

The University of Hong Kong  
Faculty of Education

Master of Education (MEd)  
Psychological Studies in Education

Professor Li Fang Zhang, Specialism Coordinator  
(Tel: 3917 2522; Email: lfzhang@hku.hk)

This specialism is designed to familiarise teachers/educators/individuals interested in psychological studies in education with the basic concepts and principles of developmental, educational, and social psychology and their application in educational contexts. Strong emphasis will be placed on topics and issues in contemporary research that are relevant to schools and higher educational institutions in Hong Kong, Mainland China, and the rest of the world. Sample topics covered are (i) learner characteristics (e.g., cognitive development, language development, moral development, psychosocial development, interpersonal development, and factors influencing student development such as individual differences in learning approaches, motivation, and learning styles); (ii) teacher characteristics (e.g., conceptions of teaching and learning, emotions in teaching, teacher self-efficacy, teaching styles, and teaching approaches); and (iii) the process, context, and culture of learning (e.g., theories of learning and teaching, curriculum, pedagogy, learning how to learn, designing effective learning, classroom talk, assessment, computer-supported collaborative learning, and the Chinese Learner).

Who would benefit from this specialism?

This specialism is designed for teachers, researchers, school personnel, educational administrators in both schools and higher educational institutions; it is also designed for individuals who work in other education-related settings (e.g., Education Bureau, Ministry of Education, etc.). Equally, it is designed for students who are interested in pursuing a doctoral degree in such academic disciplines as educational psychology, developmental psychology, and sciences of learning upon graduation from this specialism. Indeed, the specialism would benefit any one who wishes to learn how to create congenial teaching and learning environment and to better understand themselves as well as their students.

Mode of study:

The specialism is available in 1-year full-time and 2-year part-time modes of study.

Outline of four specialist courses:

Course 1: Cognition, Learning and Instruction (6 credits)

This course will be based on theories in Educational Psychology and Learning Sciences focusing on the interfaces of cognition, design and context to examine how students learn. The course will start with an overall framework introducing contemporary theories of learning and models of classroom instruction. The first component introduces research in student cognition and learning including conceptions and approaches to learning, epistemological beliefs, self-regulated learning and motivation. The second component addresses the question of design and examines how learning for 21st century education can be promoted. Theories, principles and practice related to higher order thinking, assessment for learning, and technology-supported learning will be introduced. This course also examines the influences of psychological factors and socio-cultural context and research on the Chinese Learner will be discussed. Throughout the course, students will be provided with learning experience that mirrors the theories discussed in the course.

#### Course 2: Developmental Psychology for Educators (6 credits)

This course will familiarize educators with major theories, concepts and research findings of developmental psychology as well as some of the skills and techniques of gathering information on children and adolescents. The application of developmental research to educational practice and policy will also be considered.

#### Course 3: Effective Talk in the Classroom (6 credits)

Effective talk in the classroom is fundamental to student learning. In this course, students will learn: (1) The state-of-the-art theories of effective talk. Students will learn from a growing body of research how effective classroom talk, particularly discussion participants' elaboration of their own ideas and thinking with each other, is related to their engagement and achievement. (2) The application of effective talk. Students will learn how to construct talk situations that promote learning and how to use a list of proven effective talk moves to position the participants as active learners. (3) Analysis and reflection of classroom talk. Students will learn how to analyze and reflect on classroom conversations in a rigorous way. Samples of classroom conversation transcripts and video/audio clips will be annotated using well-selected tools. Upon completion of this course, students are expected to develop knowledge and skills in facilitating effective talk in the classroom and to increase the awareness of continuing professional development in discussion-based teaching.

#### Course 4: Student Development: Theory, Research and Practice (6 credits)

Student development concerns the holistic development of a student – his/her development of psychological characteristics, physical development, career interest development, emotional development, identity development, moral development, social development, as well as intellectual development. This course examines student development not only from a theoretical perspective but also from a practical perspective. It studies the main theories of and research on student development – both classic and contemporary ones. Emphasis is further placed on how these theories and research findings based on these theories can be applied to schools and universities in Hong Kong and abroad. Potential learners (e.g., in-service and pre-service teachers, counselors, senior school managers, education policy makers; indeed, anyone who is interested in understanding students' holistic development) should be interested in this course because it will equip the learners with knowledge and skills needed not only for promoting the development of their students and other clientele with whom they work but also for achieving a better understanding of themselves.

In addition to four specialist courses, students will also have to complete:

- A compulsory core course: Educational Issues and Research (6 credits);
- Three elective courses (6 credits each); and
- An option of a professional portfolio (12 credits) or a research project (12 credits).