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In memory of a gentlemanly scholar – John Ming-Gon Lian

Editor's Notes

Research shows that it is much more challenging for students with special education needs to pursue successful career development as compared to their peers without SEN. To develop effective and productive enhancement programs on career planning to cater for SEN students' career development needs, a comprehensive overview of SEN students' self-understanding in terms of not only their academic abilities and interests but also their career goals and choices, social and emotional competences can also be an important prerequisite. Aside from students' own self-understanding, other perspectives to assess career guidance and life planning needs are equally important to bring insights for designing productive programs to boost SEN students' adaptive career planning thus supporting their long term career development needs.

In Hong Kong, to strengthen career guidance and life planning for secondary students with diverse learning abilities, "from the 2014/2015 school year, public sector schools operating classes at senior secondary levels will be provided with an additional recurrent grant to expand the capacity of schools and their teaching team of staff tasked to provide support to career guidance service and life planning education for their education" (Education Bureau, 2014, p.3). Despite guidelines and resources on career guidance and life planning education, corresponding implementation and evaluation of school-based career guidance and life planning programs remain under-researched especially under the domain of special educational needs.

As up to date, no such a thematic journal issue that publishes updated findings of evaluating the effectiveness of career guidance and life planning education with a focus on the Hong Kong context has yet been identified. While research advances in other international regions proposed well integrate regional and international research support and strengths to inform practices. Inspired by these research advances and partially supported by a General Research Fund Project (led by Sin and Yang) on career planning education to diverse learners, a group of local and international researchers in the concerned field are invited to contribute their work on the key theme as "**Self-understanding, career guidance and life planning of SEN students: Insights from multiple perspectives**". It aims at celebrating the 20th Anniversary of our Hong Kong Journal of Special Education while collating other related research papers as a special issue on the subject.

The coverage and contents of this special issue are comprehensive and substantial. Humphreys first introduced the latest development in the United Kingdom on life planning implemented in special education and discussed implications for both principals and teachers in terms of helping students define their own needs through life planning. From a perspective of policy, Szeto and Sin focused on examining teachers' experiences of supporting students' career development. Diverse school settings had also been considered and explored in this study. From a students' perspective, Li's study covered not only teachers' perspective, but also the significance of home-school collaboration and career planning to promote effective inclusive education for students with Autism in Hong Kong. In a similar vein, but beyond Hong Kong, Forlin and Deppeler discussed how to support learners with high support needs by exploring in an in-depth manner of the connection between career planning and post-school options. Apart from in-school students who are the focus of another studies, Chang aimed to establish a 'bridge' between segregation and inclusion for post-secondary young adults with special educational needs as an illustration on how such transitional connections can be set up. While Sin and Siu elaborated on the comprehensive and school-wide systemic transition program for students in a special school, Love Xpress also echoed their innovative practice in supporting youths with Autism. Although some positive outcome and successes were observed, the report by Ho, Yip and Cheng demonstrated the difficulties of SEN youths with high qualification in career development. Other local research reports have been included in this special issue for inspiring us the support of students with Autism (Li et. al.), attitude change of pre-school teachers for supporting students with SEN (Wong et. al.) and e-learning practice in special school (Tang et. al.).

2018-2019 financial year is a critical year and turning point of inclusive education development in Hong Kong. The government substantiated the previously temporary pre-school funding support for all SEN students as a recurrent expenditure and finalized too the provision and training of SENCO in all public primary and secondary schools. However, two rather hot topics namely the re provisioning of Shine Centre and the Audit Report on Inclusive Education by the Audit Commission attracted public attention and heated debates which all aims to bring long term betterment of special education development for Hong Kong. With all these very core changes to the provisions of SEN support within the education system of Hong Kong, all stakeholders have to rethink about how future systemic implementation and improvement measures to be introduced. Some of these crisis and opportunities had been well articulated by the stakeholders within the transcriptions of the speakers at our Annual Conference. Together with the 4 position papers of our Society submitted to the Government, the contents of this issue will surely inspire readers in rethinking the core value as well as the practical approaches of catering for the diversities identified within the Hong Kong education system while the way forward for sustaining the positive impacts of these support measures in a professional manner is yet to be seen.

Last but not the least, we have to thank Dr. Yan Lan for the coordination work in the making and compilation of the related papers of this special issue. We also need to thank members of the Society for the great efforts in their advocacy work to turn critics and dreams into substantiated policies and pioneering practices in special education during the year. These impacts should make the 20th Anniversary of the establishment of the Special Education Society of Hong Kong a more memorable one. We are also in memory of our old partner Dr. John Lian, a dedicated special educator and supporter of the Society as well.

Kenneth Sin
Editor