

# INTEGRATING TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCIES IN EDUCATION POLICY AND PRACTICE: PHASE III. CASE STUDIES OF HONG KONG AND BEIJING SCHOOLS

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# Local Contexts

*Project title : Generic Skills & Teacher Development Project*

- **Explore teacher perceptions of their readiness and confidence to facilitate generic skills learning;**
- **Assess school level support for teachers to facilitate the learning of generic skill in classrooms;**
- **Identify the use of generic skills in assisting students to navigate an increasingly inter-connected and globalised world.**

Note: The term 'transversal competencies/skills' is not known in either Hong Kong or Beijing educational contexts. Therefore the term 'generic skills' has been used instead.

# Overarching questions

- To what extent teachers feel prepared and supported for integrating TVC learning in the classroom?
- What are the successful/proven preparation/supports to help teachers enhance their skills to facilitate TVC learning?
- What are the challenges in ensuring sufficient opportunities to prepare and support teachers for better TVC learning in the classroom?
- To what extent globalization is influencing education reforms, especially those related to TVC learning?
- What are the policy implications to ensure teachers are well prepared and supported to fulfil their roles?

# Methodology & Methods

- The research reported here uses case studies of individual schools as the basic unit of analysis and develops comparative cases through cross case analyses.
- Case studies are particularly helpful when the number of participants is small, when understanding both the participants and their contexts is considered important and when prior knowledge is limited.
- Case studies by definition are multi-methodological in nature drawing data from surveys, interviews, documents or other sources that have the potential to illuminate key issues related to the specific case.
- The results of case studies are not scientifically generalizable but they may provide accumulating evidence relating to theory or practice (on this point see Yin, 2009, p.150).

# Sample

	Hong Kong	Beijing
• Secondary Schools:	4	5
• <b>Survey:</b>		
• Teachers:	14	-
• Principals:	2	5
• <b>Focus Group Interviews:</b>		
• Teachers:	17 (4 FGs)	25 (5 FGs)
• Principals	-	-

**Note:** These are purposive samples and therefore not representative. It is not possible to generalise from these data. The data has contributed to 'cases' of individual schools and comparisons of these cases.

## Demographics

<b>Teachers</b>	Gender	M=11, F= 3	
	Length of Service	< 5yrs	2
		5-10yrs:	3
		11-20yrs	2
		21-30yrs	7
	Subject taught	Social Studies	10
		Science	1
		Foreign Language	2
		Religious Studies	1

## Demographics

Principals	Gender	Beijing	Hong Kong
	Male	4	2
	Female	1	0
	Length of Service		
	<5yrs	2	0
	5-10yrs	1	1
	11-20	2	1

# Instruments

- Two versions of UNESCO Bangkok's "SCHOOL QUESTIONNAIRE - How are teachers prepared/supported to facilitate acquisition of transversal competencies" (SQ) were translated into Chinese: one using traditional characters (for use in Hong Kong) and the other using simplified characters (for use in Beijing).
- SQ is a 25 item instrument with 4 subsections:
  - Teacher preparation (4 questions);
  - Principals' perceptions of generic skills learning (2 questions)
  - Professional development of teachers (9) questions)
  - Generic skills in an increasingly interconnected world (10) questions
- An interview protocol was developed based on the survey to guide the focus group interviews.



# Analysis

- Survey and interview responses were analysed to identify teachers perceptions of the importance of generic skills, professional support available to assist. Survey responses were analysed to gain the views of Principals on these issues.
- A separate set of questions were analysed relating to globalizations, its importance in the curriculum and its relation to generic skills.
- The results will be reported in relation to these two broad issues

# Results – Teacher Preparedness

- Skills needed for teaching TVCs. Teachers were presented with 29 options and asked “In your opinion, which skills and competencies are important for teachers to implement [education policies/ curriculum that promote transversal competencies in your country]? Please select all that apply”. Teachers were not asked to rank the skills – just whether or not they were “important”.
- By selecting an arbitrary cut off of 75% endorsement (where n=14), 5 teacher skills were highlighted: communication skills and reflective thinking were the top 2 with 83.3% endorsement (n=10) with organizational skills, critical thinking and self awareness being endorsed by 75% of teachers (n=9).

# Teacher preparedness (cont.)

- Principals from Beijing and Hong Kong also responded to these questions. Apart from agreement on the importance of communication skills by both groups of Principals (endorsed by 100% ) there was no agreement with the other skills nominated by the Hong Kong teachers.
- Using 100% as the criterion for Principal endorsement (largely because of the small number of Hong Kong Principals (n = 2), there was agreement between the groups on the importance of: facilitating skills and motivating self and students.
- In addition, Beijing Principals nominated organizational skills, conflict resolution skills, passion/love for teaching, maintaining leadership while Hong Kong Principals nominated reflective thinking, openness and continuous and organized self learning.

## Teacher preparedness (cont.).

- Question 2 asked how well prepared did teachers feel for teaching TVCs - using a 5 point scale they ranked each of the 29 skills areas referred to in Q1. The majority of mean scores ranged between 3.5 and 4.5 – indicating that Hong Kong teachers felt moderately well prepared to teach TVCs. Similar levels of endorsement were made by the two groups of Principals. Only on three skills were means scores above 4.5 indicating a perception of a slightly better level of preparation and these endorsements were by Beijing Principals only – communication skills, self awareness, motivating self and students.

# Teacher preparedness (cont.).

- In terms of “confidence about teaching TVCs in the classroom”, Hong Kong teachers were very confident ( $M = 4.75$ ). The Principals were moderately confident about teacher capacities (HK,  $M=4.0$ , BJ,  $M=3.85$ ).
- In terms of the relevance of preservice education, the three groups agreed that the Practicum was the most relevant medium for equipping teachers with skills to teach TVC, although teachers endorsed this moderately ( $M=4.14$ ) where as the Principals endorsed it strongly (HK,  $M=5$ , BJ,  $M=4.6$ ). There is little agreement on the other media – teachers felt course work and induction was moderately relevant. HK Principals agreed with the moderate relevance of induction but thought course work was more relevant while BJ principals were the reverse – induction was very relevant while course work was moderately so.

# Results – Principals' perception of generic skills learning

- Principals perceive that there is a moderate level of understanding of TVCs by students (M=4 for both groups) but less understanding among parents (HK, M=3.0 BJ, M=3.6). Although both groups perceive that their efforts to promote TVCs are moderately well understood by parents (HK, M=4.0 BJ, M=4.2).
- On the issue of whether the acquisition of TVCs among students is time consuming there is disagreement between the groups – BJ Principals disagree (M=2.2) while those from HK strongly agree (M=4.5). The same pattern is seen when Principals are asked whether teaching TVCs requires additional preparation – the BJ group endorsed the item moderately (M=3.6) whereas the those from HK endorsed it strongly (M=4.50)
- Teachers' success in teaching TVCs is not well reflected in staff appraisal for either group, (HK, M=3.5 , BJ, M=3.4)

# Results-Professional development for teachers to facilitate TVC learning

- All Principals (HK & BJ) believe PD is mentioned in school documents but HK teachers are much less sure. Just over 35.7 % of teachers (n=5) believe PD is not mentioned and just over 42 % (n=6) believe it is not mentioned but is organized by teachers –none of the Principals think this is the case. AN even smaller minority (n=4) believe it is not mentioned in documents but is organized by individual teachers – none of the Principals believe this. Overall, just over 64% of teachers (n=9) believe PD is not mentioned is not mentioned in school documents.
- There is agreement amongst the large majority of teachers (n=13) that teachers set their own goals but there is not agreement who else might be involved in this decision making. The weight of opinion (n=11) is that goals are set either individually or with a middle level manager or peers. BJ Principals agree that teachers set their own goals but there are a range of responses about how and with whom this is done. HK Principals are less certain with one suggesting teachers donot set their own goals.

## Results-Professional development for teachers to facilitate TVC learning (cont.).

- There is agreement across teachers and Principals that in both jurisdictions PD opportunities are available. The most popular forms for both principals and teachers are lectures, (all Principals and 64.3%(n=9) of teachers, lesson study (All BJ Principals, 1 HK Principals and 64.3% (n=9) of teachers and peer coaching (endorsed by all Principals and 57.1% (n=8) of teachers.
- In general, leadership roles are not seen as offering PD opportunities and there is disagreement about self directed PD that was strongly endorsed by HK Principals, but weakly endorsed by BJ principals (40%, n=2) and HK teachers (21.3%, n=2). Other forms of PD were also weakly endorsed apart from BJ Principals who strongly agreed about the importance of school visits and exchanges.



## Results-Professional development for teachers to facilitate TVC learning (cont.).

- Both teachers and Principals found all the forms of PD mentioned in the previous question moderately relevant, even where they had not strongly endorsed those forms of PD strongly. The Principals agreed that peer coaching was the most relevant for TVC skills development but this views was not shared by teachers. The least strongly endorsed form of PD for its relevance to TVC teaching was formal study.
- The majority of teachers (83.3%, n=10) indicated they participated in PD once or twice a semester. BJ Principals, views ranged from more than once a week to one or twice a Semester while HK Principal's endorsements ranged from once or twice a month to once or twice a semester.

# Results-Professional development for teachers to facilitate TVC learning (cont.).

- The majority of teachers (64.3%, n=9) endorsed teaching methods as the most likely topic for PD followed by classroom management, use and application of IT and subject matter (all endorsed by 50% of teachers, n=7). All BJ Principals endorsed teaching methods, followed by current trends and classroom management (80%, n=4). HK Principals agreed that classroom management and uses and application of IT were the most likely PD topics.
- Teachers' experiences with PD activities in their schools appeared to be mixed. They were relatively certain that such activities did not count towards promotion (M=2.2), were somewhat more certain that it was good for self improvement (M=3.86) although not convincingly so; moderately certain that PD was provided regularly, free of charge and was a part of school policy (M=3.79) but less certain that it was based on their needs (M=3.14) or was necessary to improve student learning (M=3.21). Overall, BJ Principals endorsed all of these items more positively than did HK teachers and in general, HK Principals. There were differences between HK Principals and teachers on whether PD was included in the school plan, whether it was supported by the head and parents but agreed on the relationship with promotion and the importance (or lack of it) in order to improve student learning.

# Results-Professional development for teachers to facilitate TVC learning (cont.).

- In terms of self directed PD activities, teachers were most likely to enrol in seminars and conferences outside of school ( $M=3.92$ ) and this was endorsed by both groups of Principals. They were least likely to enrol in a university course ( $M=3.15$ ) and this was endorsed by BJ Principals although viewed more positively by HK Principals. Other forms of self-directed PD were moderately endorsed although both groups of Principals tended to endorse them more strongly than did the teachers. It can be recalled from Q9 above that self directed PD was not a highly endorsed form for these teachers suggesting that PD is seen as something others organize for them !

# Results - Generic skills learning in increasingly inter-connected world

- Reasoned decision making was endorsed by the majority of teachers (61.5%, n=8) but was only endorsed by 2 of the BJ Principals (40%) and 1 of the HK Principals.
- Application skills were endorsed by 7 teachers (53.8%) but only two BJ Principals and 1 HK Principal.
- Creativity was endorsed by 5 teachers (38.5%) but all BJ Principal and 1 HK Principal.
- Reflective thinking was endorsed by 4 teachers (30.8%), 3 BJ Principals (60%) and 1 HK Principal.
- Entrepreneurship and resourcefulness were the least endorsed items by all groups.
- As for interpersonal skills, communication skills were the most strongly endorsed by HK teachers and Principals but BJ Principals felt Teamwork was more important, although there was moderate endorsement of communication skills as well. For teachers, empathy was the next most strongly endorsed skill (46.2%, n=6) but there was no Principal endorsement for this from either group. Teachers next endorsed organizational skills and collaboration skills (38.3%, n=5) but there was little support for this from either group of Principals.

## Generic skills learning in increasingly inter-connected world

- As for media literacy, ability to obtain and analyse information was endorsed strongly by both groups of Principals but by only 4 teachers (30.8%) the majority of whom (46.2%, n=6) endorsed ability to analyse and evaluate information. The ethical use of ICT received minimal endorsement from both HK teachers and Principals and from a minority of BJ Principals (40%, n=2).

# Generic skills learning in increasingly inter-connected world

- In terms of perceptions about the impact of globalization there is”
- Moderate support for the changing role of teachers across the three groups but it is by no means unanimous;
- Moderate support for acknowledging new policies that support TVC teaching and global citizenship – weaker amongs teachers than Principals;
- There is not a strong recognition across groups that globalization affects school activities ,with somewhat stronger support from HK Principals;
- There is not a strong recognition across group that students need to be prepared for a globalized world; and
- There is not a high degree of consciousness across groups about orienting daily practice for preparing globally competent citizens with BJ Principals showing realtively the strongest support.

# Overview of Survey Results

- Preparedness: Teachers feel relatively well prepared and are confident about teaching TVCs – Principals appear to see the task as somewhat more demanding than teachers.
- It is clear that PD opportunities are available to teachers although these may not usually be school based. PD tends to be off campus and lecture based rather than on campus and collegial. Nevertheless, lesson study appears popular among Hong Kong teachers and for BJ Principals. It seems while self directed PD is an option teachers are they more used to PD being provided for them.
- Principals and teachers appreciate the importance of TVCs but there is not any agreement about which skills are the most important.
- While there is some recognition of the importance of globalization, it does not appear to be an insistent theme or emphasis for teachers or Principals.

# Emerging Case Study Themes based on Interviews

- Teachers view both generic skills and globalization through the lenses of their respective subjects –
- Despite the dominance of the subject, the need to cover the curriculum and the focus on academic performance, teachers still find ways to incorporate teaching about TVCs;
- While none of the teachers thought TVC skills were unimportant, they were also conscious of their own inadequacies;
- Nevertheless in LS there is room for the explicit teaching of globalization and generic skills and English has a module on Social Issues that also provides for teaching about global citizenship.
- Site visits and field work were thought to be better methods for generic skill teaching than formal classroom lessons;



# Emerging themes

- When asked about support provided by the school and EDB, teachers focus on different kinds of support such WiFi and PD support;
- The issue/topic of globalization does not seem to be well understood by teachers and the way it should be taught;
- Insufficient time and manpower are the two factors hindering generic skill learning;
- Students' attitudes to generic skills is not always positive in an examination dominated environment.