TEACHER EXPERIENCES OF SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS COORDINATORS' LEADERSHIP ROLES IN IMPLEMENTING INCLUSIVE EDUCATION IN HONG KONG

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Abstract - About a decade after the United Kingdom's establishment of special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) to support and enhance the practices of inclusive schooling, Hong Kong government has created such a role as well. Similar to its UK counterpart, the selection and functions of SENCOs had been largely unsuccessful during the first decade of implementation from 2004-2014. Upon the recommendation of the Legislative Council in 2014, the Hong Kong government selected a number of pilot schools to establish this position officially with financial support, employment status, selection criteria, role specification, and workload distribution between teaching and administration for 3 years and established this position officially in the school year of 2017-2018. SENCOs are expected to take leadership role in setting school-based policies, personnel management, coordinating related services in and outside classrooms, supporting teachers, and facilitating learning of special needs students. To this date, few studies have examined how they are functioning in their leadership roles. Thus, this paper focuses on analyzing the experiences of teacher who were members of their schools' student support teams. Data presented and analyzed in this paper was from the quantitative component of a larger mixed method study involving principals, SENCOs, and teachers. Descriptive statistics was adopted to examine the experiences of 404 teachers. Results indicated that most of them considered their SENCOs serving their roles adequately with a number of strategies to support their work while recommendations were made to further enhance SENCOs' functioning as leaders.

Index Terms - Special educational needs coordinators, inclusive education, middle leadership, Hong Kong.