

## School Psychology In Hong Kong

### 1. Context of school psychology

Describe briefly the country's geographic, demographic, economic characteristics, and the country's educational system.

- Hong Kong is located at the southeastern tip of mainland China.
- It was colonized by the British from 1842 to 1997 and was returned to the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997 where it became a Special Administrative Region.
- The colonization has curved numerous Western features in Hong Kong's social, economic, legal and political landscape. Hong Kong has also preserved many aspects of Chinese culture. Thus, Hong Kong is well-known as a place where East meets West and the traditional merges with the modern.
- Hong Kong has a population of 6.9 million;
- Its climate is sub-tropical and the landscape is fairly hilly, with the population being mostly concentrated in the flat land along the coastal areas.
- Hong Kong's economy is characterized by its high degree of internationalization, well-established financial networks, and free trade.

Schools in Hong Kong can be classified into 3 types according to their source of funding:

- government schools,
- subsidized schools, and
- private schools.
- In 2004, Hong Kong had 8, 500 students enrolled in 66 special schools (Education and Manpower Bureau, 2005), although it has been the government's policy to mainstream children with special educational needs wherever possible.
- They are placed in special schools only when the severity of their handicaps is such that they cannot benefit from the curriculum in mainstream schools.
- In 1997, the government launched a pilot project called the Whole School Approach to integration and students benefitting from this project include children with mild grade mental handicaps (intelligence quotient 50-70), autistic disorders with average intelligence, visual impairments, and physical handicaps.

### 2. History and current status of school psychology

Briefly discuss the history of school psychology, including the conditions and major events that gave rise to school psychology in that country. Briefly describe the state of school psychology practice.

- School psychologist are called educational psychologist in Hong Kong, after the British designation.
- The profession of educational psychology is one of Britain's legacies to the educational system of Hong Kong.

- Hong Kong is the first place in Asia with a recognized vocation in educational psychology and a post graduate program for the professional preparation of educational psychologist.
- The development of educational psychology in Hong Kong can be divided into five stages by landmark events.

**Stage 1: The Establishment of a Special Section in the Education Department**

- Psychological services for students in Hong Kong began in 1959 – this time the Education Department of the Hong Kong government set up a special education section.
- This section monitored and regulated the work of non-governmental organizations that provided services to students with special educational needs.

**Stage 2: The Establishment of a Local Training Program**

- Before 1981, all educational psychologists in Hong Kong received their training in Britain.
- After the University of Hong Kong set up a master's degree program in educational psychology in 1981, educational psychology services expanded considerably.

**Stage 3: School-Based Psychological Services in Special Schools**

- The need for school-based psychological services in special schools was first raised in 1984 by the Joint Council for the Physically and Mentally Disabled of the Rehabilitation Division, Hong Kong Council of Social Service.
- A year later, the government approved the provision of education psychologists for special school.

**Stage 4: The Extension of School-Based Psychological Services to Mainstream Secondary School**

- School-based psychological services were expanded further when the Hong Kong government announced the implementation of the School Support Scheme, as recommended in a report by the Education Commission, a government-appointed advisory body in education policy (Education Commission, 1990).
- The Schools Support Scheme aims to help students with emotional and behavioral problems that are enrolled in mainstream secondary schools. Under this scheme, school-based psychological services were extended to mainstream secondary schools.

**Stage 5: The Extension of School-Based Psychological Services to Mainstream Primary Schools**

- In 2001 a series of plans to develop relevant services were identified, one of which is to provide school-based psychological services to primary schools.

### 3. Infrastructure of school psychology

Briefly provide the names of national & regional professional organizations serving the interest of school psychology; laws or other regulations regarding licensure of psychologists and school psychologists; and titles of professional journals and newsletters relied on by school psychologists.

#### The Hong Kong Psychological Society

- It was founded in 1968 and has been active for the past 3 decades in promoting professionalism among psychologists in Hong Kong.
- In 1991 it published a code of conduct for the profession (Hong Kong Psychological Society, 1991)
- In 1995 it set up a registration board and encouraged psychologists in Hong Kong to register on a voluntary basis.
- In 1998 it formed a working group for the preparation of statutory registration of psychologists. The mission of this working group is to lobby the government to regulate the practice of psychology through legislation.
- Publishes the *Journal of Psychology in Chinese Societies* twice a year. This is a peer-reviewed journal that publishes articles of general interest to psychologists working with or studying Chinese people.

#### The Division of Educational Psychology

- It was a division of the Hong Kong Psychological Society and was formed in 1987.
- It has been active in promoting educational psychology in Hong Kong and its endeavors include: lobbying the government for a better provision of educational psychology services; organizing continuing education activities for its members; and providing community services to the public.

### 4. Preparation of school psychologists

Briefly describe professional preparation of school psychologists in terms of:

#### a) Scope of Training (Knowledge & Skill Areas)

- Educational psychologists are required to have a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in educational psychology.
- The master's degree must have an emphasis on professional training.
- Courses cover the following core areas:
  - psychological foundation (e.g. developmental psychology, children with special needs),
  - educational foundation (e.g. curriculum and instruction, learning and motivation),
  - assessment, intervention, research methods and issues related to the profession (e.g. ethical and legal issues in educational psychology).

#### b) Field Experiences Required

- For supervised internships, each student is placed in three different placement settings that include both mainstream and special education settings.

- c) Years of Study (Number of Credit Hours Required)
- The educational Psychology Program at the University of Hong Kong is the only program in Hong Kong that provides professional training.
  - It is a two-year full-time program with a scholar-practitioner's model at the master's level.
  - Applicants' to this program are required to have:
    - A bachelor's degree in psychology
    - At least 2 years' work experience in educational settings.
    - Must complete 14 courses, 1, 500 hours of supervised internship and an empirical research thesis before graduating.
- d) Training Programs (i.e. Where, How Many Programs, How Many Trainees)
- Graduates of the program are not only expected to be practitioners providing services in school settings,
  - Are also involved in the generation and dissemination of knowledge in educational psychology.
  - To prepare competent scientist-practitioners, the program emphasizes research training and adopts a proactive and systems orientation that is in line with the service delivery model. This model addresses all levels of interventions that range from remediation to prevention, case work to systems work, and direct to indirect services.
- e) Where Graduates are Typically Employed (e.g. Schools, Government Agencies, Private Clinics, Other)
- Not specified

## 5. Roles, functions, and responsibilities of school psychologists

Briefly describe the typical activities, roles, and responsibilities of school psychologists.

The roles, functions and responsibilities of educational psychologist (Lam, 2005):

- Dimension 1: Intervention: includes all of the suggestions, activities, and planning. Under this dimension, there are 3 levels:
  1. Remedial – focuses on treatment of problems or dysfunctions that have occurred, for example, anger control training for a student with aggressive behaviors.
  2. Preventive – focuses on prevention of dysfunction or problems that have either occurred or are about to occur, for example, assertiveness training for a group of students at risk for being bullied.
  3. Developmental intervention – focuses on enhancement and enrichment of positive qualities instead of elimination of problems, for example, leadership training for peer tutors in cooperative learning.

- Dimension 2: Target: includes individuals, groups, and systems in which individuals and groups reside. Under this dimension are 3 levels:
  1. Individual level – focus is the individual student, for example, counseling service for a student who has been referred for learning difficulties.
  2. Group level – for group of students, teachers, educational administrators, or parents. For example, a staff development workshop for accommodating student diversity.
  3. Systems level – the target are systems in which the individual child resides, such as classrooms, schools and families. Consultation with teachers on curriculum development is one of the services at this level.
- Dimension 3: Directness: can be direct or indirect
  1. Direct services – are activities performed directly on targets, for example, assessment and counseling for students who have been referred for academic difficulties.
  2. Indirect services – are activities implemented around the targets in the environment. For example, to help students with specific learning difficulties, educational psychologists help teachers adjust their curricula and teaching methods.

## 6. Current practice impacting school psychologists

Briefly describe major problems and challenges impacting school psychology, and the initiatives attempted in an effort to address these problems or challenges.

1. As of 2006, Hong Kong still does not have statutory registration for educational psychologists. As a strong regulatory system is lacking, there is no way to hold educational psychologist accountable for unethical practice if he/ she is not a member of the Hong Kong Psychological Society.
2. There is no way to ensure that a particular educational psychologist will engage in supervision and continuing professional development. The supervision tended to be administrative instead of professional in nature.
3. Although Hong Kong has some assessment tools with local norms such as the Hong Kong Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children, the Hong Kong Based Adaptive Behavior Scale, but these are limited in number. Hence, there is a strong need to develop local tests or to standardize Western tests on local norms.
4. The “contracting out” policy in educational psychology services in recent years represents one attempt by the government to cut the budget in education. When services are contracted to non-governmental organizations, the government can keep the budget low by competitive tendering procedures. The possible effects of such policy may include low income and job insecurity for the service providers as well as fewer and diluted services to the public.
5. There is a shortage of educational psychologists (Rehabilitation Advisory Committee, 1995). To ease the shortage of educational psychologists, the training program at the University of Hong Kong has increased its intake from 15 to 20 students by 2006 at the request of the government.

6. To integrate with local culture and develop a unique identity, education psychology in Hong Kong requires research and scholarship that reflects Hong Kong's conditions. Educational psychologists in Hong Kong have made some progress in this respect. However, there is still ample room for improvement.
7. Facing the increasing need for psychological services for school-age children, educators and psychologists in Mainland China have begun to realize the importance of establishing training programs for school psychologists (Zhou et.al., 2001)
8. In 2005, a group of senior educational psychologists from Hong Kong volunteered to help the Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou to set up a school psychology program. This program is the first of its kind in Mainland China.

