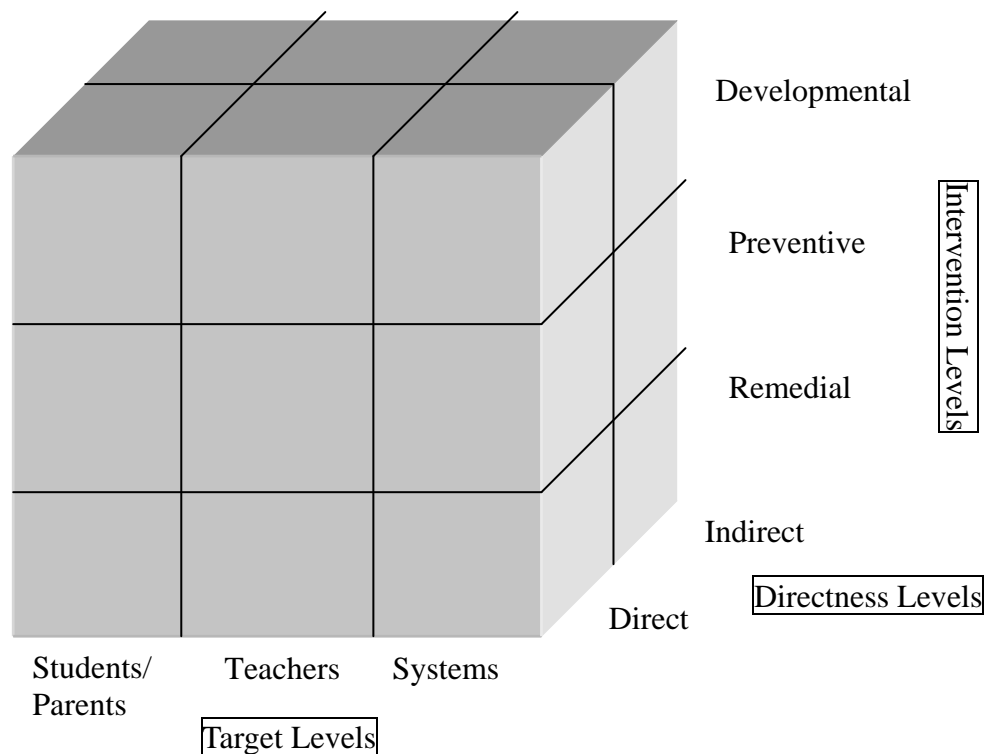


**Division of Educational Psychology
The Hong Kong Psychological Society**

Educational psychologists play an important role in inclusive education. As supporters of the school systems, we are able to provide comprehensive services to students. We can provide both direct and indirect services. The former is delivered directly to students, e.g., conducting training sessions for students. The latter is delivered indirectly to students through the empowerment of teachers, parents, and even the school systems, e.g., helping the school to set up policies and measures so that teachers can use “Whole School Approach” in inclusive education. Our service targets are not only students, but also teachers, parents, and school systems. As for our intervention, it may be remedial, preventive, and developmental. We do not only provide services after the problems become serious. We act proactively to prevent problems. For example, students with special needs are easy targets for bullying. We would try to help the school build an inclusive culture so that all teachers and students can accept these students. To help students with special needs, services in all the above areas are required. For instance, if a school needs help in supporting a student with learning difficulties, we may conduct an assessment on the student’s cognitive functioning and academic performance (*direct service*). We may discuss the case with the parents and teachers, and give advice on how to teach the student (*indirect remedial intervention*). We may also conduct a teacher workshop to promote teachers’ awareness of the needs of this group of students (*preventive indirect intervention*). We may also support the school to develop a reading programme to strengthen reading skills of all the first graders (*developmental intervention at system level*).



Despite the services of educational psychologists are comprehensive, our services are constrained to the left bottom corner of the diagram because of the unfavorable ratio between educational psychologist and school. That means we are confined to the direct and remedial work. To the worst, we cannot perform this limited work satisfactorily. In the beginning of 2014, the Division of Educational Psychology, the Hong Kong Psychological Society set up a working group to review the service ratio. On April 25, this working group called for a focus group meeting. Ten school-based educational psychologists attended the meeting. They came from 10 sponsoring bodies that provide school-based educational psychology services in Hong Kong. To summarize the work experience of these colleagues, we have the following findings:

1. On average, each educational psychologist has to take care of 7 to 8 schools.
2. They can only visit each school 20 times annually. On average, there are one to two visits each month.
3. Each school has about 12 or 13 assessment cases. Secondary school has about 10 cases and primary school has about 15 or 16 because of the Early Identification and Intervention of Learning Difficulties Programme for Primary One Pupils.
4. On average, each educational psychologist has to complete about 100 assessment cases annually.
5. Every assessment case at least requires 6 to 7 working hours. If each school has 12 or 13 assessment cases and we can only pay 20 visits to each school, most of our time is being consumed in the restricted area of assessment. That is the left bottom corner of the diagram. The services in the other areas correspondingly dwindle.

Educational psychologists should not be reduced to a testing machine. The purpose of assessment is to identify the needs of the students and the ways to help them. However, the 6 to 7 hours of work in assessment is only enough for diagnosis, proving that this student has specific learning difficulties or that student has mental retardation. Having a diagnosis or label cannot solve the students' problems. The most important is the follow-up intervention. With the time constraints, we can only make some general recommendations at the end of the assessment reports. We could hardly have enough time to ensure that these recommendations are helpful or implemented.

We are eager to provide adequate care and assistance to every student who seeks our help. However, the current service ratio does not allow us with much time to do the different areas of services beyond assessment. To rectify this problem, there is an urgency to improve the current service ratio. We hope that the current ratio of educational psychologist to school can be improved from 1 to 7 to 1 to 4. With this arrangement, educational psychologist can pay visit to each school weekly. With four days of school visit in a week, the last day can be used as the center day for preparation, paper work, administration, supervision and professional development. The number of service days that each school can have will increase from 20 to 35 per year. Then the waiting time for students after referral can be shortened considerably. The assessment can be more in-depth and thorough. Most importantly, there will be more room for intensive intervention, such as providing small group training to students, support to parents, and consultation to teachers. In our experience, working collaboratively with teachers in planning and implementing instruction is most helpful to teachers. This kind of support to teachers is not one-shot seminars or

workshops but peer coaching on the frontline. With the current service ratio, such collaborative work is luxurious. We can only afford it once in a blue moon.

The biggest barrier for school-based educational psychology services is the service ratio. To provide substantial instead of lip services to students with special needs, there is an urgency to improve the ratio between educational psychologists and schools.