



A case study on the  
implementation of a **school-based  
curriculum (SBC)** in a Hong Kong  
secondary school's English  
classrooms by teachers holding  
different **beliefs**

## Research Context

- TPSS is funded by the government under the direct subsidy scheme (DSS).
- Four classes in the Form 5 level Workplace Communication Curriculum implemented in the classrooms.

## Participants

Miss Sussie (8 years): high school in HK, grad in the US, teaches highest ability group.

Miss Mitchell (8 years ): high school in Singapore, grad in the US, teaches the second highest ability group

Miss Joey (6 years): high school in HK, grad in the UK, teaches lowest ability group.

Miss Tina (3 years): high school and uni education in HK, teaches the second lower ability group.



## Methods

1. Semi-structured interviews
2. Life history (Chik, 2008): Learning and teaching experiences
3. The ways they learned and taught English
4. The ways they delivered the SBC materials



## Findings (aligned with 'official norms')

Miss Tina: A communicative coherent teaching; the development of an independent 'learning-to-learn' culture

Miss Mitchell: The provision of a language-rich environment



(Not aligned with 'official norms')

Teachers may not necessary follow the 'official norms' in practice as 'there seems to exist a wide variety of ideas among teachers how problems can be solved' (Olson, 2005, p. 97)

# Teaching is different from other disciplines

“Teachers learn to talk about what they do, about the techniques and materials they use, about how students are doing; they refer to information about teaching and learning as embedded in **local circumstances** and **personal experience**... On the whole, teachers do not talk about information in terms of principles of regularity or canons of evidence, as other disciplinary communities do”.

(Freeman, 1998, p.11)

## Highlight (I) – Teachers use traditional methods

Miss Sussie and Miss Joey: use of first language (L1) in the classroom; formative assessment (repetitive and constant assessment)

*I still believe that if you don't ask students to recite or dictate, they won't do it on their own. They wouldn't think: "Well, these are good sentences, let me memorize them," unless you set dictation tasks. I can see that they do much better in the writing exam. (Miss Sussie, interview data)*



## Ground of good practice:

*... for weaker students, if you ask them to read a book and they do not recognize nine words out of ten in one sentence, they will not have motivation to read the book. They are afraid of reading. So I select the words and ask them to remember those words first. ... After that, when I ask them to read the passage again, they would re-gain their confidence. As long as they are more self-confident, we can encourage them to read more. (Miss Sussie, Interview Data)*

## Highlights (2) – Teachers work in context

Miss Mitchell: “A project person”

*I tried to implement it into the [weaker ability group]. But it's very hard as the kids' level of English is very low. So you have to basically give them more input.*

*At this particular school, I think this is my thinking. But I think my thinking would change with the type of students I teach. I mean, at the end of the day, we have to cater to the students' needs. (Miss Mitchell, Interview Data)*

# Implications for SBC Development

3Ps: “personalization (addressing each child’s learning needs), precision (tailoring the instruction to the needs without getting prescriptive), and professional learning (where each and every teacher learns every day” (Fullan, 2008, p.121)

## Conclusion

What is important in SBCD is, therefore, teachers' "good decisions". SBCD should be initiated and designed by teachers instead of being a government-controlled initiative. The government agency needs to trust that teachers have the ability to reflect and can improve the SBCD being carried out in their classrooms.