

# Equal Opportunities Commission Report

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*Source: Inland Regional Center*

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## Background

As I am currently a handicapped university graduate who managed to obtain a university degree despite having Special Educational Needs at that time, I naturally have a particular interest in this subject.

This proposal is envisioned to be part of a 12-month long program to revolutionize the way students with special educational needs (SEN) are currently educated in Hong Kong. Its purpose is to review related local and overseas literature and studies on approaches and strategies adopted in providing inclusive education to students with SEN; to assess the knowledge of principals, school administrators, and teachers about the DDO, the Code of Practice on Education, and students with SEN; to quantify the views on inclusive education for students with SEN in ordinary schools from principals, school administrators, and teachers; and to examine the major challenges faced by schools in implementing integrated education and meeting the needs of students with SEN.

On a personal note, as I was a student with SEN myself (I have now graduated from university), being handicapped while studying for a Bachelors' degree at the Chinese University, this topic was especially dear to my heart. Throughout my education, I have encountered many difficulties

and trials, and I am naturally anxious to help others avoid them. I have therefore analyzed some challenges facing students with SEN, possible policies, and leading practices in teaching students with SEN, and I hope it helps.

## Introduction

This research proposal is titled “Study on Challenges, Effective Policies, and Best Practices of Ordinary Schools in Educating Students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong”. It was written in response to the call for submission available at

<http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/graphicsfolder/showcontent.aspx?content=invitation%20to%20submit%20research%20proposals> .

This research proposal was written to examine whether ordinary schools faced challenges in educating students with special needs (‘SEN students’), the challenges they face regularly, and what effective policies and practices were used to deal with them. In this research proposal, I will conduct a literature review of past and current literature on the topic, introduce some possible equipment and policies (though these may differ from school to school), and also conduct an online survey regarding the subject. I hope it sheds light on possible future opportunities for students with special needs and abilities.

In Hong Kong, the Education Bureau has integrated education in public sector ordinary schools through, for example, many different measures have been introduced to support the learning and teaching of SEN students in ordinary schools. However, the right (of the public) of access to inclusive education and equal education opportunities of SEN students in ordinary schools have

not been adequately addressed. The Equal Opportunities Commission is hoping to change that by starting a call for proposals, which this proposal is part of.

Thank you for your attention.

## Method of Study

The definition of quota sampling shows that a quota is “...a non-probability sampling technique wherein the assembled sample has the same proportions of individuals as the entire population with respect to known characteristics, traits or focused phenomenon.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in keeping with the meaning of a case study, out of the “587 primary schools, 506 secondary day schools and 61 special schools”<sup>2</sup>, the research team will select a sample of “3 primary schools, 3 secondary day schools and 1 special school” to focus on in this report.

Out of the 587 primary schools, we have randomly selected 3 primary schools for consideration.

They are:

- Aldrich Bay Government Primary School
- Buddhist Chi King Primary School
- TWGH Lo Yu Chik Primary School

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<sup>1</sup> [Explorable.com](https://explorable.com/quota-sampling), Quota Sampling: <https://explorable.com/quota-sampling>

<sup>2</sup> Education Bureau, Overview on Primary Education:  
<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/edu-system/primary-secondary/primary/overview/index.html>

Out of the 506 secondary day schools, we have randomly selected 3 primary schools for our research. They are:

- SKH All Saints' Middle School
- Clementi Secondary School
- Caritas Tuen Mun Marden Foundation Secondary School

Out of the 61 special schools, we have randomly selected 1 special school for consideration. It is:

- Hong Kong Red Cross Margaret Trench School

However, since this research is titled Study on Challenges, Effective Policies, and Best Practices of Ordinary Schools in Educating Students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong, in this research proposal, we will focus on the mainstream schools (3 primary schools and 3 secondary day schools) to focus on in this study.

My method of study is an online survey which I have written and emailed to the principal of each school selected. In the survey, I listed out several common challenges, policies and practices in educating students with SEN and asked if these problems were present in his/her school. I will also review some past and current literature on the subject.



Afterwards, I will perform an analysis and introduce some possible challenges, policies and practices. In this report, we have found out that drama and theatrical play is a very effective method of teaching students, particularly students with SEN. Therefore, our report will make some recommendations, and the schools concerned could take note of them.

As a final gesture, after these recommendations, I will add a closing paragraph to conclude this report.

## Research Survey

I will email each of the principals of the selected schools, and request them to fill in an online survey that I wrote, asking them about their school's challenges, effective policies and best practices in educating students with special educational needs.

The survey is available online. In it, I will ask a series of questions about challenges, effective policies and best practices that they encountered in educating students with SEN. The survey is reproduced below:

URL: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D5LGRMH>

### Challenges, Policies and Practices in educating students with SEN

Which school do you represent?

Aldrich Bay Government Primary School

Buddhist Chi King Primary School

TWGH Lo Yu Chik Primary School

SKH All Saints' Middle School

Clementi Secondary School

Caritas Tuen Mun Marden Foundation Secondary School

Did your school face special challenges in educating students with SEN?

Yes

No

Which area did these challenges fall in?

Too much time and effort needed.

Too many resources needed.

People (parents, staff etc) were not trained to help students with SEN.

People (parents, staff etc) were not willing to help

How did you counter these challenges?

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Did your school find any policies especially effective in educating students with SEN?

Yes

No

Did these policies lead to any best practices in your school?

Yes

No

In which area did these policies fall in?

Policies about homework/assignments

Policies about teaching/knowledge transfer

Policies about student treatment

Other (please specify)

--

Overall, did these challenges lead to effective policies and best practices in educating students with special educational needs at your school?

Yes

No

If so, please name these policies and practices.

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## Literature Review

### *Introduction*

In this literature review, I will review several academic papers on the subject. They are:

- ✓ *Review of the Literature on Children with Special Educational Needs*, Mohammed Ali Alkahtani, 2016
- ✓ *Special Educators' Perceptions about Learning Fundamental Social Skills Through Theatrical Play: The Case of Children with Special Educational Needs*, G. Togia, G. Charitaki and S.G. Soulis, 2017
- ✓ *Education of Students with Special Educational Needs and their inclusion in the community*, Gordana Stankovska, Slagana Angelkoska & Svetlana Pandiloska Grncaroska, 2015

## Introduction to Possible Equipment for students with SEN

I have said limited equipment is necessary for educating students, but if necessary, there are many types of equipment can be used. Many types of equipment have been developed for users with special needs. There are many variations and categories, but in this section, I would like to briefly introduce some possible equipment for students with special educational needs (SEN).

They are:

1. For the visually impaired:

- a. Magnifiers
- b. Tactile bumps
- c. Colour identifiers
- d. Braille or Moon

2. For the hearing impaired:

- a. Hearing loops
- b. FM systems
- c. Infrared systems
- d. Personal amplifiers

3. For the physically impaired:

- a. Wheelchairs
- b. Guide dogs

- c. Frames and artificial limbs
  - d. Rollaters
  - e. Canes, sticks and quadrapods
4. Assistive devices for students with special educational needs (SEN):
- a. Text-to-speech systems
  - b. Assistive Listening Systems

I have written more information in this proposal below:

## Magnifiers



*Source:* <https://www.brightfocus.org/glaucoma/article/low-vision-and-glaucoma>

A magnifier is an assistive device for visually impaired people, e.g. students who ordinary schools may accept into the general curriculum. Magnifiers may have many different shapes and sizes: some are handheld, some are dome-shaped, and some are mounted on furniture, etc. Many types are available for sale on the market, either physical or online.



## Tactile signs



Source: Freepiks

These are also often used by visually impaired users. If you are really interested, tactile bumps can fall into one of the following categories: directional, positional and hazard warning<sup>3</sup>.

Directional tiles have raised bars set in one direction the user should take. Positional bumps are raised dots, often positioned at the end or a junction of a tactile guide path, that indicates a change in the direction the user should travel in<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [http://www.bfahk.com.hk/?page\\_id=27&lang=en](http://www.bfahk.com.hk/?page_id=27&lang=en)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.archsd.gov.hk/archsd/html/ua2/3\\_6.html](https://www.archsd.gov.hk/archsd/html/ua2/3_6.html)

## Colour identifiers



*Source:* MaxiAids

Visually impaired people, being visually impaired, have difficulty in identifying objects visually. However, in that case, a color identifier would be able to help. A colour identifier tells different colors and shades apart – for example, if a coat is pink, for example, the Colorino talking colour identifier and light detector would be able to announce “pink” out loud<sup>5</sup>. That would certainly help students with SEN.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://shop.rnib.org.uk/colorino-talking-colour-detector.html>

## Braille or Moon

A ∧	B ∩	C ⊂	D ⊃	E ⌌	F ⌒
G ⌑	H ⊙	I 	J ⌑	K ⌠	L ⌌
M ⌌	N ⌒	O ⊙	P ⌠	Q ⌑	R ⌒
S /	T —	U ⊂	V ∨	W ⌒	X ⌠
Y ⌌	Z ⌒	AND Σ	THE ⌑	! !	? ?
⋮ ⋮ ⋮	⋅ ⋅ ⋅	⋅ ⋅ ⋅	⋅ ⋅ ⋅	⋅ ⋅ ⋅	⋅ ⋅ ⋅

Source: Deafblind.com, <http://www.deafblind.com/moon.html>

You've probably heard of Braille, but Moon is also a type of tactile alphabet that users can see and read by touch. Moon is also a system of touchable alphabet similar to Braille.<sup>6</sup> In a school context, notes and assignments could be made available in Braille or Moon form. Blind users would then be able to read by touch.

<sup>6</sup> Omniglot, <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/moon.htm>

## Hearing aids



*Source:* NRS Healthcare

Hearing aids are basically divided into five categories. They are: traditional behind-the-ear (BTE), mini behind-the-ear (mBTE), completely-in-the-canal (CIC), in-the-canal (ITC), and traditional in-the-ear (ITE)<sup>7</sup>. Each type has its own pros and cons, and the user could seek help from a medical doctor or audiologist if necessary.

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<sup>7</sup> Consumer reports – Hearing aids, <https://www.consumerreports.org/cro/hearing-aids/buying-guide/index.htm>

## FM system



*Source:* Hearing Link

FM systems are another type of assistive devices. An FM system, "...also called a personal FM system, uses radio waves to deliver speech signals directly from the speaker's mouth to the listener's ears. " An FM system uses the same signals as an FM radio, but it should be tuned in to frequencies that are preset for personal use. There are also two components: a radio signal transmitter and a receiver.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Healthy Hearing, <https://www.healthyhearing.com/help/assistive-listening-devices/fm-systems>

## Infrared systems



*Source:* Sound Induction Systems

Like your television remote control at home, in an infrared system, a transmitter sends speech or music signals to a receiver using invisible infrared light waves. Because the signals may be affected by light, this technology can only be used indoors and cannot be used outdoors during the daytime.<sup>9</sup> Users using this technology also need a receiver and a headphone or a neck loop.

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<sup>9</sup> HLAA, <https://www.hearingloss.org/hearing-help/technology/hat/alds/>

## Personal amplifiers



*Source: AARP*

“While hearing aids are tailored to hard of hearing people, PSAPs are meant to be used by people with a full range of hearing.”<sup>10</sup> That means hearing aids filter out certain kinds of sound, but personal amplifiers just *amplify* all types of sound.

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<sup>10</sup> Signia Hearing Aids,  
<https://www.signia-hearing.com/blog/the-difference-between-hearing-amplifiers-hearing-aids/>

## Wheelchairs



*Source:* Ray Fisher Pharmacy, ‘Standard Wheelchair’,

<https://www.rayfisher.com/ray-fisher-pharmacy-standard-wheelchair-detail.htm?productid=-270598>

A suitable-for-all type of assistive device, a wheelchair is “...a chair mounted on wheels especially for the use of disabled persons.”<sup>11</sup> Most wheelchairs are classified into different categories according to their size and function – transport wheelchairs, bath wheelchairs and so forth.

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<sup>11</sup> Merriam-Webster, ‘Wheelchair’, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/wheelchair>



## Guide dogs



Source: National Today, 'International Guide Dog Day',  
<https://nationaltoday.com/international-guide-dog-day/>

Bob Barker said, “A person who has never owned a dog has missed a wonderful part of life”<sup>12</sup>, and guide dogs can provide companionship, warmth – and work in place of a visually impaired person’s eyes. Before becoming a guide dog, future guide dogs need to be trained and taught to avoid distractions, ignore noise, etc. Guide dogs live for a long period of time and are frequently very useful.

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<sup>12</sup> My Dog’s Name, ‘27 Dog Best Friend Quotes That Perfectly Sum Up Your Relationship’,  
<https://www.mydogsname.com/dog-best-friend-quotes/>

### Frames and artificial limbs

Whenever a person loses his/her mobility, he/she is frequently prescribed frames and artificial limbs by a physiotherapist. Both of these have a similar function: to replace a user's arms and legs.



*Source:* 1800wheelchair.com, 'Dual Release Adult Walker',  
<https://www.1800wheelchair.com/product/dual-release-adult-walker/>

Frames may have different names in different countries – in the United Kingdom it may be called a Zimmer frame, while in the United States it may be called a walker. In Hong Kong it is commonly called a frame.



Source: indiaMART, ‘Artificial Limb Prosthetics’,  
<https://www.indiamart.com/proddetail/artificial-limb-prosthetics-13213902891.html>

Artificial limbs are similar. Traditionally, artificial limbs used to be made of steel or plastic; but newer limbs have been recently developed. For example, scientists have developed bionic limbs that can be controlled by the user’s mind<sup>13</sup>, and nowadays, 3D printing has been used to produce artificial limbs<sup>14</sup>. Artificial limbs have thus become more popular and more common.

### Rollators



Source: NRS Healthcare, ‘A-Series 4-Wheel Rollator’,  
<https://www.nrshealthcare.co.uk/mobility-aids/walking-aids/walking-frames-rollators/a-series-4-wheel-rollator>

Rollators can also commonly be seen nowadays. To put it simply, a rollator is essentially a four-legged frame with a small wheel at the end of each leg. They can have three to four wheels, and usually they have a pouch or bag to put your things in. Rollators are useful for users going on long trips or for users who need to react quickly. Rollators are simpler to use than frames because they can be simply pushed along the ground without having to be lifted.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://futurism.com/bionics-artificial-limbs>

<sup>14</sup> CNN, ‘How a 3-D printed arm gave hope to boy maimed in bomb blast’,  
<http://edition.cnn.com/2014/03/19/opinion/3d-print-arm-daniel/index.html>

<sup>15</sup> <https://justwalkers.com/pages/rollators-tips>

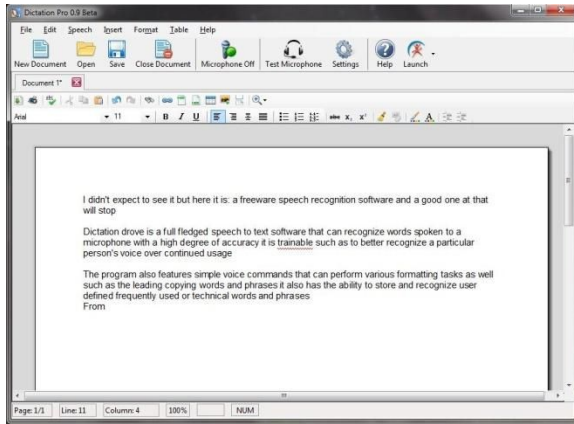
### Canes, sticks and quadrapods



*Source:* [www.caring-for-aging-parents.com](http://www.caring-for-aging-parents.com)

Many people use a cane, stick, or quadrapod, as it allows them to walk while supported by the device and gives them a certain degree of freedom. Depending on the situation and the user's physical condition, a physiotherapist may advise him or her to use one of these.

## Text-to-speech systems



*Source:* <http://www.freewaregenius.com/>

If a person is visually impaired, he or she may use a text-to-speech system when using the computer. A text-to-speech software can help. For example, if there is an icon of a puppy on the screen, the visually impaired person may not see it. However, the text to speech system would announce “Puppy” in a loud voice. The visually impaired person would therefore know that it is a puppy.

## Assistive Listening Systems



*Source:* [www.hearing-center.net](http://www.hearing-center.net)

There can be many occasions when it is very difficult for a person who has impaired hearing to differentiate voice from among many others. An assistive listening device can help. It usually captures audio signals from the environment and broadcasts them wirelessly.

## **Introduction to Possible Policies for students with SEN**

An organization may implement any number of policies targeted for or against students with SEN. I have briefly introduced them below. They include:

1. Flexible hours.
2. Adapted curricula.
3. Personalized tuition.

### Flexible hours.



*Source:* <https://vanrath.com/flexible-working-hours-advantages-business/>

A “flexible hours” policy, or flextime or flexitime, is a flexible hours arrangement that enables students to attend lessons or go to school whenever they prefer. This is different from traditional school schedules that require students to attend school for the prerequisite amount of time per day. In contrast, a “flexible hours” policy typically has a "core" period of the day during which all students are required to be at school (for example from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.), and a "bandwidth" period, during which students must be present at school for the required duration of time (for example, for 6 hours).

The total working time required is the same as that required under traditional lesson schedules. However, a “flexible hours” policy has several advantages. A flextime policy allows students to decide when they will attend school, allowing the student with SEN to bypass unsuitable hours.



For example, if he/she knows that he/she has to take a medication that will cause him/her to feel sleepy after 6 p.m., he/she can avoid scheduling lessons at that time. That will therefore facilitate overall learning by the student.

### Adapted curricula



Source: <https://www.cedu.niu.edu/seed/graduate-programs/masters-special-education.shtml>

When including students with special needs into the classroom, certain adaptations may have to be made to the curriculum (pl. curricula). For example, for a visually impaired student, a Braille textbook may need to be used, as he/she would be unable to see the words, but would be able to touch them. The *National Association of Special Education Teachers* provides useful guidelines on adapting curricula for special education teachers.

### Personalized tuition



*Source:* <http://nycteacherswhotutor.com/about-us/>

Sometimes a particular student may require personalized tuition, especially if he/she is a student with special educational needs, or SEN. Personalized tuition has several advantages, including: this may make him/her feel more at home and comfortable, as he/she would be in a relatively quieter environment; and this would create an environment that affords more privacy and one-on-one teaching, as these situations usually have less people.

For instance, a teacher may offer personalized tuition to an autistic student, helping him to memorize the different elements in the periodic table. However, teachers may find this process difficult and cumbersome. This policy may therefore place an extra workload on the teacher.

## Detailed Analysis

### *Findings*

In his paper, Mohammed Ali Alkahtani reviews the meaning and definition of special educational needs (SEN) and examines its origin, definition and types. He then settles on a most preferred type of pedagogy he considers most suitable for children with SEN – drama and theatrical play. 36.7% of SEN teachers participating in a study agree that theatrical play helps children with SEN feel better very much, while 26.7% agree that it helps the children’s psychology (Togia, Charitaki and Soulis, *Special Educators’ Perceptions about Learning Fundamental Social Skills Through Theatrical Play: The Case of Children with Special Educational Needs*). Finally, Stankovska, Angelkoska and Grncaroska conclude there are some advantages of inclusive education, some of them being warm and caring friendships and a marked increase in the students’ social initiations, relationships and networks being some consequences.

Another positive example is the example of Finnish education. Saloviita (2018) relates how “...in the Finnish context the term “a child with special educational needs (SEN)” has been

changed to an expression “a child with a need for special support”. This system serves the students’ needs quite well, and Hong Kong would benefit greatly by following this example.<sup>16</sup>

## *Recommendations*

Based on the studies and the survey mentioned above, we recommend that Hong Kong schools integrate drama and theatrical play as an effective policy and the preferred method of mainstream schools in educating students, particularly students with SEN.

An advantage of this measure is that it requires limited manpower and resources. The mainstream school in question only needs to designate a teacher as in charge of drama and theatrical play, and the selected teacher can continue to educate students with SEN using this method. For example, Florian suggests that the teaching strategies used in mainstream education can be adapted to assist students who have been identified as having special educational needs (Florian, 2008).

To conclude, many studies seem to support adopting drama and theatrical play as an effective policy of mainstream schools in educating students with SEN. In Finland, many schools have adopted drama and theatrical play as a teaching method in the general curriculum. We advise

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<sup>16</sup> Saloviita, Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research, *Attitudes of Teachers Towards Inclusive Education in Finland*, November 2018

that the practice be incorporated into the general curriculum in Hong Kong schools to teach students with SEN as well.

### *Sample Size*

Out of the 506<sup>17</sup> secondary schools currently in Hong Kong, we have randomly selected a sample of 6 to conduct this research on. The sampling ratio is  $6 \div 506$ , which works out to a ratio of 1 to 84.3 . This sampling ratio should be quite a representative ratio.

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<sup>17</sup> Education Bureau, *Figures and Statistics – Secondary Education*,  
<https://www.edb.gov.hk/en/about-edb/publications-stat/figures/sec.html>

## Budget and Motivation

Since the survey was conducted mainly online, the main types of input were time – I had to spend time writing the survey and the proposal – and labour – I had to sift through EDB school lists beforehand. There was a limited amount of money involved, as everything used was available free of charge.

This research was, to be honest, quite difficult and labor-intensive. However, as I am a SEN student myself, just newly graduated from the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I had a special interest in the topic of inclusion. Over the course of my illness, I had encountered all sorts of prejudices and difficulties as a result of my condition, and sought to change all that.

This research proposal is the result. It may not be much, but I hope it is a small step towards more understanding of challenges, effective policies, and best practices of ordinary schools in educating students with Special Educational Needs in Hong Kong. It was written by me in response to the call for submissions available online at:

<http://www.eoc.org.hk/eoc/graphicsfolder/showcontent.aspx?content=invitation%20to%20submit%20research%20proposals> .

Thank you.

## Conclusion

Here ends this report.

We hope you have enjoyed it, and hope you have gained some knowledge from reading it, perhaps about challenges, policies, and practices of ordinary schools in educating students with special educational needs in Hong Kong.

We have taken a closer look into the question of whether ordinary schools faced challenges in educating students with special needs, the challenges they face regularly, and what useful policies or common practices were used to counter them. I have conducted a literature review of different academic works on the topic, and also conducted an online survey on the subject. I have also written about some equipment and policies that may be used to engage students with SEN more proactively.

I hope it provides more information on possible future developments for students with special needs and abilities.

## List of References

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