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Collective Teacher-Researcher Inquiry: Localizing School-Based Curriculum Development in Diversified Hong Kong Schooling Contexts

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Collective Teacher-Researcher Inquiry: Localizing School-Based Curriculum Development in Diversified Hong Kong Schooling Contexts

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Abstract: *Responding to a recent call of nurturing a stance of practitioner-research inquiry, this paper reports collective memory work that disrupted academics' hegemonic voices in School-Based Curriculum Development (SBCD) studies and elicited teachers' stories about their SBCD practices. With post-colonialism as the theoretical underpinning, we explored how the Western-centric construct of SBCD was recontextualized in various Hong Kong school settings. Findings revealed teachers' struggles with hegemonic discourses that constrained their autonomy in SBCD projects to benefit diverse learners, such as the accountability mechanism, linguistic imperialism, Western-centrism, and top-down curriculum decision-making. Situated in the local realities of Hong Kong schooling, teachers' SBCD projects also illuminate productive, hybrid spaces that empower practitioners and foster new forms of knowledge, identity, and culture.*

Context and Literature Review

“Democratic impulse” fueled school-based curriculum development (SBCD) in Australia in the 1970s (Kennedy, 2010). The advent of the SBCD movement in Australia was part of a reaction to the highly centralized school systems that emerged in Australia towards the end of the nineteenth century and persisted through the middle of the twentieth century (Kennedy, 2010). The original “democratic impulse” of SBCD in the European and Australian contexts that Kennedy describes intended to buttress more bottom-up, grassroots, and periphery-center advocacy that better suits the diversity of student needs and school cultures.

In Hong Kong during the 1980s, the Llewellyn Report (1982) and the Education Commission Report No. 3 (1988) responded to the top-down, highly centralized curriculum decision-making at both legislative and school levels and ignited the spark of SBCD movement in Hong Kong. In the 2000s, there were calls for SBCD when the curriculum reform “Learning to Learn” was launched in Hong Kong (CDC, 2002). While encouraging schools to follow the central curriculum, the Curriculum Development Council of Hong Kong (CDC) (2002) acknowledged that schools should have “some flexibility in school-based curriculum development to satisfy the needs of their students” (p. 7). The Education Bureau (2017) reiterated that school-based curricula are supposed to strike a “balance between the curriculum recommended by the CDC and the autonomy of the schools and teachers” (n.p.).

Empirical studies documented the progress that local schools achieved in developing school-based curricula to meet local needs while following CDC's curricular guides (e.g., Cheung & Wong, 2011). Researchers also reported inconsistent findings about the effects of SBCD within various Hong Kong schooling contexts (e.g., Cheng et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2018). Prior studies have documented conflicts between Hong Kong's local educational heritages and the globalized educational ideologies (Chan, 2002; Evans & Green, 2001; Forestier et al., 2016; Fung & Liang, 2018; Kan & Vickers, 2002; Kennedy et al., 2006). Research shows that schools and teachers have struggled to maintain "strengths derived from its Confucian heritage culture" (Forestier & Crossley, 2015, p. 664) whilst trying to keep the "middle way" for "Chinese-Western joint ventures" (Björkman & Schapp, 1994; Chen, 2002; Forestier & Crossley, 2015). Yang and Li's (2018) case studies otherwise show that the Chinese philosophical principle of the Doctrine of the Mean could potentially promote the fusion of Chinese and Western educational approaches in SBCD efforts.

Existing studies show how teacher participation in SBCD helped enhance professional development and empower teacher leadership (e.g., Lee & Dimmocks, 1998; Law et al., 2007; Law & Wan, 2006, 2008; Law et al., 2010, 2013). Research endeavors were made to explore the links between practitioners' career development and SBCD (e.g., Lee, 2017; Loh & Tam, 2017). Findings suggest the structural and socio-cultural challenges that practitioners encountered in school-based curriculum decision-making (e.g., Lau & Grieshaber, 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Yang & Li, 2018). There are also a few studies that document how nurturing reflective and collaborative practitioners could counteract the impacts of centralized curriculum planning (e.g., Yuen et al., 2018; Zhan et al., 2016). Yuen et al.'s (2018) study investigated SBCD practices in secondary schools and discovered that using "a reflective approach to curriculum planning with a bottom-up implementation" could empower teachers to reflect upon their "creativity, artistry, knowledge of the subject and related pedagogy, and knowledge of their students" (p. 15).

However, the existing literature also reveals deficit perceptions of teachers' agency in SBCD. For example, studies reported teachers' less active role in initiating SBCD since SBCD in Hong Kong seemingly has been based on the government's initiative (Kennedy & Lee, 2007; Law, 2001). Teachers might not feel secure or have the ability to guarantee the results whilst they must assume a more accountable role in ensuring sufficient exam results in public exams. School culture played a significant role in affecting teachers' participation in SBCD (Ho, 2010; Mok, 1991; Yuen, 2004). The school culture in Hong Kong was reported to be influenced by the examination-oriented concerns of principals, teachers, and

parents in the highly centralized, bureaucratic education system (Chan, 2007; Lee et al., 2007; Lo, 1999). The leadership of the principal and other curriculum leaders are equally important in determining the success or failure of SBCD projects (Chan, 2007; Law & Wan, 2006; Lee & Dimmocks, 1999; Lee et al., 2007; Lo, 1999), whereas such leadership is “cardinal in creating structures” (Ho, 2010, p. 613) to determine the school strategies, availability of resources and support to SBCD, as well as teachers’ participation in curriculum decision-making (Ho, 2010; Yuen, 2004). Tam (2015) identified a paradigm shift from teachers’ individual work to collaborative work in SBCD projects, which may result in teachers’ uncomfortable feelings and SBCD failures. Studies show that SBCD projects were bounded by teachers’ readiness to take up new demands in teaching practices; for example, teachers’ content knowledge and skills limit the possibility of successful SBCD (Lo, 1998; 1999). Some studies identified inadequate support and professional training for teachers (e.g., Mok, 1991; Tam, 2006) and lack of relevant resources and infrastructures (e.g., Law et al., 2011; Lo, 1999; Yang & Li, 2018).

Methodologically, the case study approach was predominantly used to study various aspects of SBCD in Hong Kong, such as leadership (e.g., Law et al., 2010; Lee & Dimmocks, 1998), challenges and tensions faced by practitioners (e.g., Lee, et al., 2018), and SBCD as a reflective practice (e.g., Yuen et al., 2018). Interviews prevailed as data collection methods (e.g., Lai et al., 2014; Loh & Tam, 2017; Yuen et al., 2018; Zhan et al., 2016) whilst a few applied observation (e.g., Lau & Grieshaber, 2018; Yang & Li, 2018). For example, Zhan et al. (2016) used in-depth interviews with document analysis to study how teachers implemented Liberal Studies and found that teachers tended to adapt their teaching approaches and teaching materials instead of content and assessment. Lee et al. (2018) took a holistic case study approach and identified intellectual, structural, and cultural challenges as the major hindrances to curriculum reform. Our literature review of Hong Kong SBCD efforts over the last three decades shows limited empirical inquiries that use collective memory work as a methodology to create collegial spaces for teachers and researchers to share both their embodied memories (Davies & Gannon, 2006) and counter-narratives about the inclusion of SBCD in various types of Hong Kong schools. Such schools include government schools, aided schools, and Direct Subsidy Scheme schools. To contextualize our study for the international readership, primary and secondary education in Hong Kong is compulsory and free for all children from Grades 1-12 (i.e., Key Stage One of Junior Primary [Grades 1-3]; Key Stage Two of Senior Primary [Grades 4-6]; Key Stage Three of Junior Secondary [students aged 12-14]; and Key Stage Four of Senior Secondary [students aged 15-17]). The supply of formal education at both government schools and aided schools mainly relies on public funding. Due to the changing needs of parents and pupils, the Education Bureau proposed private

educational bodies to innovate the education system in Hong Kong and diversify parental choices and quality services to the public (Education Commission, 1988). The Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) was introduced in September 1991, through which more autonomy is given to schools, in terms of finance administration, facilities, teaching and learning, operation and management, class size and student intake (Education Commission, 1988).

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

Based on the rich literature that documented the benefits of practitioner inquiries to empower teachers and improve practices (e.g., Dana & Currin, 2017; Miller & Shinas, 2019), this study intended to disturb the dominant power of academics in empirical inquiries of SBCD in Hong Kong. In this study, two of the authors, Zheng and Sally, used collective memory work to engage six in-service teachers in collective story sharing about their embodied experiences of actualizing SBCD projects in various Hong Kong schooling contexts. The current paper responds to Ballock's (2019) call of nurturing a stance of practitioner-research inquiry. We encouraged teacher participants to be co-researchers, co-authors of an academic paper, and co-presenters of academic conference presentations. We also see this study as a timely response to Deng's (2018) recent call for restoring curriculum studies to "practice and the actual world of schooling" (p. 9).

We intended to collectively problematize discourses in Hong Kong schooling contexts that enabled and constrained school-based curriculum development as a social democratic cause in the new era of globalization. To problematize these discourses, we asked: How do Hong Kong K-12 teachers perceive the tensions and challenges (if any) when the construct of SBCD was imported to Hong Kong's different social, cultural, political, and economic realities? How do Hong Kong K-12 teachers perceive factors that have shaped teachers' agency and autonomy in SBCD?

Alignment Between Theoretical and Methodological Positionings

Theoretical Positioning

This study is rooted in Hong Kong's unique sociocultural and geographic context that embodies a hybridity of diverse educational traditions. Existent literature echoes critiques about Eurocentrism or Western-centrism in education and the marginalization of local/indigenous wisdom and ways of knowing (Asher, 2010). We therefore employed post-colonial lenses to view the reproduction and interactions in local schools' and teachers' practices as they imported Western-

centric school-based curriculum development to various schools in Hong Kong. With post-colonial sensibilities to power relations, we collectively shared memories of resistance, contestations, and negotiations in curriculum decision making and teaching practices.

Pratt (1991) introduced the notion of “contact zone” to illuminate that the post-colonial world comprises a spectrum of “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 34). Post-colonial scholars also talk about a “third space” (Bhabha, 1994) where groups of people who have been geographically and historically separated from one another come into contact (Somerville, 2007). Matus and McCarthy (2003) contend that post-colonial theorists problematize “all imperializing forms of the self/other binary as they are expressed in contemporary school” (p. 81). Post-colonial constructs also help disturb the “dualism of colonizer/colonized and East/West” (Haug et al., 1987, p. 36) and enable teachers to see that “such binaries as ‘East’ and ‘West’ are not pure” and that curricula and identities are “shaped by history, geography, and economics” (Asher, 2010, p. 6). Adopting a post-colonial perspective, Bacchus (2006) conceived of post-colonial societies’ curricular alignment with the global economic market as an extended form of Western hegemonic control. Since we have lived in the post-colonial realities in Hong Kong, we believe that in diversified Hong Kong schools, a clear-cut demarcation of colonizers and the colonized might no longer be applicable to interpreting the dominant discourses regarding the push-and-pull forces of globalization in education.

Post-colonial concepts such as the third space (Bhabha, 1994) and the contact zone (Pratt, 1992) convey “hybridity”, which is applicable to “the integration of competing knowledges and Discourses” (Moje et al., 2004, p. 39). In this study, we intended to tease out memories and narratives about “productive hybrid cultural space” (Moje et al., 2004, p. 43). With teachers participating in the study, we collectively elicited narratives about various traditions and practices that Hong Kong K-12 teachers brought from their respective curricular and pedagogical contexts. This allows for the exploration of “the integration of competing knowledges and Discourses” (Moje et al., 2004, p. 39).

Our selected post-colonial constructs enabled fine-grained analysis of a multiple, dynamic, and ambiguous landscape of SBCD in Hong Kong.

Methodological Positioning

Methodologically, we also embraced post-colonial sensibilities in our collective inquiry to “question and re-vision curriculum” through engaging local teachers’ perspectives and ways of knowing in “dialogue and self-reflexivity” (Asher, 2010, p. 5). This study capitalized on collective memory work as a form of narrative inquiry to answer our research questions. Frigga Haug et al. (1987) first developed memory work at the intersection of feminist and Marxist theory. According to Davies and Gannon (2006), memory work refers to “the writing and subsequent analysis of remembered stories told and written by the researchers themselves” (p. 4). Memory work, specifically for Haug et al., conveys a past-present-future continuum. Such a continuum helps reveal participants’ past experience as a “basis of knowledge” to shed light on “the ways in which individuals construct themselves into existing relations” (p. 34). They also made explicit that memory work shall be collective for members to complement each other’s knowledge, militate against “sectarian individualism”, and enable “socialization of wider groups” (p. 56).

We invited six teachers who have been involved in SBCD projects at various levels of Hong Kong education (i.e., kindergarten, junior primary, and senior secondary). We used both purposeful sampling and convenience sampling (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In purposeful sampling, we considered teacher participants from whom “the most can be learned” (p. 96) about SBCD in diverse school settings. Based on Zheng’s and Sally’s respective academic and professional networks, we approached the potential teacher participants via email or phone, introduced to each of them the focus of the study, and invited them to be the co-researchers and co-authors of publications. All the teachers participated in the study as co-researchers but two declined to co-author the paper. We used pseudonyms for these two teacher researchers in order to ensure that their identities are not traceable.

The teacher participants represented SBCD experiences in diversified schooling contexts and were thus able to provide stories from which a great deal about SBCD in Hong Kong could be learned. Table 1 shows the profile of the participants in the collective biography.

Table 1
Profile of Participants

Name	School Type	Number of SBCD Projects	Role(s) taken	Involved subject areas	Duration of the project	Sources of funding received	Targeting Students
Apple	Kindergarten	7	Participant	Art English Moral Education Chinese	Ranging from 1 year to 7 years	Education Bureau (EDB) Charitable funds	Kindergarten 1-3
Lorelei	Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) school	1	Participant	General Studies	1 year	School's self-financed project	Junior primary students (grades 1-3)
Sandy	Government subsidized primary school	3	Participant	English Math Special Learning Needs (Chinese, English, Math)	Ranging from 3 years to more than 3 years (on-going projects)	EDB's Learning Support Grant	Junior primary students with learning difficulties
Eunice	Government subsidized primary school	2	Participant & Initiator/Leader	English General Studies	Ranging from 1 year to 7 years	EDB	Grades 4-6
Harley: pseudonym	DSS school	2	Participant & Initiator/Leader	Liberal Studies	Ranging from 1 year to 7 years	EDB	F4-F5 (grades 10-11)
Jean: pseudonym	DSS school	1	Participant	Math	More than 1 year	Self-financed project by the school	Grade 1

Having led inquiries that employed collective biography (e.g., Zhang et al., 2014), Zheng and Sally believed that inviting teachers to share their lived experiences of SBCD would elicit significant stories about the tensions, challenges, and forces that shaped how SBCD was recontextualized in Hong Kong. We concur with Pratt (1991) that “where there are legacies of subordination, groups need places for healing and mutual recognition, safe houses in which to construct shared understandings, knowledges, claims on the world that they can then bring into the contact zone” (p. 6). Embarking on our collective journey, we explicitly explained the purpose of the study and the nature of the collective biography and invited teachers to co-construct the safe house as co-researchers and co-authors. Our collective memory work probed issues pertaining to the teachers’ SBCD projects which were both finished and on-going.

Resonating with van Manen’s (1988) orientation of research to people’s embodied experience (in this case, the teachers in our study), we attended to narrative inquiry’s sensitivity to both personal conditions and social conditions (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) that have shaped these teachers’ experiences, including how they perceived tensions and successes of school-based curriculum development. We conducted three rounds of collective story-sharing and organized eight meetings. We intended to be inclusive of all participants in each round of sharing; thereby, there were two meetings in Round 1, two in Round 2, and four in Round 3, depending on individual teachers’ availability. Meetings lasted from one to two hours in length. All teacher participants agreed to have the story-sharing meetings in Zheng’s and Sally’s offices. Because all members spoke and understood Cantonese, Mandarin, and English, we had the flexibility of sharing stories in three languages depending on their language preferences at the moment of sharing. Zheng facilitated all the meetings. All the meetings were audio-recorded and were later transcribed by research assistants who were fluent in three languages.

Collectively, we shared stories pertaining to the following themes:

Round 1:

- Sad/happy/exciting stories about their SBCD experiences
- Impacts of school culture, various stakeholders’ educational philosophies, and leadership style upon SBCD processes

Round 2:

- Levels of curriculum decision-making in SBCD projects

- Alignment or discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and top-down SBCD project requirements

Round 3:

- Factors that influenced teachers' agency and autonomy
- Impacts of Hong Kong's social, economic, cultural, and educational contexts

After each round of collective memory work, we analyzed and shared stories. Round 1 themes were identified through a literature review of SBCD in Hong Kong; Round 2 and Round 3 themes emerged from the initial data analysis of stories that were shared in Round 1 and Round 2. Data analysis in the process of memory sharing was done inductively through collective reflections. Inductive analysis informed what to share and discuss next in data collection. After the three-rounds of collective story sharing, Zheng and Sally consulted all the teachers about their timeline and we all agreed, given the teachers' full-time workload at schools, that Zheng and Sally would conduct systematic data analysis for findings. We subsequently employed data analysis methods of open coding and axial coding (Cohen et al., 2018) (See Table 2).

Table 2
Coding Examples

Open Codes	Examples of Members' Words	Axial Codes
Academic performances	"[Colleagues are not willing to participate in SBCD] because I think in our team, most of the members are teaching secondary session, so as we all know nowadays the principal only focus on academic performances" (Harley, Round 3)	Tensions and challenges in SBCD projects
No free time	"You know good Seven-Ups mean that teachers have got the timetable and then from the first period to the second period, they have no free time to relax... Just straighten up and stand in your class and teach." (Sally, Round 3)	
No knowledge and skills; mentor does not care	"As I mentioned, when I adapt the learning materials, and my teaching to cater for the small class students, very often I was lost. Because no one can help me and I was the only one who did all the things. And even my mentor didn't care. I don't have the knowledge and skills [to do SBCD]" (Sandy, Round 3)	

We first read the data line-by-line and extracted open codes via In Vivo coding, that is, using “words or short phrases from the participant’s own language” in the transcripts (Miles et al., 2014, n.p.). Examples of open codes are “academic performances”, “no free time”, and “no knowledge and skills”. We then identified the connections between open codes and clustered them into groups to develop axial codes, such as tensions and challenges in SBCD projects and factors that shaped teachers’ agency in curricular decision making.

Findings and Discussion

Here we report the major findings that could shed light on our question regarding teachers’ perceived tensions and challenges in implementing SBCD. Findings also relate factors that enabled and/or constrained teachers’ integration of differing knowledge systems and their creation of productive spaces for SBCD activities and decision-making processes.

Diversified SBCD Activities and Decision-Making Processes

One major finding unfolds the creative and productive spaces for SBCD activities and decision-making processes. Such processes fused various traditions and practices in different schooling contexts where the teachers were located.

Teachers in our study were involved in a wide range of SBCD activities that echo Marsh et al.’s (1990) SBCD activity typology: creation, adaptation, selection, and investigation. For example, Jean and her colleagues’ textbook compilation of Primary 1 math falls in the category of creating new materials. Reflective of the “adaptation” features, Harley and his colleagues tried to better align instruction and activities with the requirements of the new curriculum guide of Liberal Studies and adapted school-based teaching activities and materials. Several SBCD projects that Apple directed in kindergarten classes involved the “selection” of materials and textbooks provided by various stakeholders. Eunice’s innovative cross-border projects that connected Hong Kong, Spanish, and Canadian students in English classes clearly embodied the SBCD typology of investigating a certain area and creating new materials.

Teachers also reported efforts to make interdisciplinary connections in their SBCD projects. Sally’s SBCD projects of General Studies integrated themes from Chinese, English, and Math. Jean’s primary school ecological project integrated

computer skills showing how her students incorporated the concepts of ecological footprints into a game.

The teacher participants shared that these various SBCD activities responded to the diversified student needs in their respective school settings. Hired as a therapy teacher, Sandy's SBCD projects attended to South Asian English as a Second Language (ESL) students' challenges of learning English in a local Hong Kong school. Sandy found that South Asian ESL students were sent to her class because the other teachers thought that they could not concentrate or sit still, that they had behavior problems, or that they could not speak well. However, even though Sandy thought highly of these students, she said "they are labelled as having problems." Eunice, as the English panel head, considered the historical connectedness of Hong Kong and Canada and mobilized the cross-border SBCD projects to connect students in Hong Kong and Canada, while Harley's e-learning projects engaged students in contemporary technology-use in the new era.

However, collectively disturbing the grassroots advocacy of their SBCD projects, some teachers started to question whether their projects were truly responsive to students' needs. Apple perceived that, in her kindergarten SBCD projects, children seemed to enjoy the autonomy to choose activities based on their own interests, but the learning settings were pre-framed and pre-defined by the teachers to follow the government curriculum. In Sandy's school, teachers were expected to adapt the learning materials for the South Asian ESL students, but the exam papers were not accommodated for these students and the school placed significant emphasis on enhancing these students' test scores. Therefore, Sandy felt that she had to teach to the exams instead of focusing on students' needs.

All the teachers concurred that the Western-centric construct of SBCD was fueled by "democratic impulse" in Australia (Kennedy, 2010, p. 4); however, they did not see the individual SBCD projects that they were involved in as democratic endeavors. Although their school cultures and leadership styles varied, Harley, Jean, and Sandy agreed that schools had autonomy in designing various aspects of SBCD projects, but generally it was the senior management's beliefs that ultimately shaped project orientations and processes. Nevertheless, they also shared similar experiences where panel heads or project directors trusted teachers' professional judgment and sought their advice.

In Apple's first story of kindergarten SBCD projects, she depicted one of her principals as the "Ruler of the Wilderness" (山寨王). She explained that the principal lacked democratic motives and tended to control the processes of school-based curriculum development. Apple commented that she felt what they did in the

kindergarten SBCD projects was “flawed democracy.” When she led her team to design teaching and learning activities, it might seem that teachers had professional autonomy because the principal trusted Apple’s professional judgment in curriculum decision-making to a certain degree. However, teachers’ autonomy in curriculum decision making was always subordinate to the principal’s preferences. Apple said, “The SBCD projects are often about the principal’s beliefs. We (teachers) do have autonomy, but it is all about fine-tuning what the principal wants.” Sally’s first story about her SBCD experience echoes the influence of “significant people” such as principals in SBCD projects. The project that she led reflected her principal’s belief that SBCD projects shall play a key role in enhancing public examination results. Harley argued in Round 3 that he believed that the Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) intended to decentralize curriculum decision-making through SBCD; however, “even if EDB wants to decentralize everything, but if back to school the top management don’t share things that EDB believe, then nothing will happen.”

Teachers also communicated stories where principals’ diverging visions altered the progress of their SBCD projects. Harley’s Round 2 story discussed two principals and the changing landscape of a SBCD project in their respective tenures. Because of the first principal’s support, the school secured funding for a three-year project to use iPads to learn Liberal Studies. However, the momentum changed drastically when a new principal came in the third year. Harley shared:

In these three years, because of the change in top management’s philosophy, the top management do not show interest in developing this kind of field.... The top management would not ask you about the progress of your project. The whole thing becomes that I can only conduct pilot lessons in my own class. I can’t really promote it in other classes. I understand that the principal would not support it very much.

At Lorelei’s school, the senior school management was geared more to the imposition of test-oriented teaching. This resulted in aborting one SBCD project after her principal decided to use the government-recommended textbooks instead of using teacher-developed materials. The principal made this decision because parents expected schools to use the same teaching materials that were used at other schools, and the principal believed that teacher-developed teaching materials might not match the government’s curricular expectations.

Apple, Sandy, and Lorelei all problematized curricular co-planning as a “democratic” curriculum decision-making process. In Round 1, Sandy expressed that a number of her colleagues met up for the SBCD project to support “lower-

level” South Asian students in her class who were Filipino, Pakistani, and Nepalese. However, those colleagues did not work with these students and were much less familiar with their needs than she was. She taught 28 classes a week, so she barely had time to join the meetings to inform the decision-making teachers of the support that her students might have needed. Lorelei said co-planning in her school’s SBCD projects was “a faking practice” because they only documented co-planning for external reviews of the SBCD projects. For Apple’s project-based kindergarten SBCD inquiries, she shared that even though project-based learning was meant to involve both teachers and students to co-construct knowledge, in reality schools had to first report to parents and ensure that they were satisfied with what their children would learn from project-based learning. Thus, her colleagues called such projects “fake project-based learning” because the lesson plans that they engaged in were focused only on documenting specific academic goals to impress parents.

In summary, teachers shared stories about what enabled the productive multiplicity of SBCD spaces in their local school contexts. They also disrupted the contested discourses that shaped teachers’ autonomy in meeting students’ diverse needs in their SBCD projects, such as the hybrid top-down and bottom-up leadership styles, the superficial rationale to meet students’ needs, and the false democracy in curriculum decision-making.

Tensions of Ethical and Neoliberal Paradigms in SBCD

Heydon and Wang (2006) depicted an ethical paradigm of curriculum which allows spaces to improve learners’ quality of life and enables teachers to be “professional decision-makers” (p. 30). In the process of collective biography, teachers communicated and interrogated their fragmenting professional identities in buttressing both ethical and neoliberal paradigms in their SBCD projects.

The teachers involved with this study expressed a general concern that teachers’ creativity in SBCD projects was often confined by the top-down curricular expectations that were prescribed in EDB’s formal curriculum documents. As Harley specified, “Only within the framework of EDB’s curriculum guide were teachers encouraged to express freely.” Apple also commented on her experience in the kindergarten setting:

Teachers might be left space for curriculum adaptation. They might be allowed to divert a bit in their [teaching] space, but they are not allowed to go against the curricular expectations.

Almost all teachers admitted that students' involvement in the school-level decision-making was limited at various levels of schooling though the SBCD decisions were supposed to be based on students' local needs.

Teachers expressed uncertainty about whether their SBCD projects would benefit their students' life-long learning, particularly when they were confronted with expectations of school-designed and standardized assessments. They commented on the salient emphasis of the internal and external exams on efficiency and immediate and observable outcomes. For example, Eunice expressed that she and her colleagues had to spend lots of time dealing with students' behavioral problems and preparing students for the Territory-wide System Assessment (TSA). In Harley's first story, he expressed a positive professional learning experience between his colleagues and himself in the process of designing new materials and developing school-based curriculum. However, those projects were aborted when teachers eventually had to prepare students for public examinations and they felt "a sense of insecurity" because "if we rely too much on the school-based curriculum, we are afraid that we may lose the direction." Our collective discussion led Harley to question the ethics of actualizing a test-oriented curriculum and whether SBCD should focus on cultivating lifelong learning. In Harley's view, focusing on standardized testing would jeopardize "good," ethical SBCD projects.

The teachers also conveyed the tensions between the Western-centric values of ethical and democratic education and the cult of efficiency and productivity that was long embedded in Hong Kong. Most teachers felt that covering the curriculum content became the major focus of their teaching, instead of addressing students' needs in SBCD projects. Harley commented that the Hong Kong education he had experienced was still oriented toward productivity and efficiency, which were central to the educational focus back in the industrial era. Given the talent demands of the 21st century, he argued that such foci must be changed to accommodate the emergent needs of local Hong Kong contexts, such as cultivating students' creativity. Harley argued that education should not adhere to beliefs about productivity and standardization as students were not car models but individuals with differentiated interests and strengths. For Harley, shifting attention from efficiency-oriented education to students' diverse needs should be the key to SBCD.

Despite the paradigm shifts in her school management's beliefs in SBCD, Lorelei persisted in her ethical approaches to SBCD projects focusing on her students' needs. In the collective story sharing, she identified herself as a rebel teacher and expressed her resistance to and negotiation with the constraining yet hegemonic forces of accountability mechanisms. This contrasts most other teachers in the study who struggled to manage the competing discourses and having to

address their fracturing identities as docile or autonomous teaching professionals, as well as grassroots advocates.

Parental choice was a key factor that intertwined with the accountability model to shape the progress of the teachers' SBCD projects. Eunice's cross-border projects were approved by her principal because the school's number of students was declining, and they needed new "selling points" to attract more students. Sally shared a jargon in Hong Kong of "voting with your feet" ("靠双腿投票"), which means that if parents thought a certain school could not help students achieve higher marks in public examinations they would take their children to other schools with better public exam performance no matter what SBCD projects the school was running. But Apple shared that her principal would promote SBCD projects that would make the school look good and thus attract more parents. In the kindergarten classrooms where she worked, EDB explicitly prohibited "externally imposed accountability measures" (Xu & Marsh, 2011, p. 18) with the belief that these measures might hinder younger children's learning. However, the parents with whom she interacted bought into the accountability model and believed that standardized testing would enhance their children's learning. Responding to parents' expectations, Apple's kindergarten SBCD project opted to design internal exams to test the students' numeracy and literacy skills.

Across their stories, teachers consistently reflected upon ambiguities in their professional identities and educational beliefs. Collectively, they communicated their conscious and unconscious celebration of the underprivileged, ethical discourses in SBCD and their resistance to the privileged discourses of educational efficiency and accountability.

Dominant Discourses & Productive Hybrid Spaces

In our earlier story sharing, several teachers contrasted the "Eastern" discourses of top-down controlling and privileging meritocracy with the original SBCD discourses of bottom-up curriculum decision-making and grassroots advocacy. Collectively disturbing the East and West binary, we started to see SBCD efforts that integrated differing knowledge systems, created third spaces in learning, and problematized dominant discourses such as streaming, top-down decision-making, Western-centrism, and linguistic imperialism.

Teachers' stories about their SBCD efforts reveal their awareness of the enabling East-West connections. Eunice endeavored to conduct cross-border SBCD projects and connect her primary school students in Hong Kong with students in Canada. One of the projects connected students virtually through Knowledge

Forum, an online platform. As an English teacher, Eunice intended to hone her students' English communication and critical thinking skills while supporting their projects on renewable energy. She also took students on tours to see local landfills, environmental resource centers, and electric city. Two video conferences, one for self-introduction and another for sharing project outcomes, connected the Hong Kong students with students from abroad. Although these twelve students were carefully selected to participate in the projects because of their high English proficiency levels, she did not observe her students' "fluent communications in English in the project." That said, she was aware that her students were happy and engaged in learning. In another project, Eunice connected Hong Kong and Canadian students to design, shoot, and share videos about their respective festivals. Eunice said that streaming students based on their academic levels was a typical feature of Hong Kong schooling and her school was not an exception. In this project, she realized that students from the academically elite class were more active than the other two classes when interacting with their Canadian peers online. When asked about how such cross-border projects would benefit her students, Eunice said, "Streaming would help promote quality education. But whether such streaming based on academic achievement could benefit all the students, it would depend on the nature of the curriculum...and teachers' professional judgement." When asked about her reasons to implement such cross-border SBCD projects, she responded,

I hope my students will have opportunities to communicate with foreigners through these projects. Most of my students come from lower social-economic status and have limited exposure to foreigners in their daily life. Also, I think my students should not confine their learning to the local, but also establishing a worldview through these projects.

Similarly, addressing the question about how to nurture 21st century learners in Round 1 of collective sharing, Harley raised a question: "What qualities could be enabled by Eastern ways of education and by Western pedagogies?" Responding to the demands of the ever-changing information and technology in the new era, Harley initiated a SBCD project called "e-learning Pilot Scheme." In this 3-year project, teachers used iPads and relevant apps to teach Liberal Studies and evaluate students' work. Harley also remarked that Hong Kong's changing identity from an industrial society to a global service and financial center had placed new demands upon talents and new approaches to nurturing talents.

Jean and Harley talked about their two principals' different educational philosophies by referring to them as the Old Principal and the New Principal. To Jean and Harley, the Old Principal was a good listener and had long consultation meetings with teachers about school-level decision-making. They commented that

the Old Principal accentuated the SBCD projects' long-term benefits to the learners and saw the standardized tests as a less important indicator of students' learning. In contrast, the New Principal focused more on efficiency and his leadership style involved more top-down decision-making. He was a firm believer in the statistics conveyed through standardized tests results. Teachers like Jean, Harley, and Apple said they would follow their principals' decisions even though they might not agree. But Lorelei said, "If I myself do not believe in an educational model imposed from the top, I would not implement that model upon my own students." In one of the SBCD projects, Eunice's principal decided to use Canadian textbooks for their English classes. Eunice and her colleagues found that the Canadian textbooks did not meet their Hong Kong students' local needs. Their students needed substantial support with English grammar, but the imported textbooks were more focused on reading. Therefore, teachers collectively voted to use locally-developed Hong Kong textbooks.

In one of Sandy's SBCD projects, she worked with Special Education Needs (SEN) students from South Asia. She shared stories about how she and her SEN students were marginalized in a small "multipurpose" class which was used as a janitor's room, storage room, and SEN children's pull-out classroom from time to time. Sandy had to constantly fight against the physical marginalization of her SEN students, frequently confronting other English teachers' labels and twisted perceptions of these students' intelligence. Interacting with these SEN students day in and day out, Sandy saw her students as learners with various assets: They came from diverse cultural and ethnical backgrounds, were fluent with their heritage languages, yet had to learn Chinese and English according to the academic requirements of Hong Kong schools. The linguistic imperialism of English in post-colonial Hong Kong and the dominance of examination culture changed the original rationale of Sandy's SBCD project that intended to be responsive to these SEN students' diverse needs. Sandy took care of these SEN students in her own ways. For example, as a partial mission of the SBCD project, she took the initiative to decorate this "multipurpose" classroom and made it a more comfortable and welcoming learning environment for these students.

Situated in the local realities of Hong Kong schooling, teachers' SBCD projects can be seen to exhibit the productivity of hybrid cultural spaces. Teachers' shared struggles with dominant discourses also revealed the agentive roles that they could play to benefit diverse learners in the long run.

Conclusion, Implication, & Significance

Based on the data collected in teacher participants' stories, we conclude that hegemonic discourses such as the accountability mechanism, linguistic imperialism, Western-centrism, and top-down curriculum decision-making shaped the teachers' recontextualization of SBCD in Hong Kong schools.

The collective memory sharing brought forth stories about the creative juxtapositions of the Western-centric values of SBCD and local Hong Kong teachers' curriculum knowledge about addressing local students' needs. Findings also convey a vision of SBCD in Hong Kong as a "productive hybrid" space (Moje et al. p. 43) where new forms of knowledge, discourses, and identities came into being through struggles. We concur with Matus and McCarthy (2003) that thinking in post-colonial constructs means "thinking relationally and contextually" (p. 81). Our findings highlight the importance of addressing relationality in school-based curriculum decision-making against the backdrop of globalization. This means creating dialogic spaces in school-based curriculum decision-making to relate local/global, East/West, and self/Other so that new forms of culture, knowledge, and identity would be generated. We argue that such dialogic spaces would encourage practitioners' critical reflections about the enabling discourses for school-based curriculum development as a social democratic cause in the new millennium.

In the meantime, we would also like to highlight the fragmented purposes of SBCD in Hong Kong and fragmented teacher identities as school-based curriculum decision makers. Though SBCD projects were acclaimed to respond to students' diverse needs, teachers reported the "hierarchical arrangement of schooling" (Matus & McCarthy, 2003, p. 74) in various schooling contexts such as streaming students, standardized testing, and privileging dominant languages over others. Furthermore, such fragmented purposes that the teachers' SBCD projects served resulted in teachers' concerns about their fragmented identities, namely, grassroots advocates versus catalysts for educational inequity through meritocracy; agentic curriculum decision-makers versus passive followers of top managements' leadership in SBCD.

This collective teacher-researcher inquiry enabled teachers' sharing of lived experiences that are "pedagogically crucial" (Pinar et al., 2008, p. 530; Winfield, 2007) in a prevailing research discourse where human feelings, thoughts, and ensuing actions become "anonymous and quantitative" (Grumet, as cited in Pinar et al., 2008, p. 540). Such practitioner-researcher collaboration has strong potentials in linking "the wealth of new insights into past and present historical cultures ...

conclusively to specific social collectives and their historical consciousness” (Kansteiner, 2002, p. 179). We concur with Deng (2018) that curriculum studies are not a theoretic but a “practical undertaking” that should concern the “advancement of education” (p. 16). It is our hope that such practitioner research could inspire new ways of “modeling an inquiry stance towards practice” (Ballock, 2019, p. 2). In our study, disrupting academics’ hegemonic voices in SBCD studies encouraged in-service teachers to “research and write as Others and not about them” (Ilieva, 2014, p. 67). Teachers’ counternarratives were educational praxis because, collectively, we probed the “venues of change and transformation” (Moreira, p. 667) in the SBCD projects where teachers played agentic roles. As Haug (1999) contends, the past-present-future continuum in collective memory-work is a promising approach for such critical, equitable inquiries because the collective sharing has the potential to enable members’ changes in perception and future action as teachers and teacher educators.

We concur with Dana and Currin (2017) that critically-oriented teacher-researcher collaboration is “a hallmark of high-quality practitioner research” (p. 3). However, in this study, the teachers did not initiate the collective inquiry based on their bottom-up needs of actualizing SBCD in Hong Kong. Rather, it was Zheng and Sally who initiated this collective biography in the capacity of academic researchers and teacher educators. The teacher-researcher collaborative research design here might have impacted teachers’ ownership in the research, their levels of engagement in the process of data collection and data analysis, and encouragement to pursue teacher research of their own volition in the future. To respond to Ballock’s (2019) call of fostering a culture of teacher-researcher inquiry, we believe such collaboration could help create productive connections between teachers and university researchers to optimize practices in school-based curriculum development. In the meantime, we also hope our future teacher-research inquiries could promote “ongoing cycles of practitioner research, both formal and informal” (p. 2) and forge “a way of knowing and being” for both teachers and teacher educators (p. 2). The current research only focused on teacher-researcher systematic reflections on SBCD for teachers to “gain new understandings of their personal practices” (Hooser & Sabella, 2018, p. 1). We hope that in our future cycles of professional learning, teacher educators could support teachers’ curricular decision-making and professional practices for school-based curriculum to be more responsive to local students’ and communities’ needs. For future research, we also recommend practitioner-researcher collaboration that involves school leadership and a wider teacher population to further enhance teachers’ agency in curriculum leadership. Involving principals and school administrators in the practitioner-researcher inquiries, they would change leadership practices and allocate resources to better support the development of locally responsive curricula. Involving more

teachers in the collective storytelling about their practices with SBCD would hopefully transform the school culture to respond to students' and communities' needs.

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