

Analysis of the Demands, Dilemmas, and Paths of Basic Education Development in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area

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Abstract

To form a solid talent base for the comprehensive development of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, and to integrate the regional advantages of the three places, we explore the practical paths of basic education integration and analyze the demands for motivation from the three dimensions of “source of students-level of the educational development-curriculum system” and explore promoting cooperation in running schools with the integration of “government-university-enterprise” combined with literature analysis and comparative research methods. It is suggested to develop the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination school-based curriculum and strengthen exchanges and cooperation between sister schools. In this way, we build an educational ecosphere in Hong Kong and Macao, and cultivate high-level talents with an international vision in the Greater Bay Area.

Keywords

Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, Integration in Basic Education, The Paths of Practice

1. Introduction

Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (hereinafter referred to as the “Outline of the Plan”) mentions the following four points: firstly, to actively expand cooperation in the field of education in the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao; to strengthen exchange and cooperation in basic education; to build schools for children of

Hong Kong-Macao in Guangdong; to encourage primary and secondary schools in Guangdong, Hong Kong-Macao to found “sister schools”. Subsequently, the Guangdong Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China and the Guangdong Provincial People’s Government’s Instructions on Implementation of the Outline of the Plan for the Greater Bay Area put forward some planning and construction requirements for strengthening the exchange and coordinated development of basic education in the Greater Bay Area. The three-year Action Plan of Guangdong Province for Promoting the Construction of Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (2018-2020) encourages young people from Hong Kong and Macao to study in Chinese mainland schools; promotes interactive exchanges between schools in the Greater Bay Area; strengthens exchanges between young people from Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao; and carries out research and tourism cooperation among young people in the Greater Bay Area (Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, 2019). The General Plan for the Comprehensive Deepening of Innovative Development of Trade in Services supports the establishment of schools for foreign children in the Greater Bay Area, Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei, and Yangtze River Delta. Enhance the business environment and enhance the attraction of high-end foreign professional service personnel.

Integration and development in the field of education refer to the organic integration of all kinds of education in the same system, complementary advantages, and jointly improve service demands to achieve a dynamic balance (Hou, 2021). At present, the integration of higher education in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao has achieved initial results, and the current research mainly focuses on the development basis, cooperation path, system support, logic, and progress, etc. The vocational education research in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao mainly focuses on the exploration of the path of industry-university-research integration and the research on the realization mechanism. Based on previous studies, little attention has been paid to the research on basic education in the Greater Bay Area, which only stays at the shallow level of communication, and has not involved the in-depth analysis of the cooperation path, development mechanism, and practice path. Based on the construction of the Greater Bay Area, the field of basic education must integrate the coordinated development of government, industry, and society (Chen & Zheng, 2019). By further clarifying the demands and motivation of basic education integration, this paper explores the practical paths of basic education integration, integrates the regional advantages of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, and lays a solid talent foundation for the comprehensive development of these three areas.

2. Demand Drivers of Basic Education Integration

To analyze the demand drivers of the integration of basic education in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, the overall situation of education, in the Greater Bay Area, needs to be sorted out. To clarify the internal demand for the integra-

tion of basic education is the premise and foundation of the educational cooperation in the Greater Bay Area. Next, the analysis is carried out from the three dimensions of “source of students-level of educational development-curriculum system”, to explore the potential demand for students, the characteristics of the HKDSE and the development of education in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao:

2.1. Potential Demand of Students

The students of basic education come from the educated. The source of students is determined by the population situation, including population size, population structure, and population trends. According to the Seventh National Census Bulletin issued by the National Bureau of Statistics of China in May 2021, there were 418,509 people from Hong Kong, Macao, and foreign countries living in Guangdong Province (National Bureau of Statistics, China, 2021). The number of people from Hong Kong living in Guangdong ranked first among the provinces in China. The census results showed that employment, settlement, and education were the three most important factors for Hong Kong people to come to the Chinese mainland, accounting for 31.06%, 29.33%, and 15.36% respectively.

According to the data released by the Hong Kong Education Bureau in 2013, the number of “double non-children” born from 2006 to October 2012 was 183,000 (“double non-children” = children whose parents are not Hong Kong citizens, were born in Hong Kong and have registered residence in Hong Kong.). In 2013, the “double nonpolicy” was completely stopped. Now, these “double non-children” are aged 10 - 16, and they are children of junior high school and senior high school age. With the acceleration of the integration process of the Greater Bay Area and the continuous improvement of the education level in the Chinese mainland, more and more Hong Kong people choose to come to the Chinese mainland for school. As of June 2021, the number of Hong Kong secondary school graduates who had passed the Diploma Examination Scheme to apply to Chinese mainland universities has increased by 20% year on year (China Education Study Abroad Network, Hong Kong, 2021).

2.2. The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination Links Up with the International Education System

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (or HKDSE for short) course is developed and organized by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. It does apply to 129 universities in China and is recognized by about 300 institutions of higher education around the world. It is an internationally recognized public examination with SAT, IB, and A-Level (Hong Kong Education Bureau, 2022). Compared with European, American, and British courses, HKDSE attaches great importance to the integration of Chinese and Western cultures, which is consistent with the subjects of the Chinese Mainland College Entrance Examination. The knowledge points of the subjects overlap with the contents of the Chinese Mainland College Entrance Examination. The courses

highlight the excellent traditional Chinese culture, ethics, and cultural values, and are closely linked with the international education system. It is a truly Chinese international education course in line with the international education system.

2.3. There Is an Imbalance in the Development of Education in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao

With the help of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (or PISA for short) sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (or OECD for short), this paper analyses the students from Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. Since 2002, PISA has tested the reading, mathematics, and science abilities of 15-year-old students in major industrialized countries in a three-year cycle. PISA scores are not only an assessment of knowledge, and skills, but also a reflection of the level of education in different regions. In 2009 and 2012, only Shanghai students were tested in the Chinese mainland. In 2015, students from Beijing, Guangzhou, and Jiangsu also participated in the test. According to the test results, Hong Kong students ranked higher than Chinese mainland students in the total score. Among the top ten countries/regions in the total score of the test, the proportion of Chinese mainland students in the low segment was 10.6%, accounting for the largest proportion. In 2018, students from Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu, and Zhejiang participated in the test. Chinese mainland students ranked first in the three tests of reading, mathematics, and scientific literacy. Macao ranked third in the three tests. Hong Kong ranked fourth in the total score, and Hong Kong ranked eighth in the single test of scientific literacy. Because there were no students from Guangdong in 2018, according to the test data in 2015, in the field of basic education, Guangdong lagged behind Hong Kong and Macao, where urbanization was relatively high. Compared with the data of 2015 and 2018, the development speed of basic education in the Chinese mainland was faster than that in Hong Kong and Macao.

3. Analysis of Existing Difficulties

The integration of basic education in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area has a broad space for research and exploration. However, it should rely on theoretical analysis to guide practice. As the relevant theoretical research is still in its infancy, the degree of integration development is not yet sufficient. The main reasons are that the policies and regulations supporting the integration development are not clear, the support is insufficient, and the realization mechanism and ways are relatively single (Liu, 2021).

3.1. Policies and Regulations Have Not Yet Formed a Standardized System

The Outline of the Plan points out that the establishment of schools for students of Hong Kong and Macao in Guangdong is encouraged. At present, schools with Hong Kong and Macao students as the main target of enrollment in Guangdong

Province are being established one after another. In 2020, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government and the Shenzhen Government jointly established Longhua Xinyi School of Shenzhen Hong Kong Peiqiao College. In March 2021, the Affiliated School of Jinan University for Hong Kong & Macao Students was set up under the background of the “dual-zone driving effect” in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area and the pilot demonstration area. Both schools were officially opened in September 2021. In addition, Minxin Hong Kong School in Nansha, Guangzhou, led by former Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun-Ying, is expected to open in September 2022. At present, such schools with Hong Kong and Macao students as the main target of enrollment have not yet been regulated in terms of operation management, curriculum setting, teacher selection, and student training, and are mainly managed regarding foreign children’s schools.

3.2. It Is Difficult to Unify the Standards of Educational Integration between Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is different in terms of political system, social and cultural foundation, and educational system arrangement (Zhang, 2018). At present, the educational integration work based on “one region, two systems, three tariff zones and four core cities” is difficult to be achieved in a short time. It is also difficult to unify the standard of educational integration. In actual operation, there is no local teaching training or research system in Hong Kong. Chinese mainland teachers organize various teaching and research activities to promote their professional growth. At the same time, Hong Kong, Macao, and foreign teachers lack a unified way and standard of qualification certification, while teachers in Chinese mainland schools need to hold certificates.

4. Practice Paths

The integration of education in the Greater Bay Area aims to promote the interaction of teachers, students, and other related elements, realizing the complementary advantages of the structural layout of the three places, seeking common ground while reserving differences, being inclusive, and realizing the unity and coordination of diversity and individualization (Zhan, Zhong, Li, & Li, 2022). The practical paths of the integration of basic education in the Greater Bay Area can be carried out in accordance with the four steps of “Cooperative education, curriculum development, school exchange and educational research”, as follows:

4.1. Promote the Integration of Basic Education Services in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, and Promote Joint Education

Through the integration of “government-university-enterprise” tripartite collaborative development, promote cooperation in running schools. The study and formulation of relevant laws and regulations to further standardize the integration of basic education services need to be accelerated by the government. With

the support of the Guangzhou Education Bureau, Jinan University, together with Hong Kong Victoria Harbor Group and Dongguan Eaton, co-founded the Affiliated School of Jinan University for Hong Kong & Macao Students. With the goal of “Jinan Nature, Bay Area Background, Hong Kong and Macao Characteristics”, the school mainly recruits students from Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR, as well as suitable students from Taiwan region and foreign countries. In the first year, 360 students were enrolled, 85% of whom were Hong Kong citizens. There were more than 50 teachers, of whom 71% were Hong Kong and international teachers. By jointly running schools, the process of service integration was promoted between Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, and a new way to achieve educational integration was explored.

4.2. Develop an “HKDSE” School-Based Curriculum to Fill the Gaps in the Curriculum System

Under the guidance of the system of “one country, two systems”, Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, which share the same culture, jointly with teachers and experts from Guangdong and Hong Kong, make a thorough study of the general knowledge, Chinese and English disciplines of basic education in Guangdong and Hong Kong. Based on the HKDSE curriculum system, combined with the excellent traditional Chinese culture, national feelings, and cultural values, jointly develop the curriculum and form the HKDSE course resource library. To fill the gap in the integration and development of basic education in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, and to realize the integration of basic education in the Greater Bay Area with international education (Zhuo, 2020).

4.3. Build an Education Ecosystem between Hong Kong and Macao, and Strengthen Exchanges and Cooperation between Sister Schools

Chinese mainland schools and Hong Kong, and Macao schools are encouraged to establish sister schools to achieve in-depth interaction in many aspects, such as school-running philosophy, educational resources, teacher training, student exchanges, and academic certification. To carry out subject teaching and research activities and promote the professional growth of teachers in the Greater Bay Area. Teachers in Guangdong and Hong Kong should learn from each other, promote mutual exchanges and understanding, and establish a teaching and research system. By sharing history and experience, students in Guangdong and Hong Kong perceive each other’s memories, emotions, and attitudes, and eventually integrate and develop into a community of destiny for students in the Greater Bay Area. Enhance the sense of national identity of overseas Chinese families and teenagers in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. Through the exchange and cooperation of schools in the three places, build an educational ecosystem in Hong Kong and Macao, forming a point with a line, a line with a surface, from fragments to the whole. The hierarchical development model from local to global forms the radiation influence of the Greater Bay Area and pro-

motes the integration of basic education to achieve a leap from quantitative change to qualitative change.

4.4. To Carry Out Basic Education Research Guided by the Demand of the State, Hong Kong, Macao, Taiwan, and Overseas Chinese

Improve the training and management of Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan students. Explore the innovative development of basic education research. Conduct research on the teacher development community. Focus on the teaching and research system, teacher training, teaching practice, and other aspects. Devote to training excellent Hong Kong and Macao teachers. Study the cultivation of key competencies of students in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, focusing on the cultivation of literacy knowledge, values, and literacy skills of students in the Greater Bay Area. Promote the mutual recognition of teachers' qualifications in Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao. Promote the convergence and integration of basic education in the Greater Bay Area. Lay a solid foundation for the free flow of talent elements between the two places. Cultivate talents with core competencies and an international vision in Greater Bay Area.

5. Conclusion

In order to implement the requirements of the Outline of the Plan for the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao on promoting the comprehensive cooperation and development of education between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, and Macao, it is necessary to integrate and utilize the high-quality educational resources of Guangdong and Hong Kong. The Chinese mainland schools should rely on the advantages of the Greater Bay Area to strengthen communication and exchanges with schools in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan. Firstly, establish a linkage and coordination mechanism with Guangdong, Hong Kong, and Macao, promoting the implementation of supporting policies. Secondly, clarify the mode of cooperation, and carry out research on curriculum, teachers and student evaluation system in the three places. Finally, encourage the construction of "First Try" innovative demonstration sites. Support the development of schools enrolling students from Hong Kong and Macao. Promote the construction of demonstration benchmarking schools to provide reference and learning cases for the integration of basic education in the Greater Bay Area.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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