

Teacher training program in Hong Kong Institute of Technology (HKIT)

According to the survey conducted in October 2015, there are 17 diagnosed cases of students with special educational needs (SEN). The actual number of students requiring special educational supports may be larger because the official figures only take into account of those medically-diagnosed cases.

As a consequence, academic staffs felt pressured due to lack of experience in working with students with diverse learning needs. It urged a teacher training program to equip the academic staffs with relevant knowledge and skills in working with students with diverse learning needs.

A) Development of teacher training protocol

(1) Determining the framework of teacher training protocol

The framework of teacher training protocol was determined through literature review.

One of the goals is to foster positive attitude towards students with SEN. As Livingstone (2001, as cited in Dart, 2006, p.134) mentioned, people may misperceive the status of students with SEN as a result of ancestral displeasure, human machinations or punishment from gods. Within this context, students with SEN need to cope with the societal attitude that based on pity or fear, it is essential for teachers to reflect on their attitudes on students with SEN (Dart, 2006).

Another goal is to enhance teachers' knowledge on working with students with SEN.

Kirby, Davies, and Bryant (2005) pointed out that teachers cannot recognize or accommodate the needs of students with SEN, if they are not equipped with relevant knowledge about SEN. Therefore, a pre-service and in-service teacher development program in United States included topics about knowledge of SEN, such as "Introducing behavioral, emotional and social needs", "An overview of cognition and learning", "Speech and language" and "Autism Spectrum condition" (Golder, Jones, & Quinn, 2009).

The last goal is to equip the teachers with teaching skills of accommodating students with SEN in mainstream classroom. The document published by the Department of Education and Skills in United States (2004, as cited in Golder et al., 2009, p. 183) noted the importance of teachers to have the skills to work with students with SEN. Therefore, the corresponding program for dyslexic pupils" and "Creating an inclusive learning environment" (Golder et al., 2009).

Some components were mentioned by the literatures, but the effectiveness of these components was doubtful and was not applicable to the teacher training program in HKIT. The program mentioned by Golder et al. (2009) used various ways to enhance knowledge and skills for trainee teachers, for instance,

placements in special education schools. However, it was found that teachers from the program developed by Golder et al. (2009) commented that the skills learnt from the placement cannot be transferred to mainstream settings, one of the trainee teachers pointed out that, the tactics used in special education schools were successful as a number of teaching assistant were allocated to the students and thus differentiation was possible; and it is unlikely to do it in mainstream classrooms (Golder et al., 2009). Additionally, teachers in HKIT are in-service teacher and are not able to have placements in special education schools.

In conclusion, three elements should be included in the teacher training program in HKIT: (1) attitude, (2) knowledge, and (3) skills.

(2) Understanding the expectations of different parties and prior understanding on SEN of teachers

After determining the initial framework of teacher training protocol, QESS Project Team conducted semi-structured interview to academic staffs on their expectations on the teacher training program; and students with SEN and their parents on their views of student support in the classroom, in order to understand the expectations of stakeholders on the program and strengthen the parts in teacher training protocol if these are the major concerns of the stakeholders. Three sets of interview protocol were prepared for academic staffs (see Appendix A), students with SEN (see Appendix B) and parents of students with SEN (see Appendix C).

QESS Project Team invited 16 academic staffs that are currently teaching associate degree or bachelor degree program in HKIT. All of the interviews were in voluntary basis and conducted in Cantonese.

For the students and parents, QESS Project Team invited them according to the results of a questionnaire, which reached all of the students studying associate degree and degree in HKIT and ask if the student have any SEN. After receiving the questionnaire, QESS Project Team sent the invitation letters to the students who reported that they have SEN and their parents. All of the interviews were in voluntary basis and conducted in Cantonese.

B) Implementation of teacher training program

(1) Target group of teacher training program

The target group of teacher training program includes all of the teaching staffs in HKIT, including teachers working with Yi Jin Diploma, associate and degree levels.

(2) Duration and proposed date of teacher training program

The program will last for three hours. It is proposed to be conducted on 20 January 2016 (1:30pm to 4:30pm).

(3) Rundown of the program

1. Identification of SEN	General characteristics and presenting problems of various SEN type
2. Teaching method	Universal design for learning techniques that suit students with diverse learning needs
3. Coping skills	Techniques to handle students with behavioral or emotional challenges
4. Existing resources for SEN students	Introduction of assistive technology and services for adolescents with SEN by government or non-profit making organizations
5. Case sharing	Sharing of two existing cases of SEN students
6. Preview of screening tool	A brief review of the screening tool that QESS team is developing (i.e. philosophy)

(4) Content of the program

The content of the program was developed by QESS project team and external consultant team, which one of the members of the external consultant team have over 10 years of experience of working with students with SEN and had experience in conducting teacher training for secondary and primary school teachers; and another member of the team has 5 years of experience of working with students with SEN.

C) Evaluation mechanism of teacher training program

Kirkpatrick (1994) proposed a four-level model in evaluating a program, the model included four levels: reaction, learning, behavior and results levels. Reaction refers to measurement on participants' satisfaction on the program. Learning refers to measurement on participants' change in their attitude, knowledge and skills. Behavior refers to measurement on participants' change in actual behavior. Results refer to the measurement on the overall effects of the program on the organization, such as morale and commitment to the schools. Wong and Wong (2003) adopted Kirkpatrick (1994)'s model in the evaluation of a teacher training program in Hong Kong. Following Wong and Wong (2003)'s study, the evaluation of the current teacher training program in HKIT was based on three levels of measurement: reaction, learning and behavior. The current evaluation mechanism excluded results level as the current training program did not aim at improving school management or reducing turnover rate of employees.

Level 1: Reaction

Teachers' satisfaction on the program was evaluated in the following aspects: facilities (i.e. venue), the schedule, the course content, the trainer and the value that the teachers placed on individual aspect. Questionnaire (see Appendix D) was prepared for teachers to provide comments on the program. Four items (i.e. item 1 to 4) were related to course content. Three items (i.e. item 5 to 7) were related to the quality of the trainer. One item (i.e. item 8) was related to facilities and two items (i.e. item 9 to 10) were related to schedule of the program. Three open-ended questions (i.e. item 11 to 13) were designed to obtain participants' detailed comments on the program. Mean score of each aspect were reported.

Level 2: Learning

Questionnaire (see Appendix E) was prepared to assess teachers' attitudes towards students with SEN and inclusive education. The questionnaire was designed with reference to the survey developed by Equal Opportunities Commission (2011). Item 1 and 2 were positive items while item 3 and 4 were negative items, which reverse coding was needed. Higher scores means more positive attitude towards students with SEN. Paired sample t-test was conducted to compare teachers' attitude in pre- and post-measures.

Level 3: Behavior

Questionnaire were used to assess teachers' change in actual behavior when working with students with SEN. Questionnaires (see Appendix F) were used to

assess teachers' actual behavioral change in a self-reported basis and were distributed two weeks after the completion of the program.

Appendix A

Interview protocol for academic staffs in HKIT

1. Do you know what “special educational needs (SEN)” means?

For academic staffs that can demonstrate their knowledge on the term, turn to question 2

For academic staffs that do not demonstrate their knowledge on the term, interviewers from QESS Project Team will explain the term to them with the following script, before turning to question 2.

Definition of SEN in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, students with SEN was defined as having one or more following characteristics:

- Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD)
 - Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD)
 - Communication Difficulties (CD)
 - Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties (EBD)
 - Hearing Impairment (HI)
 - Visual Impairment (VI)
 - Intellectual Disability (ID)
 - Physical Disability (PD)
 - Specific Learning Difficulties (SLD)
- (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2012)

2. Have you ever had students with SEN in your class?

Follow-up questions for “yes” in question 2:

- (1) What were the specific types of SEN that they are living with?
- (2) How did their special needs affect their learning in class?
- (3) What did you do when you find that their special needs affect their learning?
- (4) What did you feel when working with students with SEN?

3. Have you ever suspected that some students in your class are students with SEN?

(i.e. although they did not shown to be students with SEN in official school record, they showed some “symptoms” that consist with students with SEN)

4. What do you expect from the teacher training program in HKIT? (i.e. knowing about etiology of SEN; or specific skills of working with students with SEN)

Appendix B

Interview protocol for students with SEN in HKIT

1. Do you think you have a good relationship with teachers in HKIT? Do you think that teachers in HKIT help you in encountering challenges in academic issues and life challenges?

Follow-up questions for “yes” in question 1:

How did they help you?

2. Do you think you have a good relationship with other students in HKIT?

3. How is your study life in HKIT? What are you good at doing at school? What do you think you can improve?

4. Apart from strengths and weaknesses in studying, what are your strengths and weaknesses in other aspects?

5. What do you think HKIT can do for you (e.g. teacher accommodation in classroom)?

Appendix C

Interview protocol for parents with SEN in HKIT

1. Do you think HKIT provide enough learning support to your child?
2. What do you think HKIT can provide for your child?

Appendix D

Questionnaire Sample - Teacher's level of satisfaction(at the end of the program)

Item Sample	
1. I think that the content of the program is interesting.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
2. I think that the content of the program is relevant.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
3. I think that the content of the program is useful.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
4. I think that the content of the program is comprehensive.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
5. I think that the trainer in the program is knowledgeable on the field of special educational needs.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
6. I think the trainer in the program had good preparation on the program (i.e. handouts and PowerPoint).	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
7. I think the trainer in the program facilitated a good atmosphere of learning and discussion.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
8. I think the venue of the program is convenient for me.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
9. I think the selection of the timeslot of the program is appropriate.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
10. I think the length of the program is appropriate.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
(Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree)	

11. What is the element in the current program impressed you the most?

12. What do you think the current program can be improved?

13. Do you have any other comments on the program?

Appendix E

Questionnaire about attitude on working with SEN students

Item Sample	
1. For students with special educational needs, studying in mainstream schools (e.g. HKIT) is more preferable than special school.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
2. Students with special educational needs should be allowed to attend mainstream schools (e.g. HKIT).	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
3. Students with special educational needs are often unmotivated.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
4. Students with special educational needs cannot really benefit from education.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
(Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree)	

Appendix F

Questionnaire about behavior change on teachers

Item Sample	
1. I tried to apply the skills that learnt from teacher training program conducted by QESS team in my teaching.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
2. I showed growing empathy to the students with special educational needs after teacher training program conducted by QESS team.	1 / 2 / 3 / 4 / 5
(Note: 1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = undecided; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree)	

References:

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