talked with students from School Y regarding what they liked and do not like about the toys.

Other than the above two occasions, there was a drama performance by some students from a mainstream international school from the same school organisation. All the students of School X gathered in the hall and watched the performance. Other than the performance, the students of the mainstream school stayed to interact with students of School X in the sensation cafe and also in some of the classrooms. The last occasion was a tour that was suggested by Vanessa which was a tour of School X. As Ada was going to transfer to LSC of School Y, she was participating in some of the tutor times in School Y. The teacher and students that were in Ada's tutor group came to and paid a visit to School X where Ada acted as the guide and showed them around School X. According to Vanessa, the purpose of such a visit was to *"… try to break down the barriers for staff members. Get new staff members here just try and get a tour around and see. Just make it [School X] a less scary environment…" (p.5).*

3.4 Teachers' Attitudes

Teachers are a critical factor for inclusion implementation. Therefore, attitudes of teachers are examined regarding their own agency towards implementing inclusion, the attitude of mainstream teachers towards inclusion and the trustability of teachers from parents and school management.

3.4.1 Attitudes of key informants

The attitude of education staff would focus on how they felt in implementing various types of inclusion. Question regarding attitude was not asked during the interviews. However, from descriptions of inclusion by the key informants, the connotation of the descriptions provided some insights into their attitude towards inclusion. Supporting quotes are presented in table 2.

Positive attitude towards implementing inclusion

As inclusion placements are initiated by teachers, their attitude towards inclusion is crucial to the implementation of inclusion. All of the key informants felt quite capable, confident and positive in implementing inclusion. The description regarding the implementation of inclusion was generally positive.

"… I do have these skills and I can do this [inclusion]." (Carly, p.6)

With the above statement, it represented the views of key informants and their beliefs in inclusion and having the capability to implement inclusion. Many of the identified with the value of inclusion and acknowledged their ownership of agency in implementing inclusion. High agency of key informants was observed as they all expressed assertion regarding the changes they could make through practicing and advocating for inclusion. In fact, most of them acted as proponents for inclusion.

Advocates for inclusion

"I guess my personal philosophy is to find something that I could contribute in terms of my role, my professional working role. So, where I can make a little den, little mark in the society … and special education was the one I choose" (Catherine, p.4)

This statement was evidence for her roles in advocating for inclusion. With reference to table 3, more examples of SEN teachers and administrators acting as the proponents for inclusive education could be identified. According to the interviews, all of the key informants from School X stated participating in various degrees of promoting inclusion to mainstream teachers and the community. It was shown that educational staffs in School X went beyond merely identifying with the value of inclusion and practicing it, they also undertook the responsibility of advocating for inclusion.

Positivity towards the outcome of inclusion

"Let's say for example Ada, definitely inclusion, it has helped her a lot." (Sara, p.2)

They also expressed their appreciation and excitement regarding successful inclusion cases such as improvements of students and successful inclusions programmes. During the interviews, all of the key informants recognised various degrees of success in inclusion programmes and how SEN students, mainstream students, sand mainstream teachers had benefited from it.

TABLE 3. Example quotes of the teachers' attitudes

Positive attitude towards implementing inclusion
"If the belief is there, the will is there. You can make anything happen." (Catherine, p.1)
"I would say most teachers in this school are keen for inclusion." (Vanessa, p.11)
Advocates for inclusion
"So I think hopefully what I like to do is try to break down the barriers for staff members. [between School X and School Y]" (Vanessa, p.5)
"I think what needs to be happened is those people [mainstream teacher] who has been involved [with inclusion], really need to share their experiences and share their stories and other people could be like, maybe I will try that next year because I heard it went really well and maybe I want to try that." (Carly, p.6)
Positivity towards outcome of inclusion
"… they[mainstream teachers] are really excited to have our kids in … and the kids [mainstream students] are really excited to have John [student in School X] in school." (Carly, p.3)
"We see how amazing the students are and how much they flourished." (Vanessa, p.5)

3.4.2 Trustability and autonomy of teachers

Trust is an important element for enables teachers to utilise their professional knowledge and exert their autonomy in classrooms and make educational decisions. Regarding the autonomy of teachers, there was positive responses from key informants in the aspects of pedagogy in their classrooms. However, all of them stated significant concerns regarding the lack of trust from parents.

Autonomy from School

Teachers generally expressed receiving a high degree of autonomy from school. It was evident that teachers were able to make pedagogical decisions for their classroom teaching.

"Researcher: But I remember we were in this ICT [Information and Communication Technologies] lesson and there was two curriculums and you mentioned that one is too difficult and then you switch to ASDAN [curriculum for SEN students].

Ms. Smith: Yes. But then that was in my classroom and I can control that."
(p.2)

From the above example, it presented the degree of freedom teachers with pedagogical decisions in the classroom. The autonomy of the teacher was high regarding academic decisions within the classroom. They have the autonomy to decide regarding the choice of examinations, curriculums, and duration according to different students' abilities. According to Ms. Johnson, *"With the students, I do have a bit of say about how long I will take." (p.2)* It provided another example of the autonomy that teachers had regarding their freedom in pedagogical decisions

"As long as we give them [school management] the rationale, evidence and research to show them we should do that, in general, they do say yes." (Ms Smith, p.10)

Furthermore, it was stated that autonomy was provided to teachers on the grounds that research and rationale were provided to the school to justify their pedagogical decisions and adjustments. It revealed that there was some level of a monitoring system and teachers were not provided with an extremely high level of freedom without any accountability.

Lack of trust from parents

Although the school provided the teacher with autonomy, all the key informants voiced issues regarding distrust from parents. One of the cases mentioned by Ms. Smith was very vivid regarding describing issues of distrust from parents. The case was described by her as the following.

"Parents want him to self-study for science last year, GCSE. But he already got a BTEC which is equivalent to GCSE. We explained to the parents and because parents never heard of that, he didn't accept. He said, no, no, no, I want him to do GCSE science. … Because BTEC focus on course work which means they don't have to seat in an exam. In that sense, we are differentiating and let them achieve but no, no, we want him to do GCSE cause university in the States wouldn't recognise BTEC. They also want him to do GCSE English and we said is not going to do in one year. Mainstream students need two years to do it and you are telling us Bruce can do it in one year? And then, another subject was math. He did Math, but he got a E so parents want him to get a better grade. So, they ask him to retake, plus all the other subjects that he is doing, and parents want him to do these GCSE subjects and we know that is not going to turn out well. They even go to the principal and complaining to the principal that teachers are stopping my son to achieve and at the end, principal came back and said if they [parents of Bruce] are going to be responsible for all the home learning, teaching, self-studying … So, he [father of Bruce] said he is going to teach Bruce at home science. Results: U for English, still E for maths and G for sciences and I feel so sorry for Bruce." (p.7)

From the above case, issues regarding parents with unrealistic expectations and distrust of teachers were highly evident. The adaptation was made according

to the professional judgement of the teacher to accommodate the needs of the student. However, parents were highly determined for that student to study for specific qualifications who did not have a realistic evaluation of the academic ability of their child which led to the dispute between the teacher and the parents. The conflicts were escalated and were resulted in the hands of school management. However, it was shown that parents had the ultimate decision regarding the education plan of their child. This case also provided some understanding of the relationship between teachers and parents. As described by Ms. Smith, *"Because this [School Y] is a private school, then you are kind of not really just a teacher/parent, is more, I am not sure this is how I should say that, is a more client/customer." (p.5)* Private school was mentioned as one of the factors that altered the relationship between parents and teachers where teachers had less control and authority.

Besides the above cases, the distrust of parents was mentioned in other interviews with key informants.

"Researcher: Do you get any pressure from the parents' side?
Carly: Also, that, so much." (p.6)

"So, this year he has been a part of that PE routine, but it has been challenging for him. … he is not ready for that yet. So next year maybe something like book buddies. … And then the parents were like what about math and literacy, but their expectations are not realistic." (Carly, p.7)

From the interview with Carly, it suggested that parents did not take advice from the teacher and insisted on academic inclusion when it was considered inappropriate for the student. According to Vanessa, *"Academic excellence is what most parents strive for …" (p.2)* which could be the cause for the issue. Therefore, when the expectation of parents was not managed, conflicts occur between parents and teachers. One of the reasons for the conflicts between parents and teachers was described as following.

"Because for a few of them [parents] it takes many many years to come to terms to what happen to their child and for some of them is a long grieving process or acceptant period" (Vanessa, p.7)

The expectation of these parents may not be realistic as they have not fully understood or accepted the disabilities of their children and their limitations. With parents unwilling to accept and recognise the disabilities of their children, that could be one of the causes of conflicts between teachers and parents.

"I mean sometimes is really hard when you think they [parents] don't have their child best interest in heart but then is also about being mindful that they are going through these grieving processes. "(Vanessa, p.7)

Nevertheless, Vanessa emphasised teachers should be sympathetic to parents and be aware of different parents have various ways and time of grieving and accepting which could be the source of conflicts between parents and teachers. By being mindful and accepting of how different parents react, it could relieve some of the tensions between the two parties.

3.4.3 Attitudes of mainstream teachers

The attitude of mainstream teachers was reported as one of the biggest challenges regarding implementing inclusion. As placements in mainstream schools are acquired by cooperating with mainstream teachers, their attitude vastly affects the possibility of placements in mainstream schools.

"Is definitely not easy, getting inclusion for our students in other mainstream school or learning support centre is hard cause they [mainstream teachers] are not willing to take the students cause they don't think is their job. A lot of teachers don't want that. They just think [it] is going to be hard work, is going to be more difficult for them." (Vanessa, p.4)

It was mentioned teachers in School X struggled to obtain placements in mainstream school as mainstream teachers had a negative attitude towards accepting SEN students in their classroom. They believed that teaching SEN students is not part of their job duties and therefore they do not welcome SEN students in their classroom. Sara illustrated below an incident that she observed during an inclusion session she attended with an SEN student in School X.

"And some [mainstream] just don't care. As long as you don't interrupt …

A lot of them will just be like do your own thing. … whatever we [mainstream class] do, has nothing to do with you [SEN student]. ok. As long as you don't interfere with our plan, that's fine. Some teachers are like that." (Sara, p.10)

She described the situation during the inclusion session where mainstream teachers had a negative attitude towards SEN students. The SEN student was not provided with any attention from the teacher and was even described as an interference. Therefore, the attitudes of mainstream teachers highly affect the quality of the inclusion sessions.

"… having a teacher that hasn't been with us and if they would like to be involved, then they are going to be told that you are going to have these School X students in the class and that's really difficult. Maybe they don't feel equipped to support our students and maybe they feel is more work and maybe they feel they are not trained to help with the behaviour management or things like that…" (Carly, p. 3)

One of the reasons that contributed to negative attitude towards inclusion among mainstream teachers was the lack of agency in teaching SEN students. The feeling of lack of skills, time and training from mainstream teachers were mentioned from the statement. As mainstream teachers did not believe they had the competence to teach SEN students, it caused the negativity to form around inclusive sessions and thus led to discouragement of SEN students in their classroom.

"… there's a lot of negativity around with School X. … Teachers predominately don't understand this school. … Somebody actually said to me, "oh you have an easy time teaching there because they just sit and colour." Is that lack of understanding which lead to ignorance. If you don't understand the students and you don't understand what we do and how can you try and have an inclusive environment and that's why some teachers just say no." (Vanessa, p.5)

The lack of understanding of School X and SEN students from the mainstream teachers could be one of the reasons that cause the negative attitudes towards School X and SEN students. As mainstream teachers do not have any experience with SEN students nor special schools, the unfamiliarity caused doubts and negative emotion

It was mentioned that mainstream teachers had inaccurate perception regarding the ability of SEN students and the pedagogical practices in special schools. As the result, mainstream teachers were reluctant to accept SEN students and lead to the declining inclusion placement in their class.

"They don't think is their job to teach these kids who are in private school. We just teach the elite. That's a big attitude issue and I can fully see it." (Vanessa, p.11)

It was also mentioned some mainstream teachers were unwilling to teach SEN students as they do not consider that as part of their job duty. As the admission standard of international schools in Hong Kong are extremely high, most of the students in international schools are academic elites and usually come from a high socio-economic background, some of the mainstream teachers possess the attitude of unwillingness of teaching SEN students as they believe they should only teach elites if they work in international schools which were mentioned as an attitude problem by Vanessa.

However, there were some positive cases mentioned regarding mainstream teachers and their attitude towards SEN students.

"Really great feedback even though the kids [students in School X] that went, some of them got it really well, some of them think that they are challenging but his teacher said that is it really good for me because you forget when you work in Hong Kong in an international school, in an private school, you forget you work in a bubble. You forget that if I work in the UK, maybe I have kids like this in my class, mainstreams class for me, selfishly. They [mainstream students] have a great time and they got a lot from it." (Carly, p.6)

With teachers that participated in inclusion programmes, they had positive feedback regarding the programme. The above case was about how a mainstream teacher described private internationals schools as "bubble" which metaphorically described a classroom with only elite students. The phrase "you work in a bubble" also refers to the lack of opportunity to teach in an ordinary classroom where students with various abilities usually study in the same classroom. Therefore, he described the inclusion programme as a great opportunity to teach an "ordinary classroom" with various learning needs of students. In addition to the benefit to the teacher, his class was provided with the opportunity to interact with SEN students which was a learning experience of embracing diversity.

The negativity towards SEN students was more evident in School X compared to the LSC in School Y. According to Ms. Smith,

"LSC students to mainstream [push in] class I think is easy enough because people are flexible and subject teachers are flexible. If there's issue, they will flag it up and if you say can they join, if you have evidences to show that, they normally will just say yes." (p.4)

It was suggested that the inclusion process between LSC and mainstream classes was easy and flexible which is vastly different from the inclusion case in School X. It was mentioned that SEN students in LSC could easily join mainstream classes and mainstream teachers were described as flexible. It could be

explained by the negative impression on the special school and its students mentioned by Vanessa and Carly earlier in their interviews.

3.5 Obstacles to Inclusion

3.5.1 School Management and Inclusion Policies

School Management was mentioned as one of the obstacles by key informants to implement inclusion. It was mentioned that due to the change in school policy, it changed the special school environment.

"But the learning support [LSC] teaches are really fantastic, is just the management. That's how I would say the issue is but they [LSC teachers] are really caring and supportive and they do always say that they love to take students to do more lessons with them but when we asked, the head just say no. " (Vanessa, p.5)

The above quote mentioned inclusion placement was declined according to the decision of the school management team instead of LSC teachers. Although LSC teachers welcome School X students, school management would overrule the decisions of LSC teachers and decline placements of School X students. The reason behind declining School X students accessing LSC could be explained by the following quote.

"*The school organisation is trying to be make the organisation more inclusive so over the past couple of years we have seen more of a decline in terms of having withdrawal sessions for our kids with more special needs. Is more of a push in so that they could be more inclusive and some of the kids will struggle with that [push in classes] and they need withdrawal classes. But there are less of those smaller, focused classes now which is actually the classes that our students coming from this environment could better access … it could leave us with limited options." (Carly, p.4)*

The reason was explained by the change in the attitude of school management. As it was believed that pull out /withdraw classes were not "inclusive"

and therefore the number of pull out classes declined which resulted in less pull out classes. As these classes are the classes that are more suitable for students in School X, they have left with fewer or even no option for inclusion placements. In addition to the lack of placement for placement students in School X, this policy has led to another issue described as the following.

"What we are finding out is that more and more of the students we are getting is the students that should be in learning support [LSC]. The school used to be a lot like Class C [students with more severe needs], so now what we are getting here are students with a higher level, but they really shouldn't be here. …they [School Y] just not taking the kids and that cause a real issue for us [School X] cause we are taking these kids who should be there [LSC] and we push them back [to LSC] but then they [school management] always said no to them so is just a never ending ensemble. "(Vanessa, p.11)

This statement illustrated an extensive issue that is caused by lower the number of pull out classes. As pull out classes are need by SEN students in LSC who cannot cope in push-in classes, these SEN students who were in a mainstream school are now being placed in a special school as push-in classes cannot meet their needs. However, these SEN students are not suited in a special school environment either as they have a higher functioning compared to other SEN students in a special school environment. The initiative that aimed to make School Y more inclusive ended with more high functioning SEN students in School X, a special school, which is a more segregated environment than LSC. Therefore, the policy initiative of the school management had cause obstacles for School X and Y to implement inclusion more effectively.

3.5.2 Societal views and influence

Views on disability

Views on disabilities in society were mentioned as one of the obstacles that our key informants encountered.

"Within the Chinese community as well, [disability] is not something you can get rid of it. And I still have a lot of these conversations with parents and they still seem to think you get rid of it with cupping, acupuncture. If I give them vitamins, it will make them better. Having autism, or down syndrome or any other SEN isn't an illness. But that's the mindset, is an illness and is how is can I get rid of it." (p.7)

It was stated that there was a misconception on disability within the Chinese community. It was stated many parents of SEN students still believe that disabilities are like medical illnesses which could be cured eventually. Therefore, rather than focusing on the pedagogical practice and plans that could help manage and learn to live with their disabilities, many parents focus on the "solution" of the disabilities which could hinder the disability management of the students.

Competitive nature of society

As Hong Kong is a big city, the competitiveness nature of the society influenced the opportunity for inclusion, especially on the vocational aspect of inclusion.

"I think it puts the pressure on the organisation. Cause you think with this multinational, super massive cooperation all over Hong Kong, surely, we can get it through a few doors. However, when we are doing a research to find a hotel to take on some of our students. I spoke with people in a [world renowned] hotel … But the feedback that comes back where they were concern even with the students coming in fully supported, would impact on their productivity. … we have no flex in our system because of the competition between providers are so great. Much as we would like to help you, they think it would have an implication on affecting our productivity. And no matter what we say, that was blocked." (Catharine, p.5)

The situation was explained with the difficulties of locating vocational placement for SEN students. A case was mentioned regarding a vocational collaboration between School X and a world-renowned hotel. The vocational placement was rejected by the hotel and it was mentioned that due to the

competitiveness nature in the business sector, many businesses were unable to offer placements to students in School X as they believe students would affect their productivity. Therefore, the above case can be an example to illustrate the importance of productivity and efficiency to business in Hong Kong. With the emphases of productivity and efficiency on local businesses, it is difficult for SEN students to participate in society after they graduated from school which has a vast impact towards inclusion of SEN students to the community in their adulthood.

3.6 Discussion of Findings

The following session focuses on the evaluation of inclusion practice of target schools, School X and School Y, with the use of the document "index for inclusion" (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Index for inclusion would be introduced first, then followed by the evaluation of inclusion practice of School X and Y according to the findings of this research. Other obstacles would be discussed at last to reflect on aspects that were not covered by the index.

3.6.1 Index for inclusion

Index for inclusion was developed in 2002 by Tony Booth and Mel Ainscow and was published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (CSIE). This *index* was developed for *"support[ing] the inclusion development of school"* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p.1). Various versions of the *index* have been developing to accommodate locality differences which had been prepared in 14 languages (Chinese for Hong Kong used was one of the languages). A team supported by UNSECO was developing a version of the index which would fit for use in the global south (Booth & Ainscow, 2002). Therefore, the *index* was adopted by many countries and schools as a guide to improve their inclusiveness of schools. According to the "Catering for Student Differences - Indicators for Inclusion" document published by the Education Bureau of Hong Kong (2008), *Index for Inclusion* was the major reference of the document. As *Index for Inclusion* is more recognised

internationally, this research would use the original document of the *index* for inclusion instead of the adopted Hong Kong version.

The document of *Index for inclusion* contains a total of 106 pages in length. In the document, it had included the purpose of the *index*, general indicators of inclusion, questions derived from the indicators and practical questionnaires designed for different stakeholders. Therefore, the document ensures the practicability of the *index* and had designed to be used by schools to evaluate their current inclusiveness, create and implement inclusion policies that aimed to increase the inclusiveness of the school.

Indicators for Inclusion

According to Booth and Ainscow (2002), there are three dimensions and excelling in all the dimensions would achieve the goal of being an inclusive school. The three dimensions are creating an inclusive culture, producing inclusive policies and evolving inclusive practice. Within each dimension, there are two subcategories which included five to eleven indicators in each subcategory. Indicators are presented as statement sentences such as "The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people." (p.40) Under each indicator statement, the document provided around ten follow up yes/no questions which created a checklist like documents for simple comprehension and implementation. Figure 1 shows the three dimensions of the index while Table 4, 5 and 6 show the indicators under each dimension. Table 7 shows an example of follow up questions of one of the indicators. Table 4 to 7 are located in appendixes.

Referring to Figure 1, It was emphasised by Booth and Ainscow (2002) that the positioning of the three dimensions was purposeful. The inclusive culture was purposefully put in the base of the triangle as the inclusive culture of schools have direct effect on the other two dimensions and thus it was put at the base of the triangle which symbolised the how inclusive culture supports the development of inclusive policies and practices.

FIGURE 1. Three dimensions of *the index*

3.6.2 Evaluation of findings

The evaluation of inclusion implementation of School X and School Y would follow the subcategories of each dimension and all the indicators under each subcategory would be summarised and compared to the findings of this research. Some of the indicators under the subcategories would be omitted from the following discussion due to the lack of data from this research. Only indicators there were related to findings would be discussed and compared.

Dimension A: Creating Inclusive Culture

A.1 Building community

Within the dimension of culture, the first subcategory is building community in which the indicators emphasis the participation and cooperation between all

stakeholders of the community which are students, staff, school management, parents, and the local community.

Regarding the community of School X, the sense of community within the school are well developed. This is evident from the environment of School X. For example, classrooms and staff rooms were accessible by both students and staff which encouraged the communication between students and staff by lowering the limitation of access. Staff lounge was shared with students where students also took an active role in managing the cafe which promoted the sense of community. Offices of school management are located close to classrooms and were also accessible by staff and students which reduced the hierarchical relationship between management, staff, and students. Therefore, from school environment, a sense of community is encouraged within the school.

Comparing to the environment of LSC in School Y, LSC has shown a weaker sense of community due to its isolated location. Although access to other area and facilities were not restricted, the isolation of LSC classrooms which was located away from other classrooms of the school created distance between students in LSC and mainstream students. The area of LSC created an invisible label to those students who were studying in that area which also diminished the opportunity for natural encounters and interactions between students in LSC and mainstream students. School staffs and management were less accessible to students compared to School X.

Regarding the collaboration between school and parents, communications between parents and schools were not often. From my two months of observation, unless there was an appointed meeting between staff and parents, parents were mostly absent. As there was the school bus service provided by School X, there was not a need for parents to be present in school. It was also mentioned by the staff that they have had conflicts with parents which were mostly related to academic expectations. The lack of opportunity to communicate between school staff and parents could be one of the reasons that could contribute to the issue.

With regards to the involvement of the local community, School X and Y are included in events that were organised by the school organisation. For

example, other international schools under the same school organisation shared inclusion placements with School X and School X was also included in most of the events such as the dance showcase and the art show mentioned in the findings session. The community of schools under the school organisation are closely connected and collaborations were abundant. However, the local community was not as accessible for School X because of the nature of being an international school in which English was the main teaching language. The language barrier was one of the challenges faced by students who do not speak the local language. It was also mentioned by the management of School X that there were difficulties for School X students to be included in the local community upon their graduation due to the lack of vocational placement from the business sector. The competitiveness of the society added pressure to the productivity of local businesses which led to unemployment issues of SEN students.

A.2 Establishing inclusive values

Inclusion values were examined at various levels within the school. The first level was the equal treatment of students. As School X was a special school, all students in School X have various special education needs. However, it was observed that students were treated differently according to their abilities. Students who are academically or socially able had more inclusion opportunities compared to students who are less able in these two aspects. Students were allocated to different classes according to their academic abilities which limited the social interactions between students with a difference in abilities. However, it was mentioned that some students with more severe level of disabilities were not able to communicate verbally, make meaningful social interaction nor form interpersonal relationship, it was one of the reasons behind why students were allocated to different classes according to their ability which maximised the social interactions between students who are more socially able. It was also explained by grouping students who had similar academic abilities, it reduced the number of EAs needed for support in each classroom. Therefore, the limited resource was one of the explanations for such an arrangement.

Regarding the equal treatment of LSC students in School Y, it was observed that LSC students had fewer opportunities for social interaction with mainstream students. Some of the LSC students do not have access to equal qualification curriculums and examinations compared to mainstream students. However, it was illustrated that as those qualifications do not offer alternative assessments, SEN students would not be able to reflect their abilities in such assessments (e.g. transitional paper type examination). Nevertheless, alternative qualifications were provided to them such as BTEC and ASDAN which ensured students in LSC were able to graduate with some qualifications instead of failing the traditional ones which could be defined as differentiation.

Another level of inclusion value included in the *index* was mutual respect between students and teachers. Some of the example questions under indicators for mutual respect were if students were well known by staff, if significant events were being celebrated, and if emotions of students were being recognised. Both students in School X and LSC students are well known by staff. From the interviews of teachers, it was evident that they knew very well regarding different abilities of students such as their academic strengths and weaknesses, their social skills, relationship with other peers, their interests and hobbies. Many of the teachers mentioned many examples of students without checking any kind of record. Birthdays of students and staff were also celebrated and there were abundant display of photos and certificates of student achievements, graduations and social events across School X and LSC area. The emotion of students was one of the main concerns of staff. There were issues concerning anxiety, behavioural issue, and self-esteem mentioned by teachers. It was recognisable that there were close relationships between teachers and students.

The last level of examining the inclusion values of schools was if staffs and management seek to improve the inclusiveness of schools and participate in the continuous development towards inclusion. Staff in School X were more active in promoting inclusion than staff in LSC of School Y. All of the staff in School X that were interviewed acted as some level of advocates of inclusion in the community. They were working towards providing more inclusion opportunities for their students, encouraging more mainstream teachers to accept SEN students in

their classrooms, inviting various parties to visit School X and searching for more vocational opportunities in the community. They were promoting inclusion beyond School X and hope to expand the values of inclusion to other teachers, schools and to the society. Staff in LSC concentrated more on the academic aspect of students however was passive on promoting social inclusion for students in LSC. It was mentioned by both teachers in LSC that they believed social inclusion should occur naturally and organically among students. Therefore, both teachers expressed a more passive role in promoting inclusion compared to staff in School X.

Dimension B: Producing Inclusive Policies

B.1 Developing the school for all

Developing school for all ensure schools work towards inclusion in a policy level and across the whole school. The indicators focused on the accessibility of school, student admission, and transitions for new students.

Regarding the accessibility of school, School X could improve its accessibility facilities and services as a special school. Due to the location of School X, it would be difficult for people with physical impairments to reach the School as it was located at the top of a hill. Wheelchair users would have a difficult time reaching School X without any transportation. The lack of public transport also contributed to inaccessibility for the community. School X did provide school bus service and the school buses are equipped with wheelchair space and lifts. However, according to the *index*, school policies should accommodate the accessibility of not only students but also for other members of the community. For the hearing and visually impaired accommodations, braille was found on signs in School X and there was pictorial instruction of simple sign language gestures found in the staff toilets which encouraged staff to learn and use sign languages.

Regarding student admission, as both School X and School Y are private international schools, admission of all students in its locality would not be apply to private schools. Not all families would be able to afford the tuition fee of the

schools. However, it was mentioned by teachers in School X they observed a change in the demographic of students of School X. It was suggested students with mild disabilities were admitted to School X due to the unwillingness of mainstream schools accepting these students. Therefore, it could have suggested there was a selection process in mainstream schools such as School Y and students with mild disabilities was rejected placements. It reflected there was purposeful selection of students according to their ability which does not align with the inclusion principle. The change in the demographic of student ability is concerning and should be addressed.

The smooth transition of new students is one of the indicators mentioned by the *index*. There was evidence of an organised transition period for students who were transiting from School X to School Y. It was observable that both schools had put effort to ensure a smooth transition period for students. The example case of Ada in Class A established the support provided by both schools. EA support was provided by School X for the frequent inclusion sessions of the transition programme for Ada. The transition programme was designed for the gradual adaptation of the new environment. Teachers paid attention to academic, social, and emotion aspects of the student and cooperated with LSC teachers in School Y to keep track of various aspects of the student during the transition period. Therefore, it was evident that both School X and Y ensure their new students would be smoothly transferred and settled to the new learning environment.

B.2 Organising support for diversity

This session focused on the policies that support diversity which reviews the systematic effort on promoting diversity and reduce exclusions. Coordination of various forms of support and the policies on reducing exclusion would be addressed.

With the coordination of support for promoting diversity, one of the aspects looked at if the support is coordinated by senior staff and given high status. Evidence were proving that School X was prioritising support for inclusion from the interview with the vice-principal and the head of student development. They had

their extensive roles in inclusion and had clear policy documents and student profiles documenting the inclusion process and student development. While the vice-principal focused on vocational inclusion, the head of student development was responsible for academic and social placements for students. Class teachers cooperated with these senior staff members and it was clear that all of the staff knew the policies, procedures, and support provided for an inclusion placement to take place. Although the policy document was still using wordings like "integration" instead of inclusion, it was stated that the school was in the process of updating the document which suggested their effort in the continuous development and revision of the policies. Therefore, it was clear that inclusion was one of the main goals for the school and many resources were allocated to achieve that goal.

With regards to the policies to reduce exclusion, it was mentioned there was an effort that led to the low exclusion by reducing the withdrawn/ pull out lesson in School Y as it was believed that withdrawn lesson was a form of exclusion. Therefore, it was decided by the school management to reduce the number of withdrawn lessons. The aim of the policy was an attempt to reduce exclusion in the school. However, due to the heavy emphasis on academic content and ability in mainstream classrooms, SEN students were not able to learn effectively in mainstream classrooms. Therefore, without the withdraw lessons, these students had to face the solution which was being transferred to a special school environment. However, transferring students with mild disabilities to a special school environment created a severer form of exclusion environment. As these SEN students with mild disabilities were not suited in a special environment either, teachers in the special school had to locate academic inclusion sessions for these students as the curriculum in special school was not meeting the abilities of these students. At the end, it resulted in forming "a never-ending ensemble" which the good intention of reducing exclusion resulted in a higher form of exclusion which was problematic to both the mainstream school and the special school.

Dimension C: Evolving Inclusive Practice

The last dimension emphasised on the practices aspect and the two subcategories are orchestrating learning and mobilising resources. Orchestrating learning examined the practical teaching method and experience inside an inclusive classroom while mobilising resources reviewed the resources from staff, schools and the community and their roles in improving inclusion.

C.1 Orchestrating learning

This subcategory focused on teaching and learning inside an inclusive classroom. Participation of all students, the use of various curriculums, forms of assessments and qualifications would be discussed in this session.

Regarding the participation of all students, it was emphasised by the key informants one of determinates of successful outcomes of inclusion was the degree of participation of students. It was stressed by physically placing a student in a mainstream class with no regard for his/her abilities is not considered inclusion. As it was mentioned in the findings session, academic achievements, social interactions in the classroom and the emotional aspect of the students need to be considered for students to achieve their learning goal. Therefore, the practice is aligned with the *index* which also mentioned the emotional aspect of learning, social interaction between classmates and the active involvement of learning.

The other aspect of focus was regarding the choice of curriculums and its material. School X adopt mostly a curriculum named ASDAN which was stated in their official Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Booklet that *"ASDAN engage courses are specifically designed for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities." (ASDAN, 2019, p.2)* There are two main programmes of ASDAN that were adopted by School X and School Y which are preparing for adulthood and personal progress. Preparing for adulthood focuses on aspects like employment, independent living, health, and relationships. Most of the classes in School X studied preparing for adulthood programme which highly emphasise on generic life skills. More advance students such as students in Class A or LSC of School Y studied personal progress programme which offers

more advance life skill knowledge such as ICT skills, mathematical skills, and technology.

LSC of School Y also adopted more advance curriculums than ASDAN such as BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) which is a British national curriculum that had two types of courses, technical-based and applied based. According to Dudley (2019), the technical-based courses aimed at employment while the applied based courses aimed at continuing study paths of students to higher education. As mainstream classrooms mainly studied for GCSE, LSC adopted their curriculum to ensure their students would be able to achieve their learning goals. Teachers in LSC and School X adopt their choice of curriculum according to the ability of students in their classroom. It was mentioned by Ms. Johnson that depending on the ability of the students, different curriculums could be offered to different students in the same class which achieved one of the goals of the *index* which is "*teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind*". (Booth & Ainscow, 2002, p.70)

The last aspect focused on assessments and qualifications. These two factors would be discussed simultaneously as the means of assessment would highly affect if a student could pass the assessment and gain the qualification. It was mentioned in the findings sessions that some parents who are very concerned with the qualifications as it would affect the future employment or study opportunities of their children. Therefore, it was stated by some of the key informants that they would choose a qualification (e.g. BTEC) which does not require traditional paper examination. It was indicated that traditional assessment methods do not fully reflect the abilities of SEN students, especially those with lower abilities in reading and writing. For example, BTEC has a project-based assessment that is more suitable for SEN students and would enable SEN students to pass the assessment and gain the qualification. As the result, it was evident that teachers had put the future of students in mind as they ensured students would be able to achieve the learning goals of the qualification and reflect their knowledge in suitable assessments. Thus, it had suggested the teaching practices in School X and LSC fulfilled some of the indicators of the *index* and is processing to the goals of inclusion.

C.2 Mobilising resources

Various type of resource was included in the *index* to ensure all personnel in the school are utilised and supported. The main types that would be discussed are students and community resources.

The first aspect was the utilisation of students as a resource for teaching and learning as suggested by the *index*. One of the examples would the programme Book Buddies that was mentioned by Carly. The programme paired up students in School Z (neighbouring primary school) and students in School X and mainstream students would read in the library with their buddies from School X. This encouraged the social interaction and fostered cooperation between peers. Math day was another example of student resource which was mainstream students in School Y created math games for students in School X to participate. Another example was the sensation cafe where students support each other and the whole class worked together as a team. Students who are better with math would be the cashier while students who are more physically abled took up the role of a waiter. It was a great opportunity to draw on the abilities of students and enable them to see their strengths and the accomplishments they achieved once they worked together. Every class of School X had their turn one day a week to ensure all students can participate. Therefore, students were considered as resource and schools also took an active role in creating opportunities for the empowerment to occur and achieving inclusion goals.

With regard to the community resource, School X was highly connected with other schools in the same organisation. However, there was not much interaction with the local community. One of the reasons could be explained by the language barrier. With regard to the school community, School X was welcomed in general and participated in many of the events that were organised by the community. The example events would be the art show and dance performance. However, the dance performance only included eight students in School X who were chosen due to their high cognitive and physical abilities. Events should include more students irrespective of their abilities.

4 DISCUSSIONS

From theoretical analysis, the *index for inclusion* (Booth & Ainscow, 2002) was applied to the findings and both positive and negative inclusion practices were identified. Many of the issues identified in the findings section were related to the societal background. In this section, past literature would be reviewed to discuss how societal factors affected school policies, teachers' attitudes, and parental expectations. Two societal factors, elite education system and the impact of qualification on employability would be explored. Then, three of the aspects of the findings, school policies, teachers' attitudes, and parental expectations would be discussed accordingly about the effects of the societal factors.

4.1 Societal Influences

From the findings of this research, many of the obstacles towards inclusion were found related to societal factors. Two main factors had an impact on inclusion implementation. The two aspects would be the elitism education system and the impact of qualification on employability. According to the theoretical analysis, many of the issues of inclusion revolved around lack of placement in the mainstream classrooms and one of the main contributing reasons would be the elitism education system.

4.1.1 Elitism Education System

The elitism education system was named as one of the main causes of the obstacles that Hong Kong faced in the journey towards inclusion (Poon-McBrayer, 2004). The elitism belief in education dated back to the colonial era. According to Poon and Wong (2008), back in the elitist education era (before 1978), there were only half of the primary school students could proceed to government secondary school and only 2% of students could be admitted to a university bachelor programme in 1975. The British colonial government also emphasised the economic and pragmatic value in education which ensure the focus of citizens was on economic growth rather than political issues which would not jeopardise their ruling

(Bray & Lee, 1993) It was also suggested that education was seen as a chance for social mobility and therefore students who succeed in the education system would be able to move upward in the society (Poon & Wong, 2008). Therefore, to achieve occupational success in society, it was believed students who performed well in the examination would be promised a bright future which resulted in a highly competitive examination-oriented education system (Poon & Wong, 2008).

In addition to the colonial history of Hong Kong, the education system also heavily relies on public examinations as the standard for both student selections and school evaluation. The secondary schools in Hong Kong (from age 12 to 18) follows a banding system which schools are separated into three bands, internal academic assessment results of students in Primary five to six (aged 11 to 12) will be standardised and put in the order of merit and students will be divided to the three bands according to their ranking (Education Bureau, 2017). In short, students are sorted according to their academic performance and allocated into level one to level three schools. Schools are also ranked according to the public examination results and then graded and sorted into three band levels. Besides putting great pressure on parents and students, schools were also under significant stress as the survival of the school depends on the intake of students and the government provides funding to school according to intakes numbers (Poon-McBrayer, 2017). As the result, "*public examinations were established as gateways to further education and for determining school placement*" (Poon-McBrayer, 2004, p.159) for students and "*schools compete and strive for a higher ranking in the school league tables*" (Poon-McBrayer, 2004, p.159). Therefore, the education system highly aggravated the focus on elitism which posed a serious threat to the implementation of inclusive education.

According to Poon-McBrayer (2004), she stated that "*the desire for equity has to battle against the desire for elitism … in Hong Kong." (p. 165).* This quote preciously illustrated the contradiction between the intense influence of elitism on the education system and the pursue of inclusion education in Hong Kong. Mainstream classrooms, especially in international schools that are regarded as "better" in education by locals have concentrated many elite students who have high

academic abilities. Therefore, using these classrooms as inclusive classrooms for SEN students who have lower academic abilities would cause a high disparity in student abilities in a single classroom. Therefore, that could be one of the reasons to explain one of the findings which are the inability of SEN students to cope in mainstream classrooms and thereby were then put in a special school environment instead.

4.1.2 Qualification of higher education and employability

It was mentioned that higher education in the colonial period was following the elite model which only 2% of students were admitted to university in 1975. However, higher education and the labour market have changed drastically in recent decades. According to the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (2019) and Hong Kong Government (2019), there was more than 56,000 who participated in the 2019 HKDSE (national exam of Hong Kong for secondary qualification) and there was a total of 15,000 government-funded bachelor programme offered in the same year. From the above statistic, 26% of students could be admitted into a government-funded bachelor programme. Therefore, there was a drastic increase in university placements. There were also more options for higher education such as sub-degree programmes which increased the participation of higher education in Hong Kong from around 30% in 2003 to around 60% in 2012 (Mok, 2016).

These changes in higher education altered the employability of graduates. According to Mok (2016), "*In this case, not all youth completing higher education will get a good job. However, any youth who wants to have a better job must first obtain a higher education degree. Put differently, if everyone stands on tiptoe, nobody gets a better view; but if you do not stand on tiptoe, you have no chance of seeing." (p.66)* The quote explained that due to the expansion of higher education, many graduates with qualifications were facing unemployment which suggested the situation must be worse for those who do not have any qualifications. This was also illustrated in a study that investigates the "educational non-elite" which looked at students who could not continue their education in a university, it was found that "*Presently, a degree is seen to these individuals as absolutely essential to 'getting on' in life*

…" (Waters & Leung, 2014, p.6). One of the participants of the study even stated that *"[h]aving a degree is to show people that I am normal"* (p.64) From the above studies, they clearly illustrated the employability issues in present Hong Kong and the influence of lack of qualification to the future of graduate.

These social factors could explain issues regarding qualifications that were identified in the findings. Teachers expressed their concerns regarding which qualifications their SEN students would obtain during their studies as it would directly affect their future. It was expressed some of the parents were also particularly worried regarding what types of qualifications their children would obtain which put pressure on teachers and contributed to the conflict and mistrust between parents and teachers. The societal factors regarding higher education and employment influenced the implementation of inclusive education.

4.2 School Policies

The societal influences affected various aspects of inclusion implementation. The first aspect is the school policies. The elite education system and the emphasis on qualifications put pressure on all the stakeholders in the practice of inclusive education. School management, teachers, parents, SEN students, and mainstream students were all affected. School policies are highly affected by the environment as suggested. One of the issues discussed was the selective admission of school. According to a study that investigated views of school principals (Poon-Mcbrayer, 2017), school leaders were faced with the dilemma of maintaining the school performance in public examinations and the intake of SEN students. They were concern with SEN students would lower the over performance of the school in public examination. The same concern would apply to the target mainstream school (School Y). It was suggested international schools are with a higher standard and provide "better education". Thus, it is crucial for School Y to maintain the image of an elite school. It was also evident from the decoration of School Y where trophies were displayed in the school foyer which suggested achievements are highly valued. Other reasons for selective admission were the concern of mainstream parents. According to a study conducted by Sin et al. (2012), it

suggested parents without SEN children have a low-level acceptance to other SEN students in Hong Kong. It was suggested that these parents are concern with the learning progress of their mainstream children and believed that resources would be allocated to SEN students (Sin et al., 2012). The above studies provided some explanations for the reason behind selective admission which were highly related to the academic performance of the schools and students.

In addition to selective admission, it was suggested SEN students were not able to cope in mainstream classrooms. One of the reasons mentioned in the findings was SEN students unable to pass the required assessments and gain the same qualification as mainstream students. As qualification was seen as necessary for employment or higher education, SEN students resulted in a separate environment (LSC) and studied for different qualifications. The importance of qualification in international school was illustrated by Hayden (2011), who studied the growth of international schools. She stated that one of the reasons for parents choose to enrol their children in international schools was due to the qualifications. It was suggested that international curriculums like IB were seen as a guarantee of quality. Therefore, the qualification issue in mainstream classrooms led to SEN students with lower academic ability unable to learn and gain the qualification. It was caused by the type of assessments used in these qualifications (traditional paper examination). As a result, a separate learning environment was created to provide an alternative qualification with different assessments (e.g. project-based) for SEN students which led to the separation of the learning environment.

The situation above was not an isolated incident in Hong Kong. According to a study conducted in England (Glazzard, 2011) which investigated the barriers to inclusion in a primary school. It was suggested due to the marketisation of schools, SEN students were seen to have "*a detrimental impact on school performance data*" (p.59). Besides, it was suggested that the emphasis of education was ensuring all students achieving the "*norm-related standards*" (p.59). Therefore, rather than focusing on the catering learning materials and assessments according to the learning needs of SEN students, the emphasises were put on ensuring school performances and the academic performances of SEN students which are

represented by standardised testing. Other than England, research conducted in Jordan also found similar issues regarding assessments and curriculums. According to Amr, Al-Natour, Al-Abdallat, and Alkhamra (2016), the rigid curriculum and confined assessment methods were named as one of the barriers to inclusion as well.

4.3 Parental Expectations

The Parental expectation was mentioned in the findings. Parents had unrealistic expectations of the academic achievements of their SEN children led to conflicts between parents and school. Moreover, it also placed immense pressure on teachers and SEN students.

According to an article written by Tews and Merali (2008) which is titled "Helping Chinese Parents Understand and Support Children with Learning Disabilities", it provided a cultural explanation to the unrealistic academic expectation of parents towards SEN students. The article emphasised the importance of the academic success of children to their families. Educational success was viewed as *"a family pursuit rather than a reflection of personal goals"* and *"bringing honour to the family" (p.138).* It was also suggested by Chao (1996) that the failure in the academic of the child would be viewed as *"parents were not doing their job" (p. 420).* Therefore, it is evident that the academic success of the child was the responsibility of parents and unable to achieve academic achievements would be considered as the failure of parenting. Moreover, intense training and practice were viewed as the key to academic success in Chinese culture. It was suggested the most common attribution of low academic performance would be the assumption of lack of self-discipline (Tews & Merali, 2008). Therefore, rather than understanding the abilities of SEN students, parents would attribute the low academic performance to laziness or lack of discipline. As a result, parents believed by providing more practice and training, it could improve the academic performance of their SEN children. This belief placed immense pressure on teachers and SEN students and resulted in conflict between all the parties.

In addition to the Chinese culture, it was suggested by Phillipson (2006) that parents of students enrolled in international schools in Hong Kong had a higher income and better educational background compared to local Chinese schools. It was found that the higher the socio-economic background of parents, the higher the academic expectation would be placed on their children (Roth & Salikutluk, 2012). Combining the factors of the Chinese cultural background, the socio-economic background of parents and the social pressure on qualification, it provided some explanations towards the unrealistic academic expectation that parents had towards their children.

4.4 Teachers' Attitudes

It was suggested in the findings that mainstream teachers' attitude towards inclusion were one of the main factors that was influencing the implementation of inclusion. From the findings, it was suggested teachers in special schools generally have a more positive attitude compared to LSC teachers and mainstream teachers had a negative attitude towards inclusion. The above findings were aligned with a previous study. According to Lam and Phillipson (2009), they conducted a mix method study that compared four classes with various academic achievements, an excellence class, an average class, a below-average class with students with less severe LD and a below-average class with students with severe LD. It was found that the class with less severe LD had "*the greatest feeling of alienation from school, despite their smaller class size*" and "*the poorest quality teacher-student relationships and the lowest level of social integration*" (p.145). Lam and Phillipson (2009) proposed that according to the qualitative data of the study, the poor student-teacher relationship was attributed to standardised curriculum and the failure to achieve academic standards. As compared to the class with severe LD, that class implemented a tailored curriculum, modified homework, and assessments which "*… protecting them from higher academic standards. The end result is that these students were able to enjoy their learning experiences and this, in turn, supported their psychological well-being.*" (p.145) Therefore, students with less severe LD who were placed in the inclusive classroom had the worst teacher-student

relationship compared to other classes due to the pressure of living up to the academic standard.

Other than the academic pressure, the lack of contact with people with disabilities of mainstream teachers could lead to a negative attitude towards teaching SEN students. From an international study which compared 600 pre-service teachers from Australia, Canada, Singapore, and Hong Kong, it was found that pre-service teachers who did not have any contact with a person with a disability were identified with a higher level of concerns (Forlin, Sharma, & Loreman, 2007). It was suggested in the study that as inclusion was a fairly new concept in Hong Kong and Singapore, it resulted in fewer participants from Hong Kong (18%) and Singapore (16%) had any direct contact with a person with disabilities compared to Australia (34%) and Canada (45%). This was also supported by the findings of this research. The head of student development stated that mainstream teachers who had been involved in inclusion collaboration are more likely to be involved again. To conclude, increasing exposure to inclusive classrooms could encourage mainstream teachers to participate in teaching inclusive classrooms.

The nationalities of teachers in international schools could contribute to negative attitudes. It was suggested the lack of local knowledge could also contribute to the negative attitude towards inclusion. According to Forlin, Sharma, and Loreman (2014), possessing the knowledge of local legislation and policies lowered the concern towards inclusion and increased the sense of teaching efficacy for teaching in an inclusive classroom. Many international schoolteachers were educated outside of Hong Kong. Therefore, they may not possess the local knowledge which could increase their concern and lowered their teaching efficacy.

From the perspectives of mainstream classroom teachers, it was stated they were facing other issues such as the lack of support from special education teachers. According to Fuchs (2009), classroom teachers felt the lack of support from the special education staff and the lack of understanding of their work duties as a classroom teacher. One of the quotes in the research stated the situation. *"I have 23 other bodies in that room. I can't take this boy out in the hallway and brush him!*

Which was one of her [the special education teacher] suggestions." (p.33) This quote reflected the reality of the lack of understanding from the special education teacher which led to the frustration of the classroom teachers regarding the dilemma of focusing on an SEN student while ensuring the whole classroom was also taken care of. Therefore, it is important to also recognise the lack of appropriate support for mainstream classroom teachers. In addition, training was found as one of the main factors affecting attitudes of teachers. A meta-analysis study conducted by Boer, Pijl, and Minnaert (2011) analysed 26 research regarding the attitudes of schoolteachers towards inclusion. It was found that teachers generally had undecided or negative beliefs regarding inclusion and evaluated themselves as not very knowledgeable regarding teaching SEN students. The negative attitudinal issues of mainstream teachers were suggested as a global phenomenon and a common barrier to inclusion.

4.5 Practical Implication

4.5.1 Vocational Support

One of the obstacles faced by SEN students was vocational placements. It was suggested there was not enough vocational support and placements for SEN students. One of the consequences of lacking vocational placement was that SEN students had to study for qualifications which increased the pressure on teachers, students, and parents. It was also stated that the self-esteem of students was affected due to getting low grades in assessments. Hence, vocational support is one of the recommendations which could assist SEN student in transit to the workplace and the community without any qualification. According to a literature review article (Nicholas, Attridge, Zwaigenbaum, & Clarke, 2015), support employment showed an increase in job retention and stability. In addition, it was stated with support employment, individuals were more likely to be employed, had better salaries, more diverse types of jobs and employed longer than the control group. It was also suggested compared to shelter workshops; community placement encourages inclusion as shelter workshops tend to employ only people with disabilities.

4.5.2 Parent Education Programme

The unrealistic expectation of parents caused conflicts between teachers and parents and immense pressure on SEN students which affected the implementation of inclusive education. It was discussed that these beliefs rooted in the Chinese culture of pursuing academic achievements. Therefore, a parent education programme is proposed to help parents understand the abilities of their children and subsequent actions for parents to assist their children academically and socially. According to a pilot study conducted by Chiang (2014) which examined the effectiveness of a parent education program for Chinese American parents with autism spectrum disorders children, the result indicated the reduction of stress, improvement in confidence and quality of life. Therefore, a similar programme could be implemented which emphasis helping parents manage their expectations, information regarding further studies of students, employment options and practical ways for parents to assist their children academically (rather than repetitive training). The programme could also benefit from providing an opportunity for parents to form a support group with other parents which could support them psychologically. It was suggested support groups could allow parents with disabled children to feel supported, understood, empowered and more confident (Lo, 2010).

4.5.3 Teacher Training

As mentioned, one of the reasons the negative attitude towards inclusion of mainstream teachers was due to the lack of contact with SEN students, the focus of teacher training should then be focused on practical placements in inclusive classrooms or special schools. According to a study regarding school-based practice (Lambe & Bones, 2007), it was found that students had a significant change in concerns in teaching an inclusive classroom and attitude towards the ideology of inclusion. The post-survey showed a remarkable increase in confidence regarding the acquisition of the necessary skills. This study suggested a more practical training should be provided to mainstream teachers and thus could change the negative attitude. Another study conducted by Broomhead (2013), it

conducted a study regarding teacher training and parent empathy. A mother of two SEN children was invited to share her story with about 350 pre-service teachers. Positive results were found after the sharing session. Pre-service teachers expressed they *"had developed their understanding of parental perspectives, encouraged empathy and had key implications for their practice (some direct and immediate) in relation to developing effective relationships with parents of children with SEN"* (p.183). It was suggested by providing a "real-life" example, pre-teachers would be able to have an in-depth understanding of the perspectives of SEN parents. As it was mentioned there were conflicts between parents and teachers, enabling pre-service teachers to understand the perspective of parents with SEN children could benefit the teacher-parent relationship.

4.6 Future Studies

This research explored the inclusion in School X and School Y. The focus of the current study was School X which was a special school. LSC of School Y was investigated due to its collaboration with School X. Since, School Y was not the main target school, many of the inclusive environment and practices were not studied. For example, individual needs provision where SEN students participated in mainstream classrooms, was mentioned. However, as it was out of the scope of this research, it was not studied. Future studies could explore the other aspects and address issues raised by key informants. For example, the issue with lack of placement and the attitude of mainstream teachers.

Regarding participants of this research, five out of six key informants were teaching staff. They provided in-depth opinions and evaluations regarding classroom practices and issues related to implementing inclusive education. The perspectives of other stakeholders such as parents, school managements and government officials could be taken into consideration which could provide a more holistic understanding of the inclusion. Although students were included in the observations, the interview was not conducted with any of the SEN students. Further investigation could be conducted to understand the authentic first-hand experience of SEN students.

With regarding the context of the study, the cultural background and societal influences of Hong Kong were one of the substantial influences on inclusion. Therefore, future studies could be repeated in a different social context which could provide explorative insights into how societal background influences the practice of inclusion. In addition, international schools were exclusive in Hong Kong. As suggested by Ng (2011), international schools had a higher academic standard than local schools, inclusive education could be practiced differently in local special schools. Thus, inclusive education in local special schools could be one of the directions for future studies.

4.7 Trustworthiness

In this section, the position of the researcher would be discussed according to the evaluative criteria constructed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). It was suggested especially with inductive analysis, trustworthiness ensured that the findings were "worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). There were four aspects for assessing trustworthiness which are credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability. These aspects would be addressed in the following paragraphs.

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility indicated there was confidence in the "truth" of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which should be described and identified accurately (Elo et al., 2014). Some of the techniques were implemented in this research. The first technique was a prolonged engagement. As this is a qualitative study which applied ethnographic guideline, the time spent on the field was not as long as regular ethnographic research. However, due to the internship opportunity, I was able to work alongside many of the school personnel which granted me access and trust when interviews were conducted. For example, incidents that occurred during the class were able to be discussed due to my prior involvement in the class. Issues regarding school management and parents were brought up during the interview voluntarily by key informants. Therefore, it suggested some level of

trust was built and thus prolonged engagement was achieved. During the data analysis process, referential adequacy was conducted to ensure the validity of the coding process. It was suggested some data would be archived, but not analysed. Those data would be analysed after all the other data was processed and then returns to the archived data to test the validity. Secondary data such as documents of school were not analysed until all the codes were formed. Those data were used to conduct referential adequacy to ensure the validity of the research.

4.7.2 Dependability

According to Bitsch (2005), dependability was described as "*the stability of findings over time*" (p. 86) which suggested the findings should be consistent and able to be repeated (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Anney (2015), there were several methods to ensure the dependability of research, the code-recode strategy and peer examination would be addressed regarding the findings of this research. Code-recode strategy required the repetition of coding of the data. There should be a one to two weeks interval between the first and second coding process. If the findings of the two-coding process are concurrent, it increased the dependability of the findings. Data analysis was conducted twice with an interval of two weeks. The first coding started with observational data while the second coding started with interview data. Switching the order of the data ensured that all the data would have equal attention and would not be overlooked. Most of the coding was compatible with the two data analyses. There were some codes that were not compatible between the two analysis. A peer examination was then conducted to all the questionable coding. A peer examination was a discussion between the researcher and his/her peers who do not have any involvement in the current research (Anney, 2015). One of my fellow master classmates who did not engage in any qualitative research was consulted. Questionable codes were examined and discussed. It resulted in an agreeable coding scheme between the two researchers.

4.7.3 Transferability

The thick description was the technique to ensure transferability as it allows readers to evaluate the context of the research in detail and determine if the findings are transferable to a specific setting, timing, and populations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The thick description was employed in the reporting of methodology and data analysis. As this research focused in a specific setting, the thick description was essential to ensure readers possessing full knowledge of the setting which allows the evaluation of the transferability. For example, the settings of the research were described in detail regarding the type of the school, the location of the school, the focused class in the school and the type of students in the focused class. These thick descriptions ensured the readers were provided with abundant information regarding the context of the research, the procedures of data collection and analytical steps.

4.7.4 Conformability

Conformability refers to the neutrality of researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The reflexivity of the researcher is crucial as all researchers would have preconceptions. It would be impossible to eliminate all preconceptions and achieve objectivity in qualitative research. The essence would be to account for the effects of the position of the researcher. It was suggested by Malterud (2001), "*Preconceptions are not the same as bias, unless the researcher fails to mention them.*" (p.484). Therefore, reflexivity ensured readers have comprehensive knowledge regarding the preconceptions of the researcher in which the effect of research positioning could be assessed. These predispositions could affect the neutrality of the researcher when conducting data collections and analysis. However, as we could not be free from all predispositions, it is important to ensure that both the researcher and readers are aware of these predispositions. Therefore, I tried to be aware of my positioning as a researcher throughout all the research stages and ensured to report my positioning and make readers be aware of them. Hence, I would be reviewing my positioning as a researcher in the following section.

The research context was an international special school which was located in a wealth distinct in Hong Kong. Regarding my positioning as a researcher, I would categorise myself as unfamiliar to the research context as I believe I was the "outsider" to the context. Regarding the international school context, many of the staff working in School X and School Y have studied in international schools themselves. Therefore, comparing to general staff in the settings, I considered myself an outsider in terms of social class, school experiences, and familiarity with the international school system. International schools were exclusive and limited to higher socio-economic background families. As I studied in local government schools in a low socio-economic distinct, I have limited first-hand knowledge regarding the culture of international schools. In addition to the difference in socio-economic status and the lack of international school experience, I did not have any prior knowledge of the special school environment in Hong Kong. As I am studying for my master's in Finland, I have been to more special schools and inclusive classrooms in Finland than in Hong Kong. Although I grew up in Hong Kong, my concept of special schools was constructed in Finland. Therefore, I would consider myself an outsider in respect of the Hong Kong special school and inclusive classroom environment. Regarding ethnicity, half of the key informants were from the UK and thus, there was a difference in the ethnicity which increased the outsider perspective.

It was mentioned by Berger (2013), studying unfamiliar provided some advantages. One of the advantages was "*the researcher is 'ignorant", and the respondent is in the expert position, it is an empowering experience"* (p. 227). Informants were viewed as experts which is essential in this research as one of the main focus was how inclusion was understood by them. Therefore, by acknowledging informants as experts, they would be more comfortable in sharing their personal and genuine thoughts rather than believing their opinions would be judged by the researcher who has extensive knowledge of the researched issue. Another advantage mentioned by Berger (2013) was that unfamiliar researcher could provide a fresh viewpoint which could lead to new findings. Reflecting on the above advantages to my data collection analysis process, I did find that being the outsider provided some fresh insights. For example, the difference in the socio-

economic status of the researcher and the target school enabled the reflection of different academic expectations of parents. Another example would be the societal influence as comparing the target school and my experience in Finland provided some new insights. Therefore, I believed there was some advantage to the outsider positioning.

However, there was also some disadvantage described by Berger (2013). It was suggested one of the disadvantages was the inability to provide immediate identification and response during interviews. I have experienced the same issue during my interviews with some of the key informants. Due to my lack of knowledge in the international school curriculum, some of the abbreviations used by the key informants would be unfamiliar to me. As there was no opportunity for follow-up questions, I would have to search for the meaning of the abbreviations after the interview. As a result, I was not able to understand the response of the informants immediately and missed the opportunity to have a deeper discussion.

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6 APPENDIXES

TABLE 4. Indicators of DIMENSION A: Creating inclusive cultures

A.1 Building community	
Indicator A.1.1	Everyone is made to feel welcome.
A.1.2	Students help each other.
A.1.3	Staff collaborate with each other.
A.1.4	Staff and students treat one another with respect.
A.1.5	There is a partnership between staff and parents/carers.
A.1.6	Staff and governors work well together.
A.1.7	All local communities are involved in the school.
A.2 Establishing inclusive values	
A.2.1	There are high expectations for all students.
A.2.2	Staff, governors, students and parents/carers share a philosophy of inclusion
A.2.3	Students are equally valued.
A.2.4	Staff and students treat one another as human beings as well as occupants of a 'role'.
A.2.5	Staff seek to remove barriers to learning and participation in all aspects of the school.
A.2.6	The school strives to minimise all forms of discrimination.

TABLE 5. Indicators of DIMENSION A: Creating inclusive cultures

B.1 Developing the school for all	
Indicator B.1.1	Staff appointments and promotions are fair.
B.1.2	All new staff are helped to settle into the school.
B.1.3	The school seeks to admit all students from its locality.
B.1.4	The school makes its buildings physically accessible to all people.
B.1.5	All new students are helped to settle into the school.
B.1.6	The school arranges teaching groups so that all students are valued.
B.2 Organising support for diversity	
B.2.1	All forms of support are co-ordinated.
B.2.2	Staff development activities help staff to respond to student diversity.
B.2.3	Special educational needs' policies are inclusion policies.
B.2.4	The Special Educational Needs Code of Practice* is used to reduce the barriers to learning and participation of all students.
B.2.5	Support for those learning English as an additional language is co-ordinated with learning support.
B.2.6	Pastoral and behaviour support policies are linked to curriculum development and learning support policies.
B.2.7	Pressures for disciplinary exclusion are decreased.
B.2.8	Barriers to attendance are reduced.
B.2.9	Bullying is minimised.

TABLE 6. Indicators of DIMENSION A: Creating inclusive cultures

C.1 Orchestrating learning		
Indicator	C.1.1	Teaching is planned with the learning of all students in mind.
	C.1.2	Lessons encourage the participation of all students.
	C.1.3	Lessons develop an understanding of difference.
	C.1.4	Students are actively involved in their own learning.
	C.1.5	Students learn collaboratively.
	C.1.6	Assessment contributes to the achievements of all students.
	C.1.7	Classroom discipline is based on mutual respect.
	C.1.8	Teachers plan, teach and review in partnership.
	C.1.9	Teaching assistants support the learning and participation of all students.
	C.1.10	Homework contributes to the learning of all.
	C.1.11	All students take part in activities outside the classroom.
C.2 Mobilising resources		
	C.2.1	Student difference is used as a resource for teaching and learning.
	C.2.2	Staff expertise is fully utilised.
	C.2.3	Staff develop resources to support learning and participation.
	C.2.4	Community resources are known and drawn upon.
	C.2.5	School resources are distributed fairly so that they support inclusion.

TABLE 7. Example indicator with questions

A.1 Building community	
Indicator A.1.1: Everyone is made to feel welcome	
i)	Is the first contact that people have with the school friendly and welcoming?
ii)	Is the school welcoming to all students, including students with impairments, travellers, refugees and asylum seekers?
iii)	Is the school welcoming to all parents/carers and other members of its local communities?
iv)	Is information about the school made accessible to all, irrespective of home language or impairment, for example, translated, braille, taped, or in large print when necessary?
v)	Are sign language and other first language interpreters available when necessary?
vi)	Is it clear from the school brochure and information given to job applicants that responding to the full diversity of students and their backgrounds is part of school routine?
vii)	Does the entrance hall reflect all members of the school's communities?
viii)	Does the school celebrate local cultures and communities in signs and displays?
ix)	Are there positive rituals for welcoming new students and new staff and marking their leaving?
x)	Do students feel ownership of their classrooms or tutor room
xi)	Do students, parents/carers, staff, governors and community members all feel ownership of the school?