

## DOCTORAL THESIS

# Exploring Strategies for Enhancing Children's Executive Functions in Hong Kong Kindergartens

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*Date of Award:*  
2024

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## **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative research study aims to explore the strategies employed by early childhood educators in Hong Kong kindergartens for enhancing children's executive functions. Executive functions are crucial for children's school readiness and future success, yet there is not much research on how teachers promote executive functions in Hong Kong. Fourteen early childhood educators were interviewed, and three kindergartens were visited for class observation to examine teachers' concepts and experiences in promoting children's executive functions.

The results show that teachers adopt various strategies to promote children's executive functions in their daily practice, particularly in inhibitory control. However, teachers' teaching priorities are affected by parental expectations and the academic-focused environment in Hong Kong, resulting in a discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices. The results also indicate some teachers were not familiar with the concept of executive functions.

The study suggests that professional training for teachers is needed in this area to ensure that children's executive functions are effectively promoted in early childhood education and to minimise the discrepancy between teachers' beliefs and practices. This research provides insights for educators and kindergarten teacher training programmes in Hong Kong on promoting children's executive functions by facilitating teachers' professional development.