

International Curriculum – It's Meaning and Perception in Hong Kong

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Abstract

International education has a long history. It helps to pursue and maintain world peace, the education of the young, which focuses on how nations and people can work in harmony to achieve international cooperation and understanding. In a knowledge-based world, with prosperous economy and sophisticated information technology, the world is moving towards globalization, human resources is being reallocated, resulting in a need in educational globalization. Therefore, this article proposes the promotion of international education and integration of international curriculum to foster whole person development. International curriculum is not just a curriculum that used in international school, though it should be a curriculum that promotes international learning which should include cultures, languages, environmental studies, political relations, religions, geography and history of the world. In the meantime, both local and international schools should implement international curriculum for the world citizens. This study compares the curriculum in international and local kindergartens and provides suggestions for kindergartens to foster international education. In the meantime, international curriculum should begin at the foundation stage so that the next generation will adapt and accommodate to this change easily. Last but not the least, an abiding purpose of international education is necessary for the millennium to enhance international learners to face the future world.

Keywords : *international education, international curriculum, local curriculum, educational globalization*

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Introduction

In the 21st century, a knowledge-based era, with technology and economic upraising, people need to have knowledge and be able to apply learning to working or real life experience. This remains true to most of the countries in the world, at least true for all developed countries. Economies and technology are globalizing and so does education. Moreover, as economies and technology are developing in a rapid speed, human resources is being reallocated all the time, people are moving around with their family members whilst the education of their next generation becomes intercultural and education needs to be internationalized. The fact is that the world is small, fragile, and it has become obvious that its inhabitants are increasingly dependent on one another. This realization has also made it imperative that international educators devote more attention and resources to developing new curricula. Courses will focus on issues and problems that are trans-national and trans-cultural as well as to examine and reflect upon the ways of thinking of people around the world. International education is the trend nowadays which should apply to all educational levels, starting from Early Childhood to Primary to Secondary education. As educators, we also need to guide students into becoming international learners. Right now, we are experiencing educational reform world-wide and our next generation will be facing different people from around the world. At the same time they might have chances to have their career around the world or they might need to cooperate with other people from around the world. The earlier our next generation gets in touch with international education, the easier they will accommodate to the change. The above shed lights towards the importance of international education, how educators promote international education in the early years, and the essential elements that international curriculum should cover. This paper looks at the curricula that are being used in Hong Kong kindergartens, and provides suggestions on ways to promote international education. In Hong Kong, there is a variety of kindergartens and their practices are not the same. After the education reform in the year 2000, kindergartens have begun to adopt school-based or kindergarten-based curriculum and this study aims at investigating, exploring and comparing the components in the curricula of local and international kindergartens in Hong Kong. It was hypothesized that, curricula in international kindergartens are able to promote international learning but curricula in local kindergartens lack

international components.

Research Design

This study on international curriculum had adopted the qualitative research method. It included 56 international kindergartens and 120 local kindergartens in Hong Kong and compared the characteristics of their curriculum with “international curriculum”. Researcher randomly picked 56 international kindergartens in Hong Kong and assessed their curriculum pamphlet, and on the other hand, randomly searched 120 local kindergartens’ government report posted for public and assessed the curricular characteristics. According to the government’s reports on the 120 local kindergartens’ curricula and the 56 international schools’ curricula contents to analyze the characteristics of international learning and the perception of international education. Based on the government's reports and the curricula contents provided by both the international and local kindergartens, this research attempted to evaluate and analyze the characteristics of the curricula and identify the components that were essential in international curriculum. The analysis focused on four different areas that an international curriculum should reflect: language, global perspectives, cultural aspects and whole child development. Finally, the research suggested ways to foster international education in kindergartens.

Definition of International Curriculum

International curriculum is not just a curriculum that used in international school, though it should be a curriculum that promotes international learning. In contemporary concerns, the world is changing rapidly and our next generation need to broaden their visions by being educated under international education. International education should be a part of global education where as it is defined to encompass both international and intercultural education as well as immigrant education (Palm Beach State College, n.d.). International education emphasizes the need to understand a variety of perspectives by acknowledging similarities, but also by respecting and protecting differences among multi-country diversities. There are two general meanings to the concept of international education, first refers to education that

transcends national borders through the exchange of people and second, a comprehensive approach to education that intentionally prepares students to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners in an interconnected world. It focuses on the total growth of the developing child, touching hearts as well as minds and encompassing intellectual, social, physical, emotional and cultural needs. International education trains international learners while using international curriculum, therefore international curriculum should fit into the aims of international education. As international education includes cultures, languages, environmental studies, political relations, religions, geography and history of the world, international curriculum should provide students the opportunities to learn the above. According to Ian Hill's suggestions in *International Schools Journal* of November 2000, and that of others, international curriculum should:

- integrate a global perspective across the curriculum;
- strengthen foreign language programs;
- contain course content that provides an international perspective;
- recognize that the world is increasingly interdependent;
- provide activities that bring students into contact with people of other cultures;
- create a context for world peace by providing opportunities for many cultures to learn together in mutual understanding and respect.

The above definition of international curriculum reveals the characteristics of international education which is also the international curriculum that this paper focuses on.

International Curriculum

Under an international curriculum, children should learn to know about who they are, where they are from, how to express oneself, how this world works and how to share the planet. Everyone should have the right to use the resources from the planet and have the responsibilities to protect the planet. Integrating international curriculum in schools can help children to learn and understand the world better and therefore international curriculum should apply to both local and international schools to maintain the equity and quality. When talking about international education, people will eventually think of international schools and

international curricula. Curriculum in international schools is planned to help children aboard to enroll and study under the same umbrella of curriculum (as their home country) so that they can easily align their studies or adjust knowledge, attitude, and skills at work when they get back to their own country. In this paper, when talking about international education, it is better to focus on “international minded”, meaning children are taught to learn about different aspects in the world and the international curriculum helps to prepare students to be active and engaged participants in an interconnected world. In UNESCO (1996), it declares that international mindedness identifies issues such as a sense of universal values, valuing freedom, intercultural understanding, non-violent conflict resolution and so on (cited in Hayden, Thompson, & Walker, 2002). Therefore, regarding helping our next generation to face the world and to survive in a knowledge-based society, all children should have the right to take international education in either local or international schools. For children to have international minds, the creation of an international curriculum has to be a work in progress. International curriculum, as defined above, is a kind of curriculum that helps children to understand the world around them, and to face the world tomorrow. The contemporary problem of knowledge glut and obsolescence creates the necessity for developing resourcefulness and creative thinking capabilities in children from their youngest years to help them manage the floods of information pouring in upon them (Fortson & Reiff, 1995). In order for children to face the ever-changing world, teaching for the development of coping or adaptation abilities is also an urge. Toffler (1974, 1993) who insists that the prime objective of education is to increase the individual's “cope-ability,” that is, the ability to adapt to new situations, to anticipate changes and deal with them constructively. Torrance (1979) urges that the skills of creative thinking be recognized as the most important human adaptability skills and that teaching for such skills “must become basic to the curriculum of schools, home, business, and other agencies” (p. 9). Moreover, Johnson and Johnson (1990) emphasize the importance of developing children's social awareness from earliest school years, pointing out that “social skills are directly related to building and maintaining positive relationships and to keeping psychological health” (p. 32). Csikszentmihalyi (1993) points out in *The evolving self: A psychology for the third millennium* that “The future is not constrained by rules and predictable outcomes, we need to cultivate more than logic if we want to thrive in it. We must foster intuition to anticipate changes before they occur; empathy to understand that which

cannot be clearly expressed; wisdom to see the connection between apparently unrelated events; and creativity to discover new ways of defining problems, new rules that will make it possible to adapt to the unexpected.” (p. 42). An international curriculum should provide opportunities for children to be creative, to work cooperatively, to have a positive attitude towards changes, to preserve one's own culture and also understand others, to become more aware of self and others and to make commitments to change a situation or being a desire to reality. Children will need to work with others from different backgrounds even not in their early years but will soon be cooperating with one another in their future. According to the above, as educators we do not only hope that our children understand their own culture well but also be able to work with others cooperatively from a diverse background, therefore anti-bias concepts become imperative in an international curriculum. By using anti-bias approach, children can develop and strengthen their self and group identities, while interacting respectfully with others in a multicultural environment. Consequently, it supports the development of every child's fullest potential by actively addressing issues of diversity and equity in the classroom and the outer world. An anti-bias perspective should be integrated to all aspects of daily classroom life which can match perfectly with international curriculum.

International Curriculum vs. General Curriculum

As suggested above in order to cover the areas (cultures, languages, environmental studies, political relations, religions, geography and history of the world) international curriculum included, a curriculum that focuses on whole child development, promotes creativity, provides multicultural learning (includes foreign languages) and integrates an anti-bias perspective need to be created.

Comparing international curriculum with general curriculum (Table 1), general curriculum claims to focus on children's whole child development, in the guide to the pre-primary curriculum (2006), Hong Kong government suggested under the curriculum framework that the aim of early childhood education is to foster children's whole person development. The below table compares the differences between international curriculum and general curriculum under five aspects.

Table 1. *Comparing International and General Curriculum*

	International Curriculum	General Curriculum
Cultural Aspects	- Learn about local culture - Learn about others culture	- Learn about local culture
Languages	- Learn the local language - Learn at least one foreign language	- Learn the local dialect - Learn the official national language - Teach in mother-language
Environmental Studies	- Learn about environmental issues around the world.	- Learn the environmental issues in the neighbor
Global Perspective	- Talk about global issues from around the world	- Learn about issues around the neighborhoods
Whole Child Development	- Focus on six learning domains (arts, physical fitness and health, language, self and society, early mathematics and science and technology) under four developmental objectives (physical, cognitive and language, affective and social and aesthetic development)	- Focus on social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development

Fostering International Curriculum

“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). Since the beginning of recorded time, philosophers have extolled the importance of the early years for future growth and development. Whether starting with the Bible, Aristotle, Rousseau, or Locke, the idea that what happens during the early years of life will affect later development has been a prevalent theme. From birth through age 6, the child learns all the rudiments of knowledge, written by Comenius in the *School of Infancy: An essay on the education of youth during the first six years* in the 1600s. Early Childhood Education is the foundation of all learning to impart rudimentary knowledge to beginners. Therefore, educators need to start as early as possible in order to cultivate international

learners when implementing an international curriculum. As Montessori (1965) stated in her research that children from 0-6 had a natural ability to develop and learn. They learned without knowing it and learned little by little from unconscious to conscious. According to Montessori, children have “absorbent minds” and they learn differently compared to adult. Children's minds can absorb knowledge from the environment unlike adult who has to memorize different information. Children's learning is like photo taking, one only needs to press the button and the photo will look pretty much the same as the original setting and it can stay for years without fading. Therefore, educators should implant international education starting in the early years in order to advocate international learning.

International Kindergartens in Hong Kong Context

This research studied 56 international schools (kindergartens) that used international curriculum in Hong Kong and all of them offered English programs. Regarding to these 56 international kindergartens, the most common international curricula being adopted were “International Baccalaureate” (IB) and “Foundation Stage of British National Curriculum”. These two international programs covered 26% of the 56 international kindergartens. Based on statistics, about 60% of these international kindergartens did not mention about which one of the international program had been adopted but explained that their international curricula were school-based and covered different developmental areas in order to foster children's whole child learning. In addition to that, there were 2% of the schools using International Primary Curriculum (IPC), 5% using New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, 5% using Waldorf Curriculum, 2% using National Curriculum of England and Wales and the last 2% using the curriculum from Ministry of Education in the province of Ontario, Canada. Looking at the data above, there is a variety of curricula which international kindergartens in Hong Kong are using, though they share similar characteristics. According to the above curriculum approaches, many of them are well known by early childhood educators.

The IB Program

The IB Curriculum is a recognized leader in the field of international education, encouraging students to be active learners, well-rounded individuals and engaged world

citizens. It aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect. In addition to that, the program encourages students across the world to become active, compassionate and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

The Foundation Stage

The Foundation Stage Curriculum is based on the British National Curriculum and is divided into six areas: language; literacy and communication; numeracy and mathematical development; creative development; personal, social and emotional development, physical development as well as knowledge and understanding of our world. Young children will have had a wide range of different experiences and will have a wide range of skills and interests when they join a setting or school at the age of three, four or five. They need a well-planned and resourced curriculum to take their learning forward and to provide opportunities for all children to succeed in an atmosphere of care and of feeling valued (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000). At the end of the Foundation Stage, most children are expected to have achieved skills in the above mentioned areas. Children who have developed skills in all these 6 areas would possess the basics before they begin formal school in Year One.

The IPC Program

The IPC is a topic-based curriculum that focuses on a combination of academic, personal, and international learning, which is innovative, exciting, engaging and learning through real situations. Core subjects in IPC include science, mathematics, history, art, language, and geography. They are taught under different themes such as the Rainforest, Mission to Mars and Beyond, Chocolate, Fit for Life, The Olympics and Making the News, each one lasting two to six weeks.

The Waldorf Program

Waldorf preschool program nurtures young children, as well as to establish a strong foundation for academic learning and a life-long interest in other people and in the world around them. Waldorf educators know that young children grow best in an environment that

provides active play, natural materials, rhythm, and beauty in a consciously created home-like environment. Waldorf program believes that children need to learn about their environment and eventually when they grow up they will be able to serve the “world”. Steiner (1982) the founder mentioned “If young children have been able to give up their whole beings to the world around them in their play, in later life they will be able to devote themselves with confidence and power to the service of the world.”

Characteristics of Hong Kong International Schools

Language

Language is a very important aspect in international education and under international curriculum. According to statistic by Hayden (2006), most people in the world speak Chinese and “in 2005 there were estimated to be approximately 1.5 billion users of English worldwide, divided roughly equally between native speakers, English as a Second Language and English as a Foreign Language users; it is estimated that by 2015 half the world's population will be speaking or learning English” (p. 167). Thus, in the short term at least, it seems likely that bilinguality (mother tongue and English), currently the norm for educated elites worldwide, will become the norm for many more. In the above well-known curriculum approaches that used by Hong Kong international kindergartens, they all claimed to be either bilingual or trilingual and this characteristic revealed the perception of “strengthen children's foreign language” in an international curriculum. In addition to that all schools have both English and Cantonese or Mandarin speaking classroom teachers. School C mentioned that their curriculum “build a solid foundation in Chinese (Cantonese), English and Putonghua.” School F mentioned, “The medium of instruction of our school is English language and Putonghua as Chinese language. Also, we hire the native teachers to teach our students. It is helpful for them to improve their listening, speaking, writing and reading skills.” Many of the international schools in Hong Kong also pin pointed the importance of language and how language can be a bridge for children to become a global learner. School HK stated “The world is fast becoming a global village. With increasing inter-nation, inter-racial, inter-culture

activities the need for bi-, tri-, even multi-lingual personnel is inevitable, and the monolingual world is fast disappearing. The Government has aptly tabled a policy of 'Two literacies, three languages'. The Preschool endeavours to develop our children to be proficient in the two literacies of Chinese and English, and be fluent in the three spoken languages of Cantonese, Putonghua, and English." School V stated, "Bilingual learners today world citizens tomorrow."

Global Perspectives

The curriculum of the international schools in Hong Kong integrates global perspectives across the curriculum and they contain course content that provides international perspectives. Furthermore, the curriculum provides different kinds of integrated activities, outings, and interchanged functions for children to use and share community resources in order to build learning communities. In the introduction of School V's curriculum mentioned "teaching is carried out in small groups with an aim to cater for individual abilities as well as to provide inquiry-based learning for children to develop into caring lifelong learners with a global vision." Under the area of "Global Perspectives", it should also include environment awareness and political or global issues from around the world. Most of the international schools curricula mention about helping the young children to learn together and to understand different issues happening around their environment. School L hoped that the children in their school would be enabled to succeed in facing the 21st Century challenges. In order to succeed in their mission, the school provided professionally trained staff, well-balanced curriculum and stimulating environment for children and strived to instill students under different areas and one of which was "A respect for self, others, society and the environment". Another international school, School GH, also mentioned that the components in the curriculum helped their children to appreciate Chinese heritage and at the same time presenting them with a global perspective of the world around them.

Cultural Aspects

Related interchangeably with global perspectives is the cultural part of a curriculum.

International curriculum should provide activities that bring children into contact with people of other cultures and create a context for world peace by providing opportunities for many cultures to learn together. In Hong Kong's international schools, the children all learn in a multi-cultural environment with children who come from diversified backgrounds. At the same time, their curricula also reveal different types of cultural learning.

School St. C: "Our unparalleled curriculum merges a strong academic foundation from the Eastern culture with good early childhood educational practices from the Western culture."

School PV: "The experiences that contribute to a child's development and learning are defined by social and cultural contexts - the family and home; the school environment, and the surrounding community."

School HG: "Celebrating festivals and experiencing the culture of our environment which brings light, colour and joy in to the classroom and provides us with a chance to express awe, wonder and gratitude for the earth, others and ourselves."

Whole Child Development

Last but not the least, all kind of curricula around the world should foster children's holistic development. All international schools in Hong Kong mention about fostering whole child development in different areas. School K claimed that their program concentrated on developing the whole child, and valued a healthy body as well as a healthy mind. It also encouraged students to be thinkers and problem solvers while nourishing the creative and caring aspects of their personalities. It was recognized internationally for its excellence and prepared students well for further studies either here in Hong Kong or overseas. School F, on the other hand, mentioned their school's development of students in morality, intelligence, physique, group life, outward beauty (good manners and appearance) and inner beauty (good nature and personality). To conclude, the international kindergartens in Hong Kong fulfill the perceptions of an international curriculum and their curricula are designed to provide children with international education. However, international kindergartens only cover a small percentage of Hong Kong's kindergartens and we should take an in-depth look into the local schools' curricula.

Local Kindergartens in Hong Kong

Based on the information from the Profile of Kindergartens and Kindergarten-cum-Child Care Centers (Education Bureau, 2009), around 682 local kindergartens have joined the voucher scheme in the year 2008-2009. Among these 682 kindergartens, the researcher randomly looked into the curriculum characteristics of 120 kindergartens through the curriculum reports released by the Education Bureau.

Language

The findings show that all these kindergartens adopted Cantonese as a medium of instruction and provided Mandarin and English activities for children.

Most of these Mandarin and English activities were taught by native teachers in Mandarin and English lessons only and others were taught by local classroom teachers. “Right now classroom teachers need to teach children English and Mandarin activities”, was written in School 44's reports. School 6's report mentioned “Classroom teacher will use games and storytelling to enhance children's interest in learning English.” It was written in another school's report that the school had good Cantonese language environment and activity though as for learning another language, “the school is still groping about the more suitable strategy and has not yet decided on using direct teaching or allowing children to learn in the environment. Therefore, at this moment the school is allowing part-time teacher to use different methods to teach phonics, pinyin, reading words and oral skills, which lead to mismatch methods for children to learn foreign languages and is a disadvantage for children's language development.” At the same time, most of these native teachers only entered the classroom for English and Mandarin sections and they were not counted as classroom teachers. School 16's report stated that “the school assigned special subject teachers to lead English and Mandarin activities and allow children to have exposure to foreign language.” In addition to these reports, School 36's report stated that “in order for children to have the ability of using second language, school spends their money on hiring native English and Mandarin teachers to teach children English and Mandarin and children will have English activities every day and Mandarin activities twice a week but the lesson time is very tight and

the second language teaching needs improvement.” According to the findings, less than 1% of the kindergartens used English as a medium of instruction in different types of activities other than English activities. Only one of the school's report brought out “the school has good language teachers, they have good articulations and able to teach children in an interactive way. NET teacher will sing, play and communicate with children and classroom teacher will also communicate with children in English during the theme time of the day in order to allow the children to have greater exposure to English other than in English lessons.”

Global Perspectives

There are about 20% of the kindergartens mentioned using community resources as tools for young children to arouse their awareness of the neighbourhood environment. On top of that these kindergartens also provided outdoor activities for children to explore the real world around them. These activities included outings and/or visiting different organizations in the community to broaden children's global vision. Here are some of the examples: In School 8's report – “through different types of activities such as planting day, festival activities, and a diversity of visiting activities allow children to gain different experiences and effectively widen children's vision.”

In School 18's report - “understand the needs of community and merge in 'life education' which include one of the element called ‘the green curriculum’ and using it to promote environmental awareness; using planting activities to cultivate children's patience, caring heart and observation skills; from this help children to look into a global issue - environmental awareness.”

In School 29's report - “timely, school arranged different activities for children to step out of the campus to do different goodwill visits and other visiting activities to widen children's learning experience.”

In School 113's report - “according to the children's need in the community, the school tried to enrich children's learning and life experience and provide different types of all rounded learning for children and held lots of outings and inter-communion activities for children.”

Cultural Aspects

Unlike international kindergartens, children do not learn under a multi-cultural environment, they learn in a local environment with mainly Chinese learners. Less than 3% of these kindergartens have non-Chinese speakers among the children. At the same time, less than 3% of the curriculum in these local schools mentioned about cultural learning. Only the schools that have non-Chinese speakers concerned about learning one another's culture, one of the school's reports stated that “In order for the non-Chinese speaking children to understand the uniqueness of the culture around the world and understand Chinese customs, the school promotes ‘Global Village’ plan and Chinese Education activities.”

Whole Child Development

In the year 2006, the Education Bureau in Hong Kong provided a pre-primary curriculum guideline for Hong Kong's kindergartens explaining the importance of fostering whole child development under four different aspects in six different learning domains; therefore, many kindergartens reviewed their curricula in order to provide learning opportunities for children to learn under the six learning domains. According to the Curriculum Development Council (2006), the four aspects are “Physical Development”, “Cognitive and Language Development”,

“Affective and Social Development” and “Aesthetic Development” and the six learning domains are “Physical Fitness and Health”, “Language”, “Self and Society”, “Early Mathematics”, “Science and Technology” and “Arts”. The guideline explained that the learning domains were components of the curriculum. They addressed developmental objectives for young children in different curriculum domains, and provided a framework for reviewing different learning elements. They were designed for the construction of knowledge and to provide children with contexts for the development and application of basic skills, values and attitudes. As a result, about 93% of the local kindergarten curricula were able to provide different opportunities for young children. In many of the reports showed that the schools trained children under different aspects such as moral, intellectual, physical, social, aesthetic, language, and emotional development in order to cultivate children's whole child

development.

In School 5's report - "the curriculum design and the activity plans are able to cover different learning domains and provide a comprehensive and diverse learning experience for young children."

In School 11's report - "the school provides different learning experiences for young children in order to widen their learning experiences and with different kinds of activities covering different learning domains help children to work independently and cooperatively which foster children's whole child development."

In School 49's report - "the arrangement of the curriculum is able to cover children's social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and cognitive development."

In School 67's report - "Each day the teacher arranges integrated activities for children allowing them a balance opportunity to develop their social, emotional, cognitive, physical and aesthetic abilities."

In School 99's report - "the curriculum design of the school related to its philosophy - 'respect children, cultivate love, inspire potential, and inspire thoughts' which covers social, emotional, cognitive, physical, spiritual and aesthetic areas and foster whole child development."

Discussion

According to the above findings in the four areas – language, cultural aspects, global perspectives and whole child development, one should analyze each of the above in depth.

Language: Both the international and local kindergarten encouraged children to learn different languages in school though when comparing the duration and environment exposed by the children to the language in both types of schools, the children in international school seems to have more advantage.

Global Perspectives: Some local kindergartens do show concerns on taking children to utilize community resources and arouse children's awareness of their neighbourhood environment. However the above practices only occurred in a small percentage of local kindergartens while in most of the international schools train their children to have global vision and discuss with children political and global issues from around the world in the

curriculum.

Cultural Aspects: Some local kindergarten show their concern on Chinese Education activities and taught children patriotism and similar to global perspectives, only a very small percentage of local kindergartens have this practice. On the other hand all international kindergartens mentioned about providing opportunities for children to expose in western and/or eastern culture.

Whole Child Development: Both international and local kindergarten paid their concerns on the whole child development all kindergartens mentioned different ways and strategies to plan the curriculum in order to foster children's development in different areas.

To sum the above up, a few local kindergartens in Hong Kong are already promoting children's international mindedness; some of the kindergartens are able to show one or two elements included in an international curriculum. Whilst, international kindergartens' curricula were able to reveal more thoroughly the areas that international curriculum should cover and promote children with international mindedness. As a result, local kindergartens need to redesign their curricula in order to fulfill the needs of the new generations.

Implementing International Curriculum in Hong Kong

In regard to the above data, the curricula used by international schools reveal international perceptions. The curricula designed help children to be a global citizen, it strengthens children's foreign language ability, activity contents providing international perspective and bringing children into contact with people of other cultures. On the other hand, the curricula designed by local kindergartens only focus on providing local environment and local issues for children to learn and lack global perspective. In result, local kindergartens should amend their curricula to be more internationalized. The content provided in an international curriculum must be both global and local, because each programme needs to be based on the premise that students need to understand themselves and their indigenous local culture before they can appreciate others. The combination of global and local enables an appreciation of what is similar and different in others. When setting up and running an international curriculum in Hong Kong's local schools, three levels of implementation should be examined:

- (1) Government's level
- (2) Schools' level
- (3) Teachers' level

Implementing International Curriculum in Hong Kong – Government's Level

The Education Commission (EC) set up a Task Group on School Quality and School Funding (the Task Group) in April 1996 to make recommendations on quality school education and government can support funding for the school on using international curriculum. Government can provide voucher for schools which are willing to develop international curriculum to encourage kindergartens to use international curriculum on the one hand and encourage parents to choose these kindergartens on the other hand. At the same time, government should also encourage kindergartens to have both English and Chinese speaking teachers as class teachers in order to allow children to have more chances to use different languages at school. At the same time if schools hire NET teachers (both English and Mandarin), children would also have opportunities to learn other cultures when interacting and communicating with these teachers at school.

Implementing International Curriculum in Hong Kong – Schools' Level

Since the year 1988 the Education and Manpower Bureau of Hong Kong (which is now the Education Bureau) has begun to promote “school-based curriculum” and in September 2006, the Education Bureau established the Pre-primary Education Support Section to provide school-based support services and thus enhance the schools' proficiency in curriculum development as well as learning and teaching approaches; in this regard, kindergartens all start to plan their own school-based curriculum. The elements of this school-based curriculum introduced by the Education Bureau included building up a learning community among schools and parents with a sharing and reflective culture, empowering teachers in scaffolding children's learning and enhancing teachers' readiness to employ appropriate developmental practices and assessments. The design of the curriculum should also aim at fostering children's moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic development, as well as their

interests and positive attitudes in learning as the foundation of future learning. When comparing the school-based curriculum elements mentioned by the government and the international curriculum perspectives, they sound very similar. Since local kindergartens in Hong Kong are all starting to review their old curriculum, it is a good chance to add in the international curriculum perspectives. Schools are advised to plan more interchanging activities, such as visiting international schools in the community and sharing experiences with peers, providing knowledge of other world regions and cultures by using community resources more often, and planning different types of activities for young children that use English as the medium of instruction instead of just English activities using English as the medium of instruction (use both Cantonese and English interchangeably)

Implementing International Curriculum in Hong Kong - Teachers' Level

In turn the development of both global and local dimensions is “to a large extent dependent on the contribution of teachers in selecting curriculum content, a process referred to by Hargreaves (1998) as ‘creative professionalism’” (cited in Hayden et al., 2002, p. 63). Kindergarten teachers play a very important role here. To prepare for the implementation of international curriculum, teachers have to take professional courses and learn about the importance of international educations. On the other hand, in the year 2007, the government released a voucher scheme system whereas teachers can use the funding from the system to study and learn more about planning and implementing curricula in schools. In children's learning activities, teachers are encouraged to adopt diversified and flexible pedagogical approaches, build and reinforce children's sense of identity and cultural awareness, and foster the recognition and development of universal human values. To be more practical, when doing activities with children, teachers can enable children to learn more about the environment through outings, newspaper reading, and/or writing to children in other countries, all these can help young children to broaden their international perspectives. Furthermore when starting a theme with children, teacher can begin with simple concepts, do activities relating to children's experiences first, and later, expand children's vision by introducing practices of people in other cultures (e.g. When starting the theme “Clothing”, teacher can begin with names and types of clothing children see in their daily life then extend their

knowledge on different clothing that people in other countries wear).

Conclusion

The world is ever-changing; the world we face nowadays and the world our children will face in the future will be very different. Education should provide chances for children to explore the world. The changes and challenges in our world, and consequently our minds, cannot be kept local. Our global economy, instant communications and global pollution have meant that whatever happens in one place quickly affects every other. Particularly teachers and children are now in a position to exert some influence over the interrelated future of this world, but to do so effectively we need to be very clear about what we value most. A curriculum which addresses children's global future is crucial if we agree that school activities should be relevant to their lives.

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