

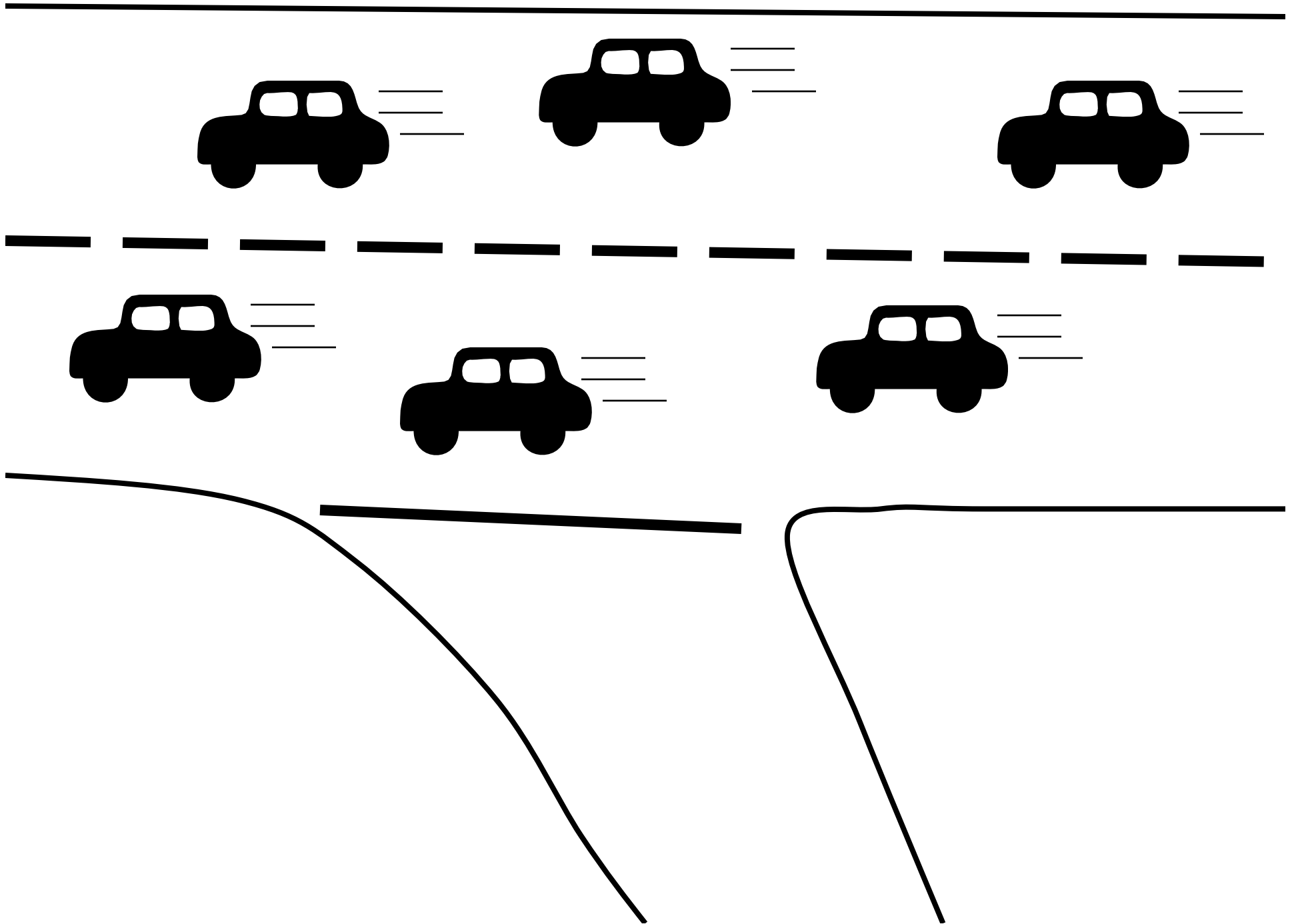
# Teacher Education as an Agent of Hope for an Inclusive Society

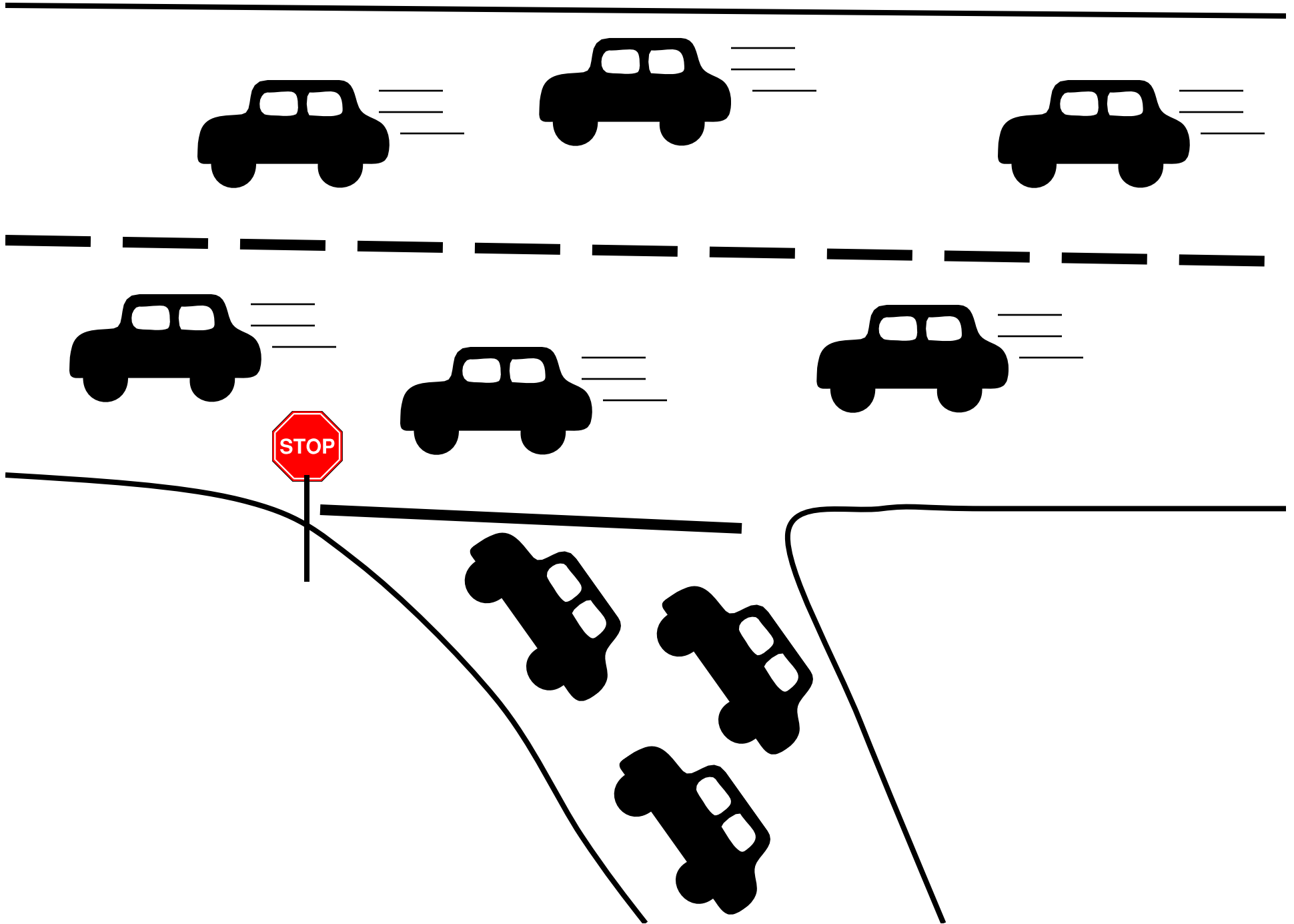
Levan Lim

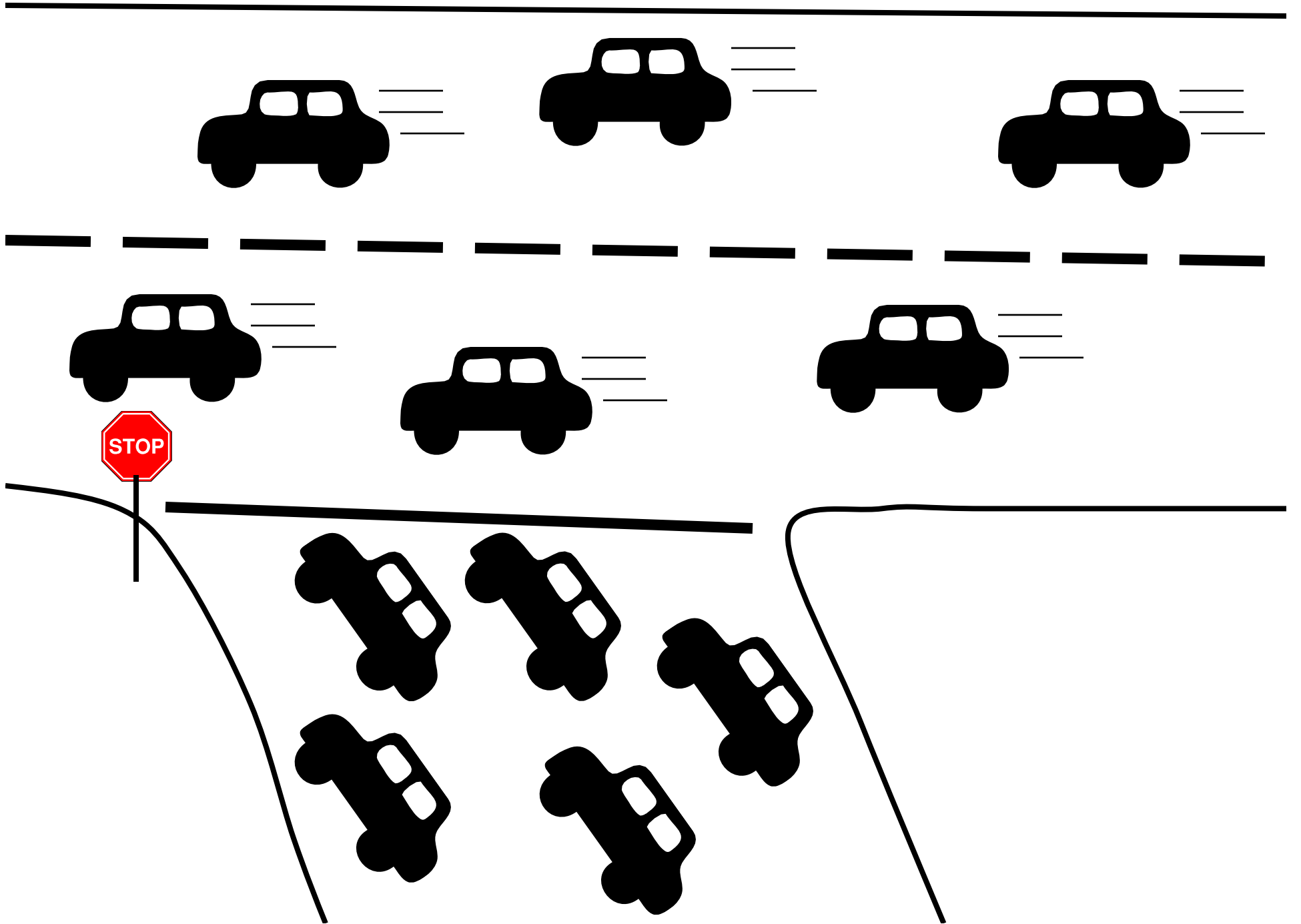
Early Childhood & Special Needs  
Education Academic Group  
National Institute of Education  
Nanyang Technological University  
Singapore

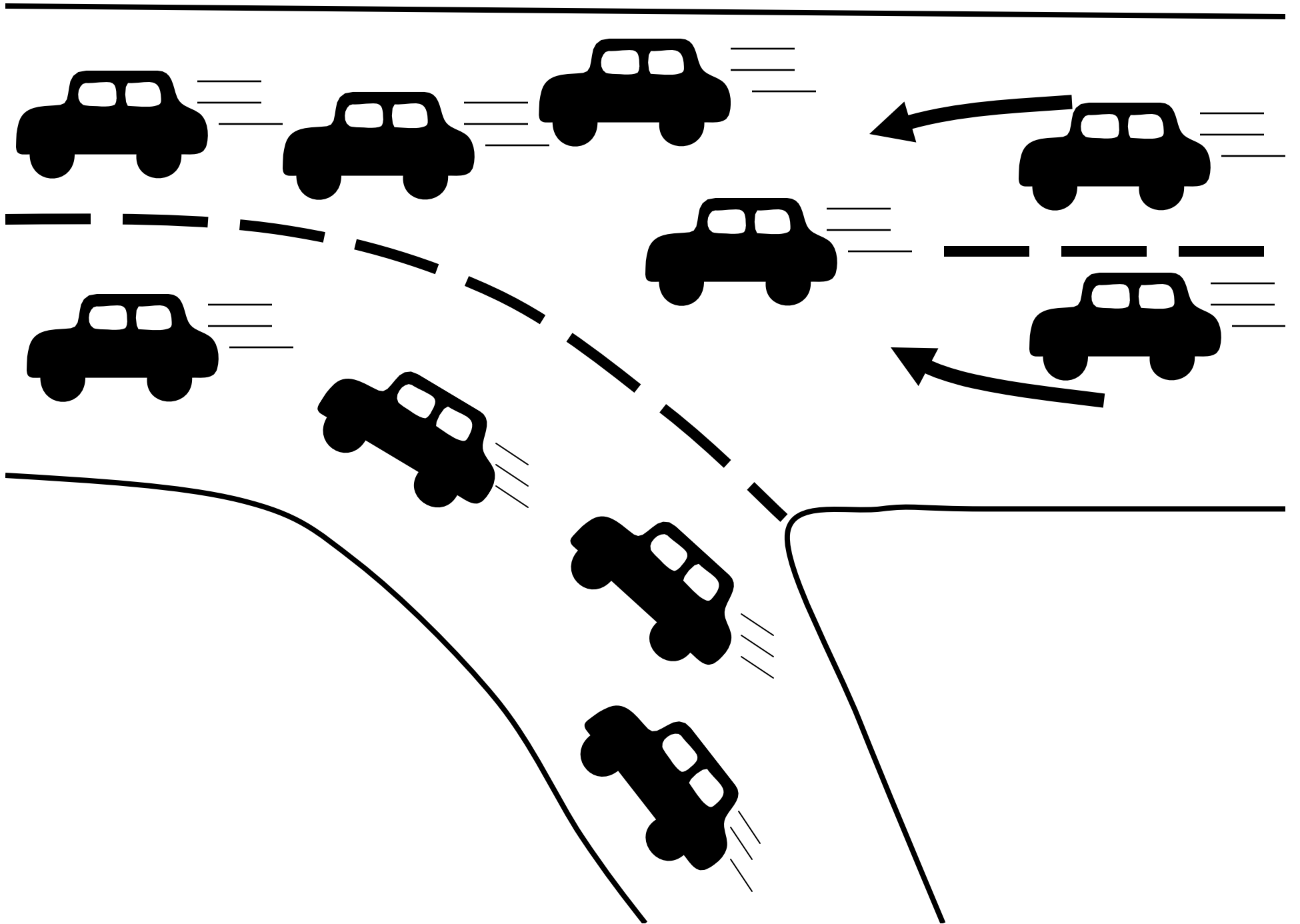
# Overview of talk

- Asian context
  - Inclusion in various countries
  - Asia-Pacific Symposium for Inclusive Education (organised by the Asia-Pacific Network of Special Education Professionals)
  - Need to consider the unique and dynamic interplay between disability, culture and society (& vision of)
- Singapore
  - Opportune moments
  - Changing face of special education
  - Role of teacher education
  - Pedagogies for change (within & without)
  - Future directions (includes wish list, future directions)









# Inclusion in the Asia-Pacific Region

- Special Issue of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Education (Vol. 24, 2, 2004)
- Brunei
- China
- Hong Kong
- Philippines
- Queensland, Australia
- Singapore

## Titles and Authors

- **Inclusive Education in Brunei Darussalam**
  - Koay Teng Leong (University of Brunei Darussalam)
- **Inclusive Education in China: Conceptualization and Realization**
  - Meng Deng (Central China Normal University & Kim Fong Poon-McBrayer (University of Hong Kong)
- **Equity, Elitism, Marketization: Inclusive Education in Hong Kong**
  - Kim Fong Poon-McBrayer (University of Hong Kong)
- **Inclusion of Children with Disabilities: Philippine Experience**
  - Teresita Inciong & Yolanda Quijano (Dept. of Education)
- **Inclusion: Culture, Policy and Practice: A Queensland Perspective**
  - Robyn Gillies (University of Queensland) & Suzanne Carrington (Education Queensland)
- **Foresight via Hindsight: Prospects and Lessons for Inclusion in Singapore**
  - Levan Lim & Marilyn Mayling Quah (National Institute of Education)

## Brunei Darussalam

- Turning Point: The Special Education Proposal (1994)
- Special education system within mainstream education
- Setting up of the National Advisory Committee on Special Education
- Teacher education and in-service training in special education
- Liaison and collaboration between agencies and bodies involved with children with special needs
- Liaison and networking with international organizations

## Policy Support from the Ministry of Education

“All pupils are able to learn given an appropriate learning environment. Appropriate learning environments can be created within the inclusive school. The inclusive school is one that provides appropriate instruction for all pupils based on their level.”

(Special Education Policy Guidelines, 1997, p. 2)

The Minister of Education, during the opening address of the 1<sup>st</sup> National Conference on Special Education (1996):

“We must look at how the system can better serve all children, including children with special needs who require special education and related services if they are to realise their full potential...

The special education, or special needs agenda in Brunei Darussalam, is an essential element of the drive for education for all. The inclusive education where the aim is to respond to the needs of all children” .

## China

- Compulsory Education Law (1986) – A civil rights law for all children, including those with disabilities, to receive a free public education

“all children who have reached the age of six shall be enrolled in school and receive compulsory education...” (p. 41)

- The Protection of Disabled Persons Act of 1990 (the National People’s Congress, 1991)

First national survey on disability:

Nearly 5% (51.64 million) of China's population had disabilities in 1987 (Office of the National Sampling Survey of the Handicapped and State Statistics Bureau, 1987).

6 % of those children enrolled in school in 1988

At least 21,000 new special schools needed to serve 5 million children with intellectual disabilities alone.

National Movement on Inclusive Education known as the “Learning in Regular Classrooms’ (LRC) (1994 Pilot Project on Implementing Learning in Regular Classrooms for Children and Adolescents with Disabilities – Ministry of Education of China, 1994)

LRC program served approximately 69% of students with disabilities

In some ways, resembles the continuum of special education services

Mr He Dongchang, former Minister of Education in China:

“special schools will constitute the ‘backbone’ of the system while special classes and Learning in Regular Classroom programs will serve as the ‘body’

Incentive:

Enrolment rate of students with disabilities has become a quality index of school district performance.

## Hong Kong SAR

- Inclusion began 1997
- Impetus: Equity, human rights and equal opportunities
- Issues
  - Equity vs Elitism
  - Equity vs Marketization of Education
- Insufficient preparation and funding
  - School change
  - Teacher change and training

# The Philippines – Policy Framework

- The Education Act of 1982

provides for equality of access to education and the enjoyment of the benefits of education by all citizens regardless of sex, age, creed, socioeconomic status, physical and mental condition, social and ethnic origin, and political and other affiliations

- Magna Carta for Disabled Persons

requires the State to consider the special requirements of persons with disabilities in the formulation of educational policies and programmes and to encourage educational institutions to take into account the special needs of persons with disabilities with respect to the use of school facilities, class schedules, physical education requirements, and other pertinent matters

## The Philippines

- Some 3.5 million categorized as individuals with disabilities (1996)
- Only .96% or 33,459 students with disabilities formally served in special education (1996-1997)
- Remaining 99.4% either out of school or unidentified
- General lack of medical services on maternal and child care programs and basic health services especially in rural areas
- Like China, inclusion a viable and pragmatic alternative

## Silahis Centres

- 'School within the School' concept
- Special Education (SPED) as a resource centre for the implementation of inclusion.

Functions to:

- conduct assessment of children
- provide in-service training to school personnel, parents and related others for inclusion
- provide appropriate teaching or instructional materials/resources
- provide support to children with special needs included within mainstream

- **Foresight via Hindsight: Prospects and Lessons for Inclusion in Singapore**
  - Levan Lim & Marilyn Mayling Quah (National Institute of Education)

We noticed...

- Singapore: not a signatory to Salamanca
- Not to the extent of other countries
- Not a significant agenda within mainstream reforms
- Prospects and lessons

## Situation in Singapore

*Report of the Advisory Council for the Disabled: Opportunities for the Disabled (1988)*, stated that, “Whenever appropriate and feasible, special education should be provided within the regular educational system. A child should only be placed in a special school if he cannot be well educated in a regular school” (pp. 37-38).

## Situation in Singapore

- No official policy or legislation on inclusion
- Not a significant agenda within mainstream education reforms
- Dual system
- Organization of services
- Gaps between systems
- Gaps within each system
- Ranking – marketization of education
- Extensively differentiated education system
- No compulsory special education course in teacher education

# 2004

## June 2004

- Special Issue on Inclusion in the Asia-Pacific Region (Asia-Pacific Journal of Education)

## June 2004

- Lim, L., & Quah, M. L. M. (2004). *Educating Learners with Diverse Abilities*. Singapore: McGraw-Hill.

## August 2004

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's Inaugural Speech – vision of an inclusive society

## September 2004

- Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's speech – a society that cares for people with disabilities

# Changes in Society

“An open and inclusive Singapore...”



Prime Minister Swearing In  
Speech 2004

# PM Lee's inauguration speech – 'Let us shape our future together' (12 Aug 2004)

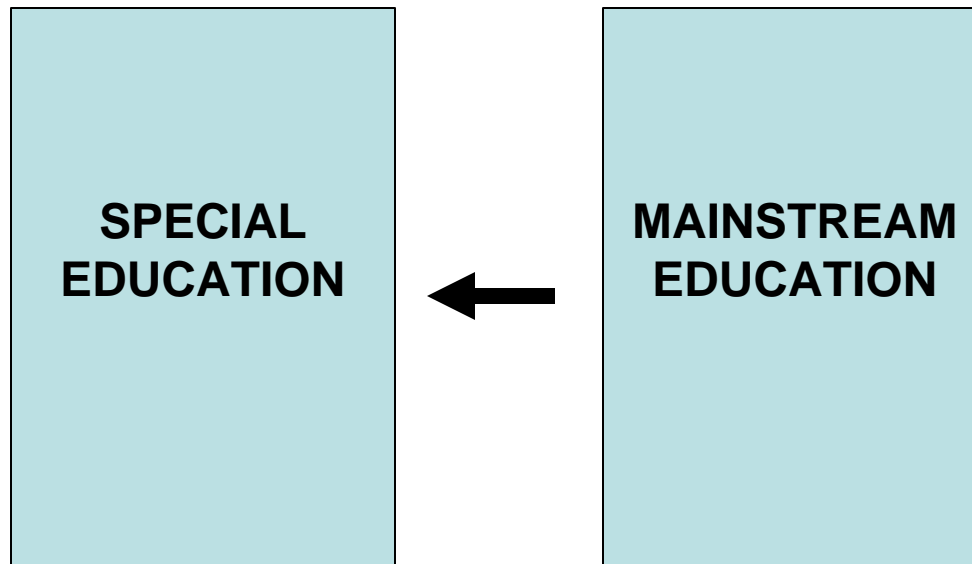
- He 'held up a vision of a government that will be open and inclusive towards all Singaporeans, young and old, disabled and able-bodied, rich and poor',
- of Singapore as a place 'where all can live in dignity and harmony, and where we all have the opportunity to raise our children and realize our dreams'
- 'a city that is open and inclusive... compassionate and caring...'

# PM Lee's speech – Opening of new Cerebral Palsy Centre (18 Sept 2004)

- ‘We want ours to be a society that cares for all its members; one that does not ignore the needs of those who are born or afflicted with disabilities’.
- ‘We must have a place in our hearts and lives for the disabled...’
- ‘...efforts should be made to integrate the disabled into mainstream society.’

# Teacher Education

- National Institute of Education (NIE)
- Teacher education, until recently, have reflected society's position towards disability – a dual system



## Reflected in...

- Separate training programmes – DISE for teachers in special schools
- No pre-service degree programmes with special education specialisation/option
- Electives in special needs for teachers (pre- and in-service) in mainstream schools
- No compulsory core introductory course for mainstream teachers...until now

# An Integration Model

- In integration, we expect students with disabilities or special needs to fit or adapt to mainstream schools. The belief is that mainstream schools do not need to change to accommodate a greater diversity of students.
- Onus on changing the student to fit in better
- Position of teacher education – integration
- Onus on special education community

# Visions for People with Disabilities (McKnight, 1987)

- Therapeutic Vision
  - Segregated for own good and for society
- Advocacy Vision
  - Professionals advocate and protect against an alien public
- Community-based Vision
  - It is within “public interest” to care, to include
  - Community as the basic context

**We exclude because  
we don't understand...**

**We don't understand  
because of limited  
contact...**

**We lack contact because  
we exclude.**



# Opportune Moments

- Vision of an inclusive society (August, 2004)
- Singapore 21(1999)...emphasis on “heartware”
- Greater support for special needs within mainstream education
- More students with special needs within mainstream schools
- Parents’ voices
- Encouragement of school-based initiatives to address student needs
- Socio-emotional learning and holistic development
- Schools as communities
- National Institute of Education (NIE) – sole teacher ed. body

# Changing Face of Special Education

- Increased funding
- Special Needs Officers (SNOs)
- Teachers in Special Needs (TSN)
- Core module for pre-service teachers
- A proposal for professional development of teachers at NIE

# The Changing Face of Special Education

- Special Schools:
  - Increased funding of \$12 million per annum for development of professional resources

# The Changing Face of Special Education

- Special Needs Officers (SNOs):
  - Provision of in-class or pull-out support
  - Dyslexia support
    - One per primary school
    - 20 resourced secondary schools
  - ASD Support
    - 20 resourced primary schools
    - 12 resourced secondary schools

# The Changing Face of Special Education

- Training at the Certificate-level in special needs support - TSN
- 10% of all teachers to undergo in-service training from 2005-2010.

# Certificate in Special Needs Support

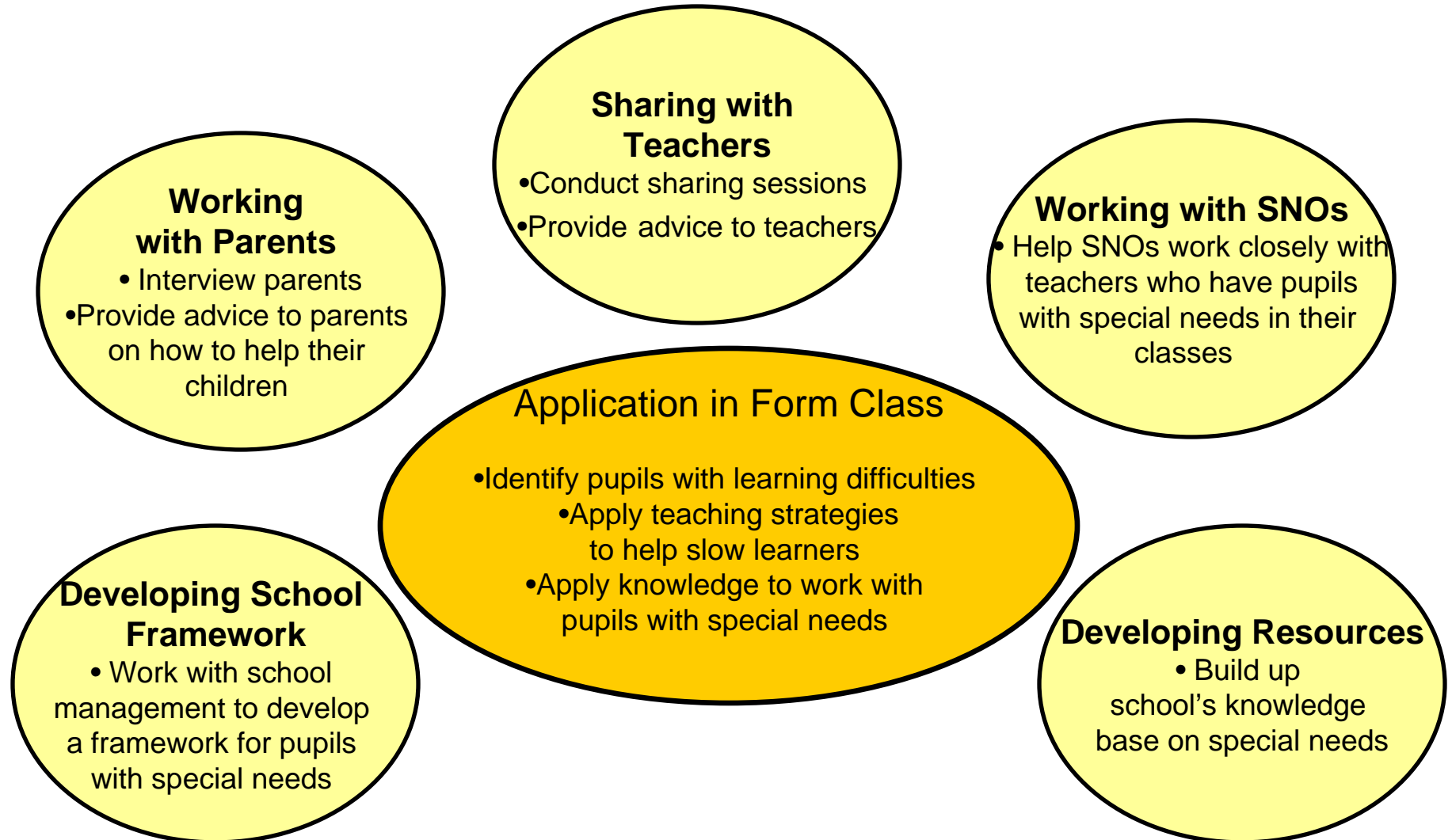
## **Basic Modules (Compulsory)**

- **Introduction to Understanding Pupils with Special Learning and Behavioural Needs**
- **Assessment and Instructional Planning for Pupils with Special Learning and Behavioral Needs**

## **Intermediate Modules (Select 1)**

- **Learning Disabilities: Characteristics and Classroom Intervention**
- **Autism Spectrum Disorders: Characteristics and Classroom Intervention**
- **Teaching Language and Literacy to Pupils with Learning Problems**
- **Teaching Mathematics to Pupils with Learning Problems**

# Application of Knowledge & Skills by TSNs in Ph 1 Schools



# Teacher Education at NIE (Pre-service & In-service)

## Pre-service

- July Semester of 2005 – basic compulsory module
- “Providing for Individual Differences”
- First time ever at pre-service level
- Cohort of 1,600 students from all programmes
- 12 hours module – a beginning
- Emphasis – attitudes, with disability areas and strategies

## In-service (TSN)

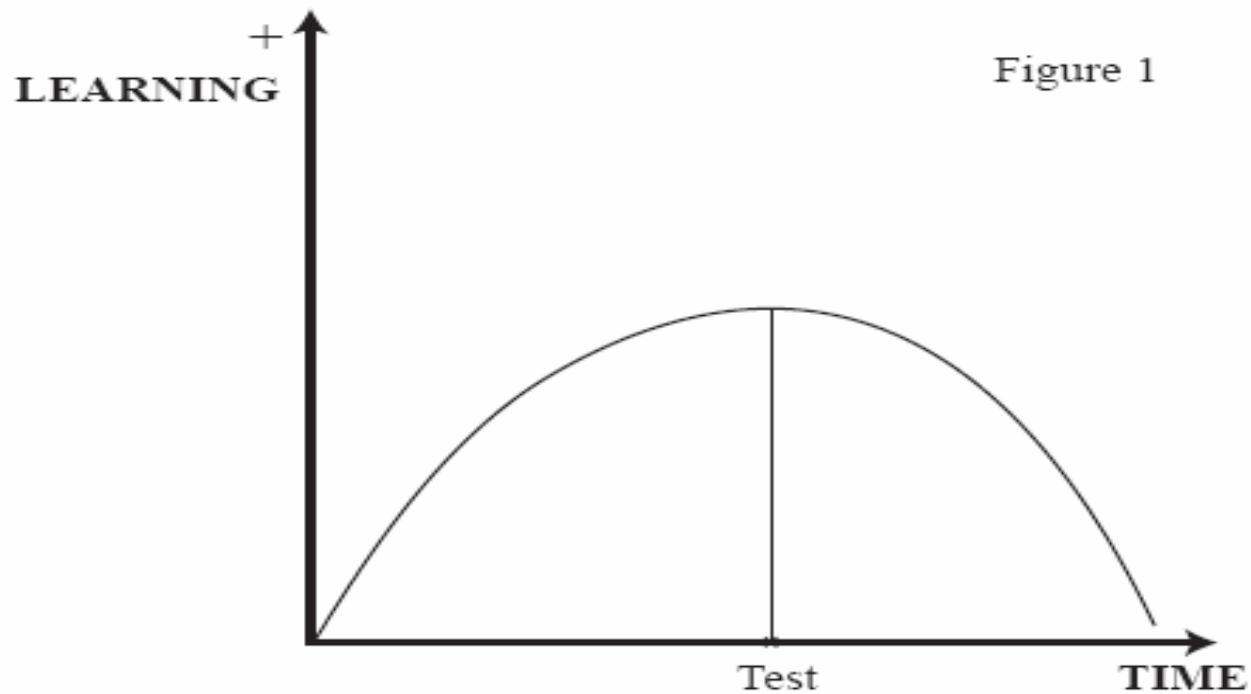
- Introduction to Special Needs
- 2005 – 100 teachers, 2006 – 300 teachers, 2007 – 600 teachers
- Attitudes as well as areas of disabilities and strategies

- Text developed: “Deconstructing special needs: A personal learning encounter” (Lim, Thaver & Slee, 2005)
- Focus on deconstructing the personal lives of teachers in relation to their experience of disability in Singapore
- Informed by research on teachers

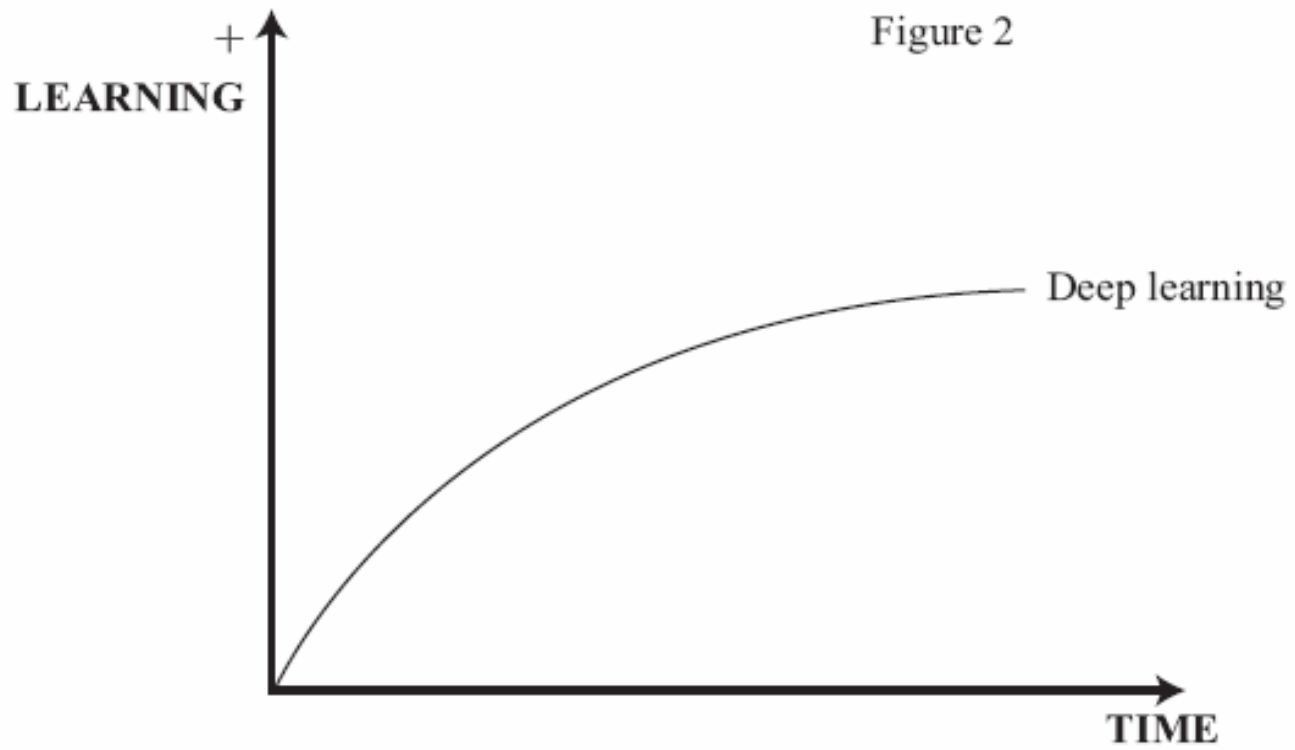
## Positioning learning for special needs

- We did not want an educational pedagogy that was detached from the actual personal experiences of teachers.
- We did not want simply book knowledge – e.g., memorization of details specific to special needs

# Traditional learning and testing situation



# Better...



# But, in light of...

- The long-standing history of the dual system in Singapore
- Strength of the advocacy model
- Emphasis on integration
- History of 'othering' students with special needs to special schools and VWOs
- Lack of Personal, Practical Knowledge about special needs among many Singaporeans – an indictment and legacy of society
- Pervasive stereotypes, assumptions, attitudes
- Beginning and initial stage of change
- Attitudes, attitudes, attitudes...

**We exclude**

**Because we don't understand**

**We don't understand**

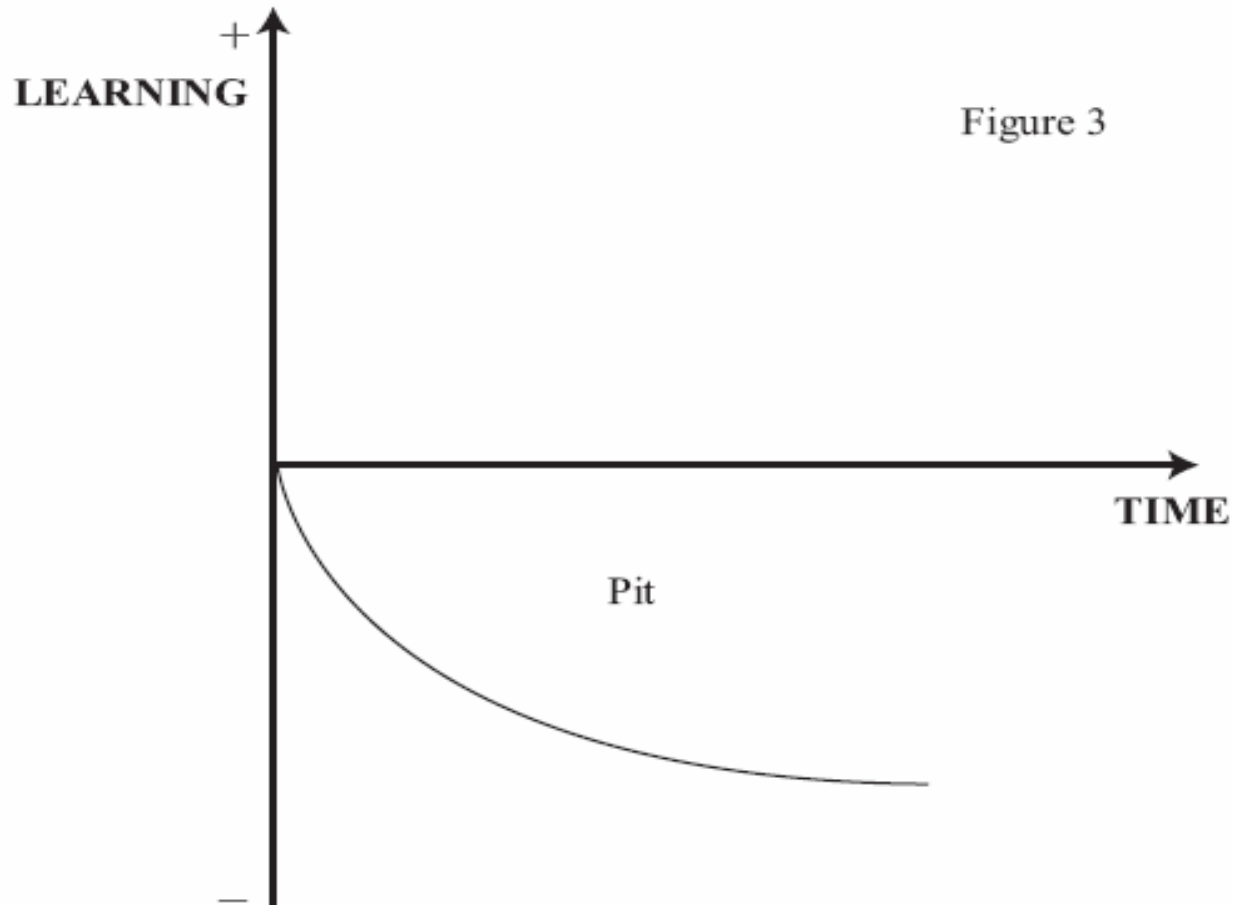
**Because of limited contact**

**We lack contact**

**Because we exclude**

**We exclude because...**

# Learning that challenges personal values, beliefs and assumptions



LEARNING

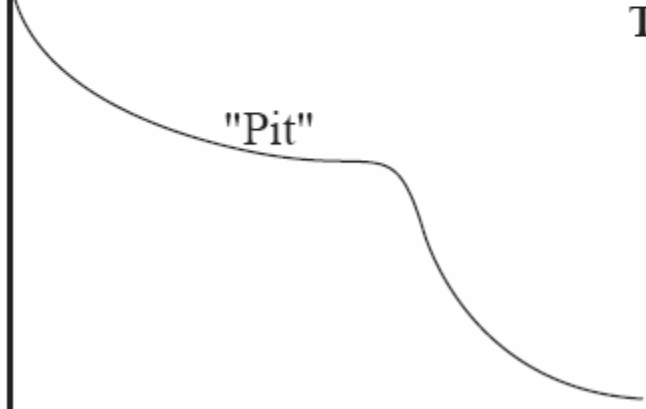


TIME



Figure 4

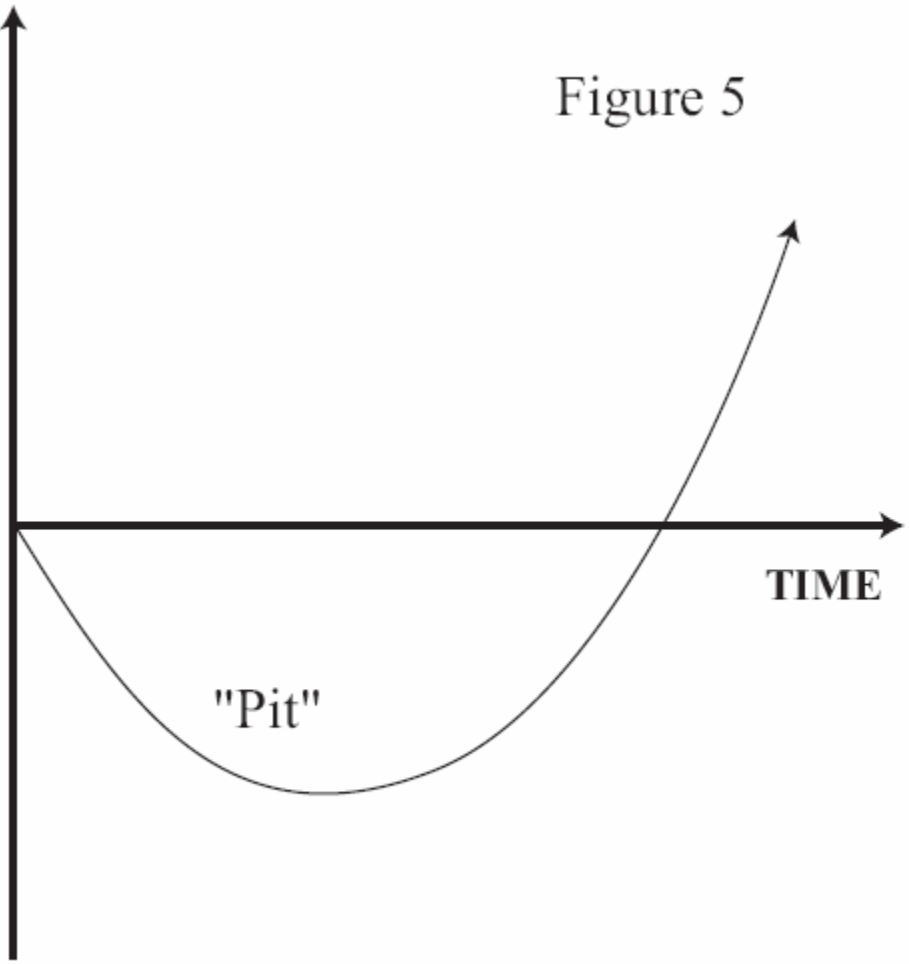
"Pit"



-

**LEARNING**

Figure 5



**TIME**

"Pit"

# Pedagogies for Change

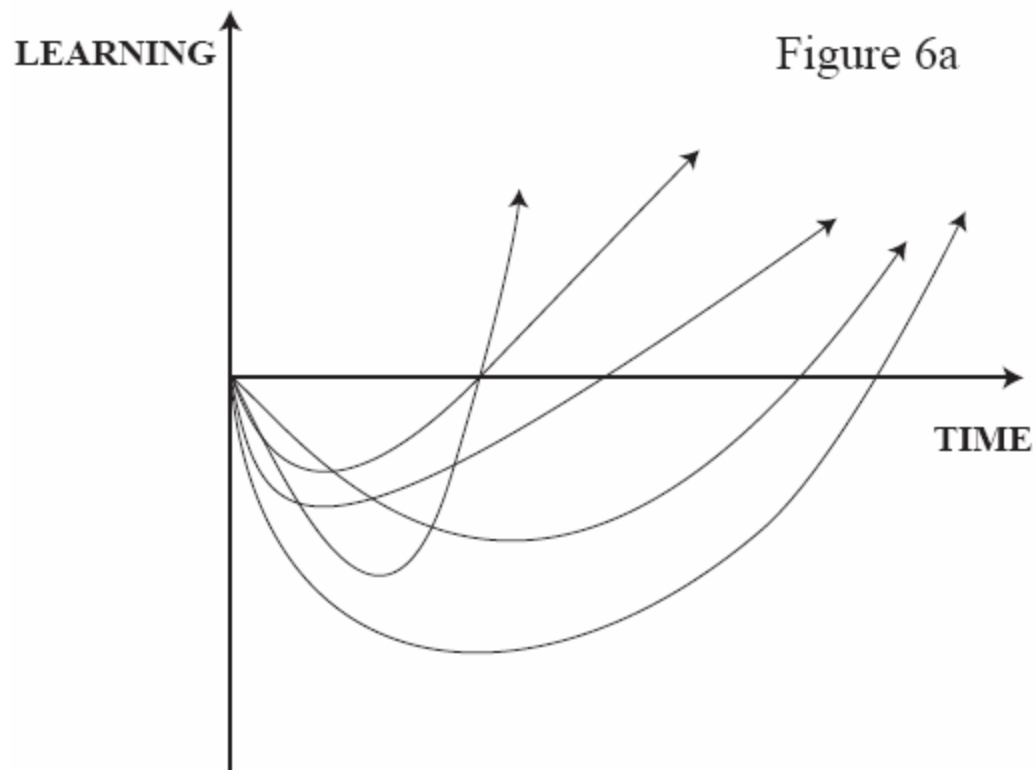
- Traditionally, in the DISE: dominance of a technical-rational framework of special education (Skrtic, 1986)
- Narrow interpretation and application of special education knowledge in Singaporean society
- Disability has been disavowed from being part of mainstream educational discourse
- Involves the personal self (change from within)
- Involves the personal self in communion with the “other”
- Exposes personal and professional vulnerabilities
- Highlights personal and professionals risks and resiliencies

# The “Other”

- For a teacher who has minimal or personal knowledge and experience with persons with disabilities, a child with special needs is the “other”.
- The “other” refers to what I do not know, understand or have not experienced.
- The presence of the “other” poses questions that challenge and even contradict one’s way of knowing, assumptions and worldviews
- As a result, we are often uncomfortable with the “other”
- Because for many Singaporeans, often not part of one’s “interior community”

# Positioning learning for special needs

- Personal learning journeys so far
- “Restorying” in hindsight...relearning and unlearning
- Highly personal – about personal meanings, thoughts, feelings, interpretations
- The ‘self’ as the site for educational learning and change so that “whom the learner is to become” is the focus of learning.
- About making sense, making meaning, new meanings, new possibilities about the “other”



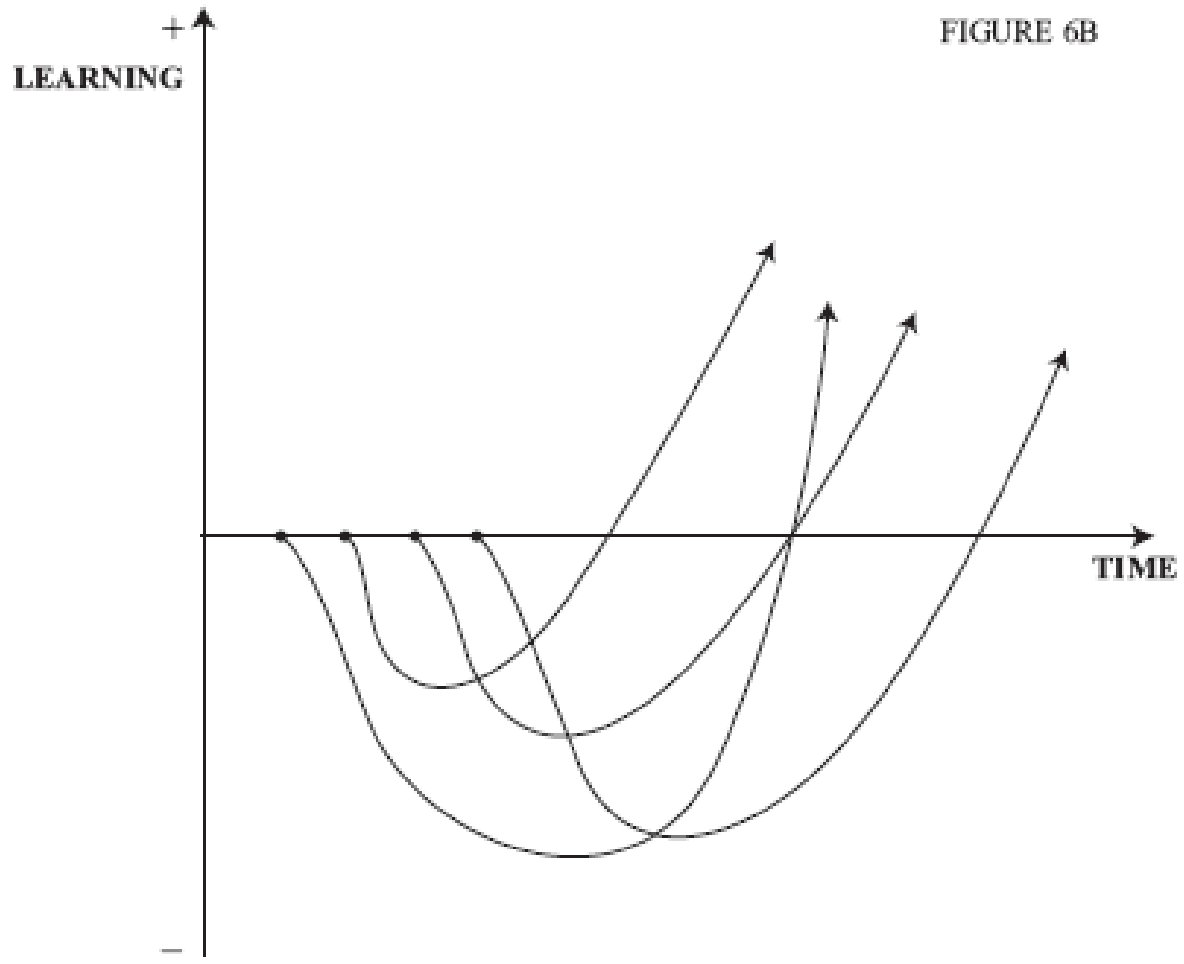
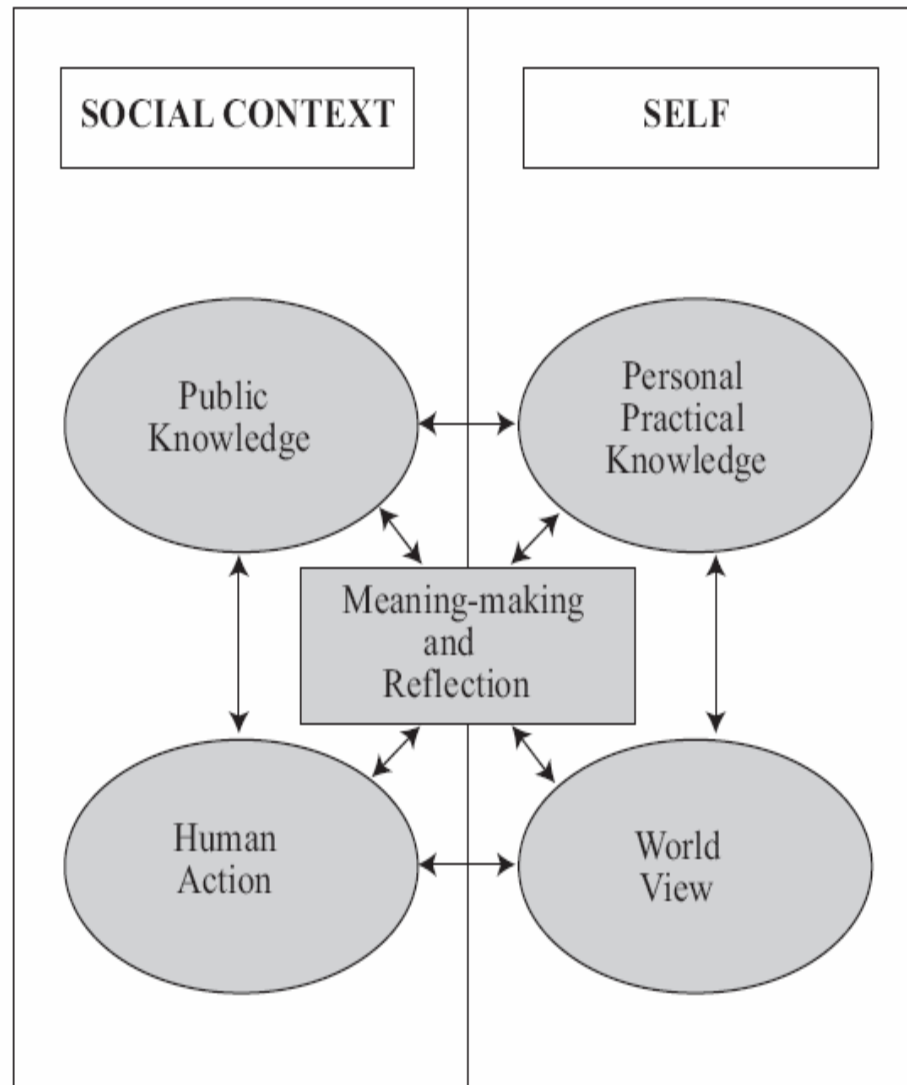


FIGURE 6B

# Deconstructing and Reconstructing the Experience of Disability in Singaporean society

- Facilitating change from within – awareness and honest examination of their own positioning and the influence of society’s position on their own in relation to the experience of disability
- Facilitating change from within/without – exploring the external factors such as cultural, social, political and economic conditions that contribute to how people with disabilities are treated
- Being with and helping build (doing) communities where persons with disabilities are included – needs to be intentional...”intentional communities”
- Change from without: community development ethos and skills (e.g., facilitation)



**Figure 7: A Model of Human Action and Learning**

# Social Context: Public Knowledge

- Public knowledge is what abounds in social contexts outside the self that can directly or indirectly influence our perceptions
- Public knowledge about special needs can manifest in the form of common beliefs, superstitions , stereotypes, societal expectations, media reports, policies.
- For those of us who have no personal knowledge, we are shaped by public knowledge
- In your tutorials, talk about what images and thoughts come to mind when you think 'disability'? Sources of your images?

## Self: Personal Practical Knowledge

- This is knowledge and understanding gained through 'lived' experience with persons with disabilities.
- Can lead to personal change and transformation.

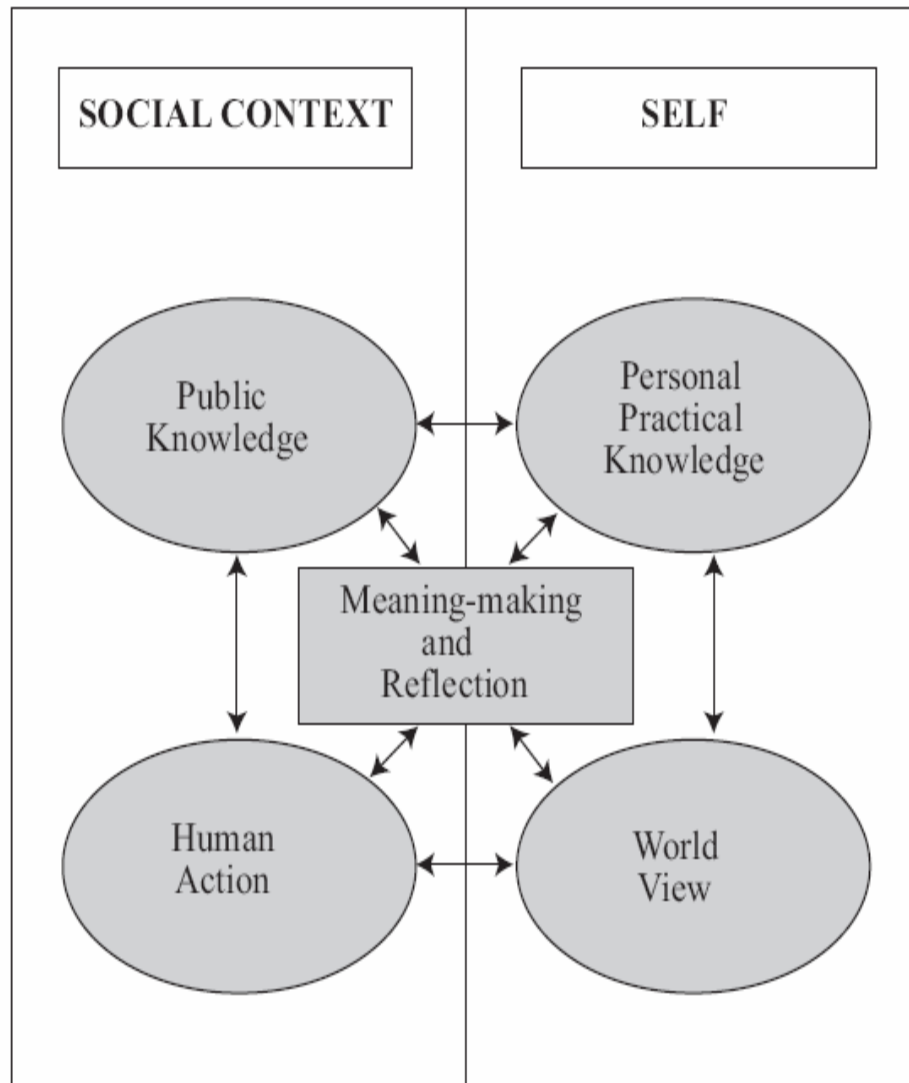


Figure 7: A Model of Human Action and Learning

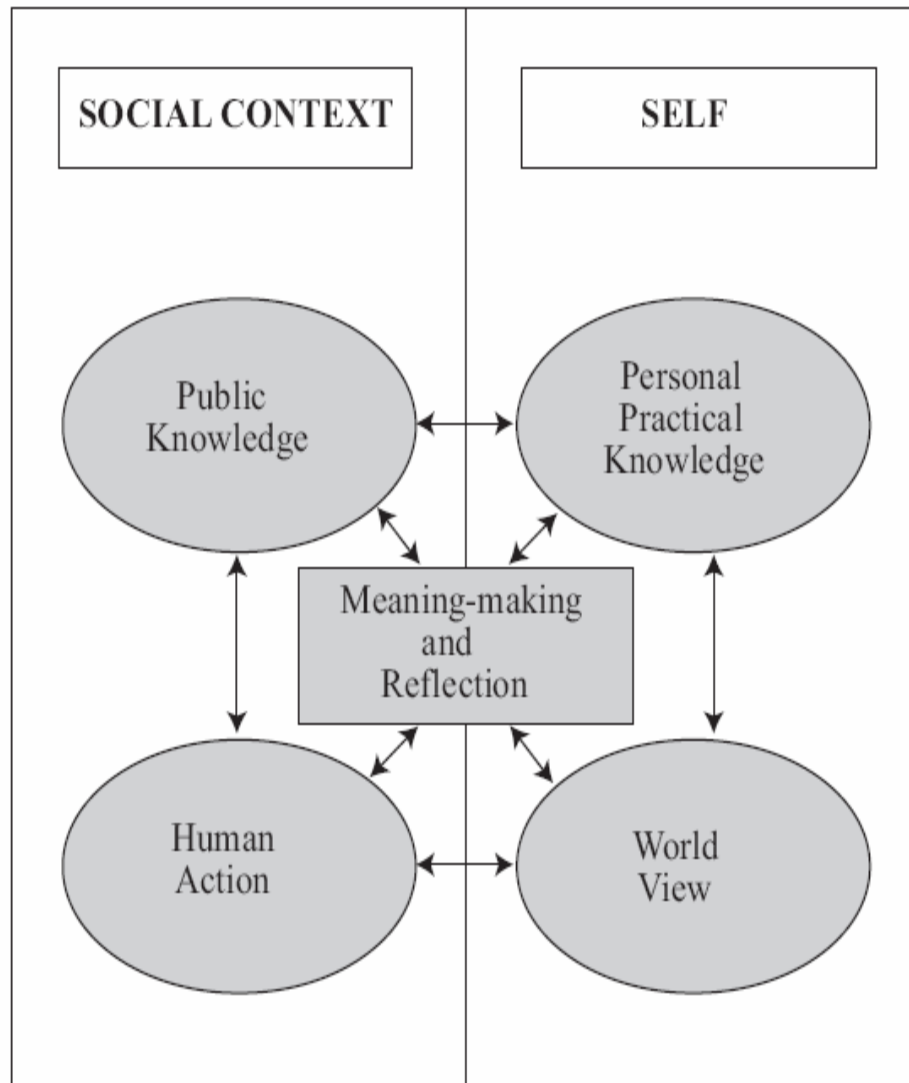


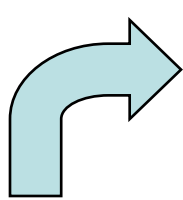
Figure 7: A Model of Human Action and Learning

## Self: World View

- Our way of looking at the world based on our personal assumptions and beliefs.
- Our world views can be clarified or modified through new experiences.

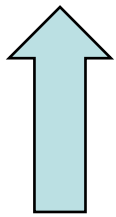
# Social context: Human Action

- Human action is the 'output' of how people behave as a result of the interaction between public knowledge, personal practical knowledge and world view.
- How does this manifest itself?

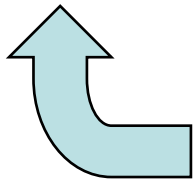


# Quality of Life Outcomes

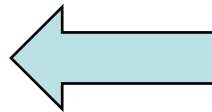
How do we generate quality outcomes?



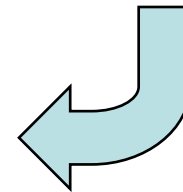
Quality of Actions



Quality of Planning



Quality of Collective thinking



Quality of Inner Convictions, Beliefs, Values, Views, Personhood



Quality of Relationships in the collective

## From our research findings of teachers working successfully with children with special needs

- Almost all of them had little personal knowledge of special needs, little/no training, very little support in terms of infrastructure and resources in special needs.
- What drove them was their personal pedagogy, their personal values and beliefs.
- For these teachers, every single child mattered, they saw the child first and the disability second, they focused on what the child could do and found ways to accommodate the child.
- They spoke of personal transformation/change – of themselves, the children in their classes and the child himself/herself.

# “Successful” Teachers

- Majority of them: the way they teach reflects the way they are
- Who they are as persons, their personal beliefs and values, are weaved into their classroom pedagogies (such as creating a caring classroom community by connecting students with each other)
- Worked with others in the school to think through, plan, and act in building up a more supportive and inclusive school culture
- We shared their pedagogies for
  - Managing the individual
  - Classroom management
  - Instructional strategies

# Pedagogies of Connections

- Making connections within and between ‘head’, ‘heart’ and ‘hands’
- Connections between human ‘being’ and human ‘doing’
- Connections between ‘passion’ and ‘action’
- Connections between the personal and the professional (i.e., teachers-as-persons, persons-as-teachers)
- Inclusion (without) and becoming an inclusive person (within)
- “Fruitful” and “Productive” pedagogies
- Assignments reflected these pedagogies of connections

## Survey (of degree of awareness)

- Pre- and post-module instrument – strength of agreement
- Exploratory factor and principal component analyses
- Two factors – personal and general degree of awareness
- Pair t-test analyses indicated a significant increase before and after the module

# Personal Awareness Construct

- I have some misconceptions about people with special needs.
- I have some prejudice about people with special needs.
- I have some stereotypes about people with disabilities.
- I have a lot to relearn and unlearn about special needs.
- Learning about special needs involves feelings of discomfort.

# General Awareness Construct

- Society plays a part in including and/or excluding people with disabilities.
- People with disabilities have gifts and abilities.
- Many Singaporeans have limited personal practical knowledge about people with special needs.
- Non-disabled children can learn to be inclusive of children with special needs.
- Children with special needs can learn.
- Many Singaporeans have grown up apart from people with disabilities.

## Future Directions (includes wish list)

- More hours for the pre-service module
- Further understand and refine “flow” between change from within and change from without, and the processes associated with each.
- Interdisciplinary approach: counselling, special education, community development work/skills
- Extensions of Teacher Education: Explorations into disability – community development initiative
- Bachelor’s Programme (with Special Education specialisation)

# Situation as it is in Teacher Ed.

- Mainstream teachers are receiving training in special education
- But special school teachers are still excluded from teaching in mainstream schools
- More students with mild disabilities are supported in mainstream education
- Teachers in special education may now need to have an understanding of the mainstream curriculum
  - Help transition students in special education who have the skills into mainstream schools

# Teacher Education:

Wish List...a new breed of teachers who can teach in both mainstream and special schools



# Professional Development Needs of Teachers

- Mainstream Teachers
  - Understanding more about special needs
  - Developing skills to support students with special needs in their classrooms
  - Collaboration skills
  - Agents of change
- Special Educators
  - Understand mainstream curriculum
  - Help transition students in special education who have the skills into mainstream schools
  - Collaboration skills
  - Agents of change

# Professional Development in Special Education...a proposal

## **BA/BSc (Special Education Option)**

- *Career options:*
  - Dual qualifications for graduates to pursue careers in mainstream as well as special schools
  - Graduates will be able to pursue careers as special school teachers or teachers in mainstream schools
- *Admission criteria:*
  - GCE 'A' Levels or a polytechnic diploma
- *Program of study and subjects:*
  - Four years of full-time study
- *Credit Exemptions/Transfers:*
  - Module exemptions for DISE graduates
- *Commencement of program:*
  - In the works

# Conclusions

- Risks: individual and collective/societal
- Risk: something to do with how a society envisions its future.
- If Singapore does not go about supporting the building of “heartware”, what are the risks in terms of the society it becomes.
- Resilience: the capacity to deal with risks, its realities and its consequences. Also, at the individual and collective levels
- Singapore: on the right track
- Singapore needs people with disabilities to become a world-class city...a more human face.
- Humanising – dealing with the whole range of being human...the “conveniences” and “inconveniences” of being human.

## Conclusions...continued

- Facing and tackling risks and through it, building resilience, whether at individual or collective level, makes for a society and its individual members who can better accept the full range of humanity of all its citizens.
- And that is Hope for the Future!
- Teacher education – part of this privilege