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Title
Ethnic minority students in a Chinese society:
School practitioners' narratives of caring in Hong Kong
secondary schools

Abstract

Many schools concern about the growing number of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. It is asserted that they have academic, personal and social difficulties. When they are enrolled into Hong Kong schools, how the school caters for the diversity of students' needs become very critical. The paper looks at this area. It aims to examine how teachers and students construct the identity and needs of ethnic minority students, who came from India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, and Thailand. The qualitative data were collected from interview, through which the views of twenty-four students and twenty-four teachers from three secondary schools were explored. Also, three focus group interviews for 15 parents were conducted. Further, field notes which the author kept when conducting the study in these three schools were used as a supplementary source of data. It showed that the behaviour and needs of Chinese and non-Chinese students and their parents were constructed differently, in terms of social behaviour, cultural practices, gender identities, languages, and educational aspiration, and that the school, home and community were disconnected. This paper argues that to implement the ethos of caring, it is not only necessary for the school and government to develop culturally responsive approaches to catering for the needs of students, but equally important to develop a connected schooling ecology where ethnic minority students and parents can be consistently supported in classroom, in school, at home and in community.

Ethnic minority students in a Chinese society: School practitioners' narratives of caring in Hong Kong secondary schools

Introduction

Hong Kong is well known as an international city that bridges East and West. While Hong Kong has been predominantly a Chinese society there is today some evidence of its colonial background as well as a current demand for unskilled labour that results in a more ethnically diverse community. In the most recent census (2007) some 2% of the school age population comes from diverse ethnic backgrounds such as Pakistani, Indian, Nepalese, Indonesians, Pilipino and Thai. In a predominantly Chinese society, such numbers are few but a recently passed Racial Discrimination Ordinance has alerted authorities to the need to ensure equitable educational provision for these ethnic minority students (Kennedy, 2008). Since then, the diversity of students' needs has drawn the public's attention to the broader issues of social justice and equality. Concerns have been expressed about how all students can be equally valued, without any forms of discrimination such as those revealed in this study.

Hong Kong schools are responsible for catering for the diverse needs of every individual student, regardless of their background, such as ethnicity and languages spoken. (Education Commission, 2000; Education and Manpower Bureau, 2004a, 2004b). Pastoral care, or known as school guidance and counseling in Hong Kong, has a crucial role to play in achieving this, while its ultimate goal is set to promote the whole person growth of all students (Best, Ribbins, Jarvis & Oddy, 1983; Hamblin, 1978; Marland, 1974; McGuiness, 1989; Watkins, 2001; Watkins & Wagner, 1987, 2000). It also aims to encourage their self-esteem and the development of various aspects of their 'self', including personal, moral and social dimensions. It has been suggested that it be made an integral part of any educational programs (Best, Jarvis & Ribbins, 1977; Marland, 1974; Miller, Fruchling & Lewis, 1978; Watkins, 1992, 1995), which could include the educational provision for ethnic minority students. In the context of Hong Kong schools, all teachers are expected to have a role in caring and helping students in needs, even though they are not equipped with basic counseling skills. At the school level, guidance is promoted by a team of teachers. The guidance team, which is also known as the counseling team, is responsible for offering a counseling service for students in need and organising programmes for enhancing the whole person growth of all students (Education Department, 1986).

While this is a key policy issue, an equally important issue is how teachers and students make sense of the cross-cultural experience of ethnic minority students and how they construct the challenges of caring for these students. This perspective is currently lacking in most policy discourse concerned with equitable provision for ethnic minority students. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to examine how teachers and students constructed the cross-cultural experiences of students in general and specifically the diversity of their needs. Understanding of what schooling experience they have and what challenges and difficulties these students has been dealing in relation to cultural, social, and psychological changes is one of the ways to help school practitioners rethink about effective school guidance, or pastoral care, in the school and their roles in supporting the education of these students and optimize individual student's potential regardless of ability, ethnicity and socio-cultural background. This understanding will lead us to develop ways to create a culturally responsive school. In what follows, the discussion begins with an examination of relevant studies into the learning difficulties of ethnic minority students in schools in Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and the United States. A theoretical framework will be established to examine the cross-cultural experiences of ethnic minority students on the basis of the literature. The research method adopted and some findings from this study will then be reported and lastly, the implications of this study for the educational provision to ethnic minority students will be discussed.

Literature Review

One of the educational issues which many Hong Kong schools are deeply concerned is the education of ethnic minority students and how they could be cared and supported within the current school's caring system. It is alarming to see that the number of ethnic minority has been growing in our society while their needs and rights have not been properly addressed. According to the official figure of population census, in 1996, the number of ethnic minority people from Asian countries, such as Filipino, Indian, Thai, Nepalese, Indonesian, and Pakistani, was 157,678. It constituted 2.5% of the total population in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 1997). In 2001, the number raised by 58% to 249,516 which represented 3.8% of the total population (Census and Statistics Department, 2002). In 2006, the number climbed up to 342,198, constituting 5.0% of the whole population in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2006). Although the number of ethnic minority students enrolled into Hong Kong schools has not been released to the public, it is estimated by an non-government organization that only the number of students who enrolled into local schools is over 9,000 (Wong, 2009). Compared with the local Chinese, the rate of school attendance of ethnic minority students was relatively low,

This rate for ethnic minorities in the aged group of 17-18 and 19-24 was 74.3% and 6.7%, whereas those for the whole population of students in these two age groups was 82.8% and 37.3% (Census and Statistics Department, 2006). Further, based upon these population figures, it can be inferred that the number of these students has been growing and that there is an urgent need for schools and policy makers to address diverse students' need and support their academic success.

In response to the growing number of ethnic minority student populations in Hong Kong, there is a developing body of literature in the education of these students. Loper (2004) conducted an extensive review of educational provision for ethnic minority students and found that many non-Chinese ethnic minority students such as Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese and Filipino were excluded from Hong Kong schools either by admissions procedures or lack of information on services available to support them. Some other studies into this area have been done by non-government agencies (Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005; Loper, 2004; Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, 2000, 2002). Stories of ethnic minority students' experience of difficulties and struggles in Hong Kong schools and communities have also appeared in Hong Kong newspapers (Lau, 2005; *Hong Kong Youth*, 2005; *Over 6% South Asian Students*, 2005). For various reasons, public perceptions of the educational provision for ethnic community students are overwhelmingly negative.

In response to the growing number of ethnic minority student populations in Hong Kong, there is a developing body of literature in the education of these students. Loper (2004) conducted an extensive review of educational provision for ethnic minority students and found that many ethnic minority students such as Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese and Filipino were excluded from Hong Kong schools either by admissions procedures or lack of information on services available to support them (Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005; Loper, 2004; Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, 2000, 2002). Public concern about the education of ethnic minority students can be reflected from stories of these students' experience of difficulties and struggles in Hong Kong schools and communities, reported in Hong Kong newspapers (Lau, 2005; Hong Kong Youth, 2005; Over 6% South Asian Students, 2005). For various reasons, public perceptions of the educational provision for ethnic community students are overwhelmingly negative. Despite this, teachers apparently had positive experience in the classroom where ethnic minority students participated. Kennedy, Hue & Tsui (2008a) and Kennedy and Hue (2008b) examined how teachers carted for the diverse needs of these students in the classroom. The survey showed that teachers reported a higher level of self-efficacy for teaching ethnic minority students compared to local

Hong Kong Chinese and that they were equally able to engage all students in their learning. Despite this, as the qualitative data revealed, teachers experienced difficulties in managing the vast range of diverse needs of these students and in collaborating with parents to support their children's learning.

While the needs of ethnic minority students and their learning difficulties have been examined, extensive research has also been done on multiculturalism, inclusion and other diversity issues which are central to mainstream schooling. These studies seek to find out how ethnic minority students can be better supported at various levels of schooling (Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Macfarlane, 2004; Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Other relevant studies include those which examined school practice (Cheminais, 2001; Dentler & Hafner, 1997; Phillion, 2002); families, schools and communities (Carger, 1996; Soto, 1997; Travers & Klein, 2004); teacher training programmes (Arora, 2005); language, culture, and identity in education (He, 2002a, b, c, 2003; Toohey, 2000). For example, the studies into the classroom knowledge of teachers and their attitude (Alton-Lee, 2003) suggested that in a classroom where students with various ethnic backgrounds were accommodated, teachers had a key role to play in making all members involved. According to Macfarlane's study (2004), it was equally important for teachers to have culturally sensitive which would enable them to recognize and fulfill the learning needs of students in diverse classrooms. Other authors focused on the quality of relationships between teachers and students. Some specific factors for developing this relationships were identified, including caring for students, having a high expectation of students' achievement and that of teachers' performance of teaching (Bishop & Berryman, 2006). To enhance school practitioners' communication, Byram (1997) suggests the development of a set of communication skill, named as an intercultural communicative competence. There has been, however, little explicitly narrative work done in this area. In particular, no studies into the context of Hong Kong primary schools have been done so far. What is missing are accounts of how ethnic minority students' language, culture and identity developments are shaped by the constructs of their cross-cultural experience in mainstream schools; how an understanding of such experiences helps make connections among schools, families and different ethnic cultural groups; how such an understanding helps develop culturally relevant approaches for pastoral care and improving students' academic performance; and how knowledge of these students' experience in the families, communities, and schools informs administrators and policy makers to create inclusive school environments and policies to support their school success.

Methodology

Theoretical Framework

The study was grounded upon the psychological and sociological perspectives. The former was taken to explore the cross-cultural experience of ethnic minority students and the diversity of their needs, whereas the later was used to examine the talks of teachers and students. From the psychological perspectives, a person's sense of self, an idea of oneself as a unique being, developed out of the various roles and associations of all experience one has got at different stages of life (Cuypers, 2001). For the ethnic minority students, the development of self-identity is a complex issue as they experience more changes than those who have never had the cross-cultural experience. The changes may include the move from place to place, the adaptation of the second culture to the first culture, and the change from language to language. It is particularly complicated for ethnic minority adolescents as they have to face an extra problem with identity when they merge into both an ethnic or racial group and the mainstream culture. Despite the fact that this usually cause extra stress and intensify the existing conflict of adolescent self-identity, all these changes would lead them to rethink about their role and identity by making meaning from the cross-cultural experience (Carr 1986, Phillion and He 2001).

Many authors have described the development of cross-cultural identity as a fluid, ongoing and complex process (Berry, 1994; Rogler, 1994; Rosenthal et al. 1994). Berry (1980, 1984) describes such processes as acculturation. It refers to the contact between autonomous cultural groups and to the attempts of the visitor group to maintain its identity. Further, two acculturation strategies are suggested with respect to the interest of this paper. The first issue pertains to cultural maintenance, the importance of cultural identity and characteristics and the individual's effort and willingness to maintain them. The other issue pertains to the extent of contact with and participation in other cultural groups (Berry, 1994). However, Berry's view has been criticized for being unable to see the dynamic nature of the process of redefinition of ethnic identity as one of the processes underlying acculturative changes (Horenczyk, 1997, Schonpflug, 1997). To fill this gap, Phinney (1989, 1990) advocates that the process of exploration of ethnic identity of ethnic members is dynamic, taking place and changing over time and context. This can be elaborated by a three stage progression she proposed. At the first stage, individuals' ethnic identity is unexamined or diffuse. This stage is thought to continue until they acknowledge that they are members of two cultures and have an ethnic identity. The result of this experience leads them to become aware of their ethnicity. In the final stage of the

process, an achieved or internalized ethnic identity is formed. In Phinney's model, the meaning of ethnic identity and cross-cultural experience differ from one to another because of their particular historical and migrational experiences. Further, being a member of two cultures does not mean being between two cultures. Rather, it means being part of both cultures to varying degree.

In addition to the psychological perspective, the study adopted the sociological framework of the social construction of reality (Berger & Luckmann, 1973; Holzner, 1968). It drew attention to the social construction of their cross-cultural experience, and how the knowledge of realities was constructed in everyday life in classroom. To explore this kind of knowledge, the methodological approaches of narrative analysis and personal experience were employed for interviews (Anderson, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Denzin, 1998; Geertz, 1973; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Specifically, the methodological approach suggested by Clandinin & Connelly (1995) was used to explore what constructs the teachers used when talking about the cross-cultural experience of ethnic minority students across three dimensions, namely 1) the change of the 'space' from the classroom and beyond, and the community of local Chinese and the community of ethnic minority group of people; 2) in the 'place' of the Hong Kong schools where they have been participated and particularly the classroom where they participated, and 3) throughout the 'time' when they were in the classroom and the schools and how they interacted with students. Furthermore, the analytical framework of moving 'inward', 'outward', 'backward' and 'forward' was adopted. Using 'inward' was to discover their inner feelings towards the students' cross-cultural experience, whereas with 'outward', the perception towards the host society of Hong Kong and the community of the ethnic minority group of people was explored. Regarding 'backward' and 'forward', this was to see how these teachers related the stories of their 'past' experience to 'the present' and how it shaped their perception of 'the future'.

Research Methods
The study was qualitative in nature. Interviews were conducted respectively in two primary schools where large numbers of ethnic minority students from India, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal, Indonesia and Thailand were enrolled. Having received school permissions, twenty-four teachers and twenty-four students were invited to attend one-on-one interviews. Each interview lasted about 60 minutes and was tape-recorded. The interviews were unstructured and conducted in either English or Cantonese. Also, three focus group interviews for 15 parents are conducted. This was intended to provide them with substantial freedom to talk about the issues concerned. Whenever

they had something to say about their cross-cultural experience, they were allowed to express their concern, in order to explore the issues, dilemmas or tensions associated with these experiences. Up to a point, the unstructured interview method adopted for this study could be considered the type of active interview as proposed by Holstein and Gubrium (1995), in which the students and the interviewer play significant roles in constructing a conversation.

Another supplementary source of the data was the field notes I kept when conducting the study in the three secondary schools. Since I conducted this study, I kept field notes about school participants' interaction inside and beyond the classroom, school documents on pastoral care, structural arrangements for supporting ethnic minority students and any features I spotted when visiting the schools, and the experience I got from interacting with teachers and students from the three schools. The field notes recorded the data about how I conversed with them about the construct of ethnicity and the cross-cultural experience of ethnic minority students.

Since this kind of study involved gathering information about individuals or individual situations, as suggested in the literature (Alderson, 1995, 2000; Ball, 1981; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 1999; Hargreaves, 1967; Hill, Laybourn, & Borland, 1996; Lacey, 1974), some important ethical considerations were taken into account when involving teachers in this study. For example, participation would not result in any harm to the participants and other school members; participation was on a voluntary basis; participants fully understood what they were getting involved in and the role expected of them; and they had the opportunity to opt out of the process at any stage. Further, confidentiality issues which might arise were addressed, with participants having a clear understanding of how their contributions would be reported. Confidentiality was regarded as a high priority, particularly for those participants who felt they could easily be identified in publication (Bentley, Oakley, Gibson & Kilgour, 1999).

All data collected were transcribed for analysis. In doing this, I tried to ensure that the analytical procedure was grounded in the data collected from the students involved, and that the foundation for interpretation and analysis rested on the trustworthiness of the empirical materials. To achieve this, in the analytical procedure, it was endeavored to make interpretations in the light of a deep ethnographic understanding of social relations, the students' families, and their school and individual practices.

For data analysis, a constant comparative method as proposed by Glaser and Strauss

(1967) was adopted. To begin with, the twelve units of audio data collected were transcribed. By producing 'richly detailed' descriptions and accounts of the data collected (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p.335), it was intended to illuminate both the interviewer's and the students' narratives of cross-cultural experience and to identify the multiple meanings carried in the data. Categories and concepts were generated from each unit of the data collected. Having processed the twelve units of audio data separately, the similarities and differences between the students were identified, and then relevant categories and concepts generated from the data were compared and contrasted. In short, the analytic procedure mentioned was a cycle of constant comparisons, moving in and out of the data, reading for meaning and advancing the analytical procedure by the intensive use of the above stages.

The Findings

The study showed that the diversity was constructed as a challenge for school guidance. They were narrated in terms of the four categories, including local Hong Kong Chinese students, ethnic minority students who were born in Hong Kong, the new immigrant of students with ethnic minority background, and the new immigrant of students from the Mainland China. Each had their specific learning needs and bought a number of unique characteristics to their classroom situation, different levels of language ability, academic self-concept, students' interest, different of numbers and mathematics, different style of communication, a varied way of relating to others, a variety of attitude towards school, and different concepts of themselves as learners. They often experienced cultural and linguistic differences and struggles with differences in school systems, classroom experience, and academic programmes. To face up the challenge of caring for these students, the teachers developed a sense of inter-cultural sensitivity, particularly when they worked hard to build up the connection between classroom and home, home and school and home and community. These themes will be explained below.

Developing a sense of inter-cultural sensitivity

To better support the personal growth of these students, the teachers insisted that they needed to incorporate the knowledge of the diversity and cultural difference into their caring work and to help them recognize positive aspect of their cultural experience. In achieving this, the teachers felt necessary to enrich their understanding of the nature and importance of cultural diversity. Specifically, two strategies were adopted, i.e. using a cultural agency and developing a sense of inter-cultural sensitivity.

The teachers acknowledged that they needed to take a cultural agency to make sense

of NCS's behavior, thinking, emotion and feeling. This could be reflected by the strong sense of empathy the teachers developed to understand their behavior and see the world from their perspective. As acknowledged by the teachers, it was very likely for ones to feel frustrated if they expected NCS students to perform behavior, show emotion, and express feeling as CS did. They would be fail in precisely interpreting the social signs used by NCS and their behavior if they merely do it based upon the reference of CS. For example, some NCS were used to sit with their peers on the floor in the park and inside the compartment of the metro and then chat loudly. It was insisted that such behavior was a way to express their friendship and connectedness. Any negative deceptions of such behavior as "self-fish", "poor parenting", "strange" and "noisy", made by the local Hong Kong Chinese, were inappropriate.

In addition to the use of the cultural agency, they developed a strong sense of inter-cultural sensitivity for themselves, students and parents, and accordingly became reflective to their own methods, standards and expectations. They found NCS having a stronger sense of purpose and direction of learning in the school. They tended to respect teachers more and hold them in high regard. They reacted very fast in relation to teachers' requests. They raised hands when questions were posed by teachers in classroom. NCS were more able to show their respect to teachers and tended to be more submissive to the authority figure. It got to become obvious after having disciplined. When they met the teachers who disciplined them before, they still showed their respect and warmth to them and greeted them in a very friendly way. With this understanding, they realized that compared to CS, NCS preferred more student-centred, activities-based and cooperative learning styles. They were driven to adjust their teaching strategies, especially when they realized that due to the difference of behavior between CS and NCS, the caring approaches adopted for NCS should be adjusted and make slightly different from those offered CS.

Classroom-and-home connection
Learning difficulties in Chinese and Mathematics lessons
Most of the students liked to study in Hong Kong schools. When talking about what they liked most, they compared the schooling experience with those in their home countries and highlighted something good in Hong Kong schools, i.e. the good facilities of the schools, an adoption of an activity-based approach to teaching, use of no corporal punishment and the humanistic style of teachers. Regarding their learning difficulty, compared to CS, most of NCS had vast difficulties in learning Chinese language. What made teachers deeply concerned about was how they could raise students' learning motivation, rather than tailoring the existing curriculum or

developing more effective teaching strategies. As they fully realized, students could only be facilitated to learn when being motivated. It was particular the case for the new immigrant of students with ethnic minority background, as they struggled for mastering the learning of two foreign languages of English and Chinese. When teachers looked for explanation, the lack of effort invested in learning Chinese was regarded to be rooted at students' belief that their labor put in acquisitioning the proficiency of the dominant language of Chinese would not be properly rewarded in terms of jobs and social recognition. For those students who planned to further their study at their home countries or to migrate to western societies, learning Chinese became even more irrelevant to their aspiration of education and future career. Therefore, what teachers could do was to draw them to see the rise of China's economy and constantly rationalize students about the importance of learning this foreign language in the success of their future career development, but as they realized that the effort they put in reasoning was not effectively enough to get them motivated to learn Chinese Language.

While students experienced difficulties in learning Chinese language and Mathematics, the teachers tried to work with their parents to help their children. However, disappointedly it could not be achieved, because they found that the parenting of Chinese parents was so different from the ethnic minority. Unlike Chinese parents, the parents of ethnic minority students were not enthusiastic with the education of their children and participating in any school events and activities. Also, they were not keen on knowing how their children behaved in school and showed very little interests to work with teachers to improve their children's learning. Only very few of them were able to work with teachers to supervise students' homework strictly, check their handbook, and take the school circulars seriously as teachers requested them to do. For example, parents of ethnic minority students were rarely able to supervise students' homework. Partially because of this, almost 70% of ethnic minority students were unable to submit the homework assigned. Having called up parents and explained the matter to them, they answered positively and agreed to give more supervision. However, the situation was the same.

Different Rationale underlying behaviour management stragegies
In addition to the students' academic work, teachers found hard to work with parents to improve their children's classroom behaviour. Many teachers and students admitted that some students would never learn a lesson. They repeatedly committed offends even they were disciplined, with the exercise of punishment. Habitually, they ignored teachers' reasoning and discipline.

One of the reasons for explaining this was that the discipline implemented at home was very different from those at home, mosques or sheik temples, schools in their home countries, where corporal punishment was strictly and excessively exercised. If they misbehaved, they could be slapped and hit seriously, such as palm hit with a ruler; and various forms of physical punishment could be exercised as well, such as running around in playground. The different rationale underlying the different approaches to discipline let ethnic minority students get inconsistent message. The discipline which they got from local Hong Kong was regarded as very mild and something that could be ignored, as compared with those serve form of discipline exercised upon them at home, at Mosque and at the home from their home country.

School-and-home connection
To better manage the diversity of students' learning in the classroom, the teachers felt necessary to work closely with the parents of NCS, but they experienced difficulties in doing this. The weak connection between home and school could be reflected from the definition of parents' role, their religious practices and the expectation of their aspiration of children's education.

When talking about the parenting style of non-Chinese parents, teachers were used to compare them with local Hong Kong Chinese parents. They were found to have very different beliefs, expectations and aspiration of their children's education and future careers. They cared for their children's education, but many of them did not share the expectation of parents' roles in their children education as Chinese parents did. In the view of teachers, they, especially the Pakistan and Indian parents, made sense of their role in terms of the legality of law, under which they were requested to send their children to school. Once it had been fulfilled, they tended to leave all responsibility of their children's education to schools. They did not realize that they had crucial roles in supporting their children's success in school. Most of them were not keen on knowing how their children behaved in school and showed very little interests to work with teachers to improve their children's learning. Only very few of them were able to work with teachers to supervise students' homework, check their handbook and take the school circulars seriously as teachers requested them to do. Almost 70% of NCS were unable to submit the homework assigned. Having called up parents and explained the matter to them, they answered positively and agreed to give more supervision. However, the situation was the same. Underlying the expression of this kind of constructs, teachers were overwhelmed with a strong sense of powerlessness. This feeling was intensified when they attempted to "pull" the parents of ethnic

minority students to collaborating with school but felt necessary to deal with the counter-force of "being pushed" away by these parents.

The weak collaboration of parents with the school could be further explained by their cultural practices stemming from the stereotyping of gender role. It was common that the gender role was culturally stereotyped in the family of NCS. It was particular the case for those parents from Pakistan and India. Females were expected to be more introverted whereas males were extroverted. Girls should stay at home and do housework and cooking. In many cases, a wife could not leave home without the permission of their husband and were not encouraged to get in touch with other males who were not belonged to their family members, even male teachers. It was one of the reasons why teachers found hard to get mother of NCS involved in supporting the learning of their children in school. Most of the time, they could merely contact them on phone. Parents felt more comfortable and open to talk to them, compared with the local Chinese teachers.

In addition to the expectation of parents' roles, what make them distinctive from local Chinese students was that most of the students from Pakistan, India, Nepal and Thailand were very devoted to their religions. In particular, for Pakistani and Indians, religion was regarded as the first priority whereas academy as the second. However, in the school, this priority was put in reserve, where academy should be prioritized as the first. Due to this conflict, arisen from religious diversity, any practices and culture from the local schools and community which were against the value of the teaching of their religions or hindered them from putting their faith through should be abandoned or ignored. For examples, Fai Chun, the poster displayed over walls and doors during Chinese New Year, over which some words of blessings were printed, was not allowed to be displayed at home, as it was considered as something against the teaching of Muslim. For all the whole school activities or educational programmes, they would not attend if it crashed with their religious activities, such as chanting and pray groups. They were also absent from school for celebrating some religious or cultural festivals which had not been included in school calendar. They needed to attend the service not only in weekend, but also during weekdays, to worship and study the holy texts of their religion. Many students had to attend some classes for learning these holy texts in mosques or Shek temples after school, which normally finished approximately at 7:00 pm. While students went back home, they were normally too tired to study and complete their homework. It was obvious that religion took a very important role in the everyday life of most of NCS and their family.

Regarding their aspiration of their future education and career, most of the students and their parents did not have any long-term plan for children's education and career development in the Hong Kong society, except very few of those who planned to further their study aboard or in their own country. Rather than making no plan, most of NCS and their parents were actually unable to foresee any other alternative for the future, in terms of education and career development. What the frame of reference which allowed them to maintain an optimistic view of their future possibilities was that *"life in Hong Kong will be a lot better than in their home country; at least they will be able to find a job and earn a living."* When they compared what opportunities are offered in the host society of Hong Kong and what they were likely to be in their home country, they believed that they would have relatively more and better opportunities in Hong Kong. To hold this belief, as foreseen, once NCS completed their primary and secondary education, girls were encouraged to get married at very young age, and were not expected to have much achievement in education. Boys were expected to have a higher achievement in education and be able to find good job. They could be introduced by their relatives and friends to get involved in the careers or business run by them, most of which were the types of larbouring work, such as working in construction site, loading and unloading goods, and working in restaurants as waiters or waitresses. They were expected to start working as soon as they completed their study so as to earn a living to support the family.

Home-and-community connection
Being marginalized in local community
Parents of ethnic minority students lived in a community of their own race, rather than merging into local Hong Kong community. It was one of the reasons why ethnic minority students could hardly learn Chinese language and integrated themselves into local community. It was certain that language was one of factors hindering ethnic minority students and their parents from building a connection to the local community. For most of them, the mother tongue was neither English nor Cantonese. They could not communicate as effectively as they expected with teachers. It was suggested as a key reason why they rarely took the initiative to contact the school. In some schools where teaching assistant with ethnic minority background were recruited, it made a difference. Parents felt more comfortable and open to talk to them, compared with the local Chinese teachers.

Even for those parents who could speak Cantonese, they spent most of the time at home, and showed a very weak connection to the community and local Hong Kong Chinese who lived just next to their door. In the culture which they belonged, females

were encouraged staying at home and not going out to establish their own circle of friends, especially with males. Hence, whenever they went out, it was mainly for religious reasons or visiting their friends who had the same ethnicity. Many of children's mothers had no idea of how to get to their children's school. It suggested that they merely knew the area where they lived and did not know how to use the public transport system.

Being excluded in the community
In a community, ethnic minority students spent most of the time with those who had the same ethnic background as they did in school. It became clear that their involvement in the local community was low, though there were more NGOs offering service to the ethnic minority people as a way to help them merge into Hong Kong society. From time to time, they felted being discriminated in the community, which they never experienced within school. For example, students held a belief that they were considered by some Chinese as 'more dirty' and 'more wild'. Some students shared experience of being discriminated when playing in a park. They were shouted by the local Chinese children for no reason, "Get out! Go back home!" It made them feel excluded.

Conclusion
In the narratives of the ethnic minority students, teachers' and students' views were expressed through the use of stories, showing vividly how they narrated about students' learning difficulties and cross-cultural experience in school, home and community, which underwent a process of cultural integration to the Chinese society of Hong Kong, which is totally different from students' own countries. While teachers take a cultural perspective to make sense of the diverse needs of NCS, or ethnic minority students, they realize that NCS and their parents tend to take a "relative" perspective to construct cross-cultural experience in the contexts of classroom, school and home. By taking this perspective, they compare what they have now in the host society with what they may have in their home country. The sense of relativism forms as their personal frame of reference which gives them hope and motivation to face new challenges and to explore the new opportunities which they might not have in their home country. It was not only the case for the ethnic minority students who engage in a cross-cultural process. As the students do, the teachers who interact with them simultaneously engaged in a cross-cultural process, through which they learn the culture of NCS, re-learn the culture of their own and re-think about the relevant rationale underlying cultural responsiveness, when they struggled for creating a culturally responsive culture in the school, fulfilling the diverse learning needs of

students and building up a well-connected school ecology for the promotion of culturally responsiveness approaches to school guidance. It is also the school ecology where every individual student can be treated equally and receive equal opportunity to learn and be cared.

Furthermore, this study has shown that to better promote the atmosphere of culturally responsive caring in schooling, the challenge for school guidance is to build up the connection between classroom and home, school and home, and home and community. When looking for ways to put such a notion into practices, we may go back to the constructs of the cross-cultural experience of ethnic minority students. They provide us a cultural frame of reference to understanding the needs of these students. Briefly, some suggestions are given below for building up a well-connected school where the culturally responsive caring will be more effectively put through at various levels of schooling; and, hence, the needs of the ethnic minority students are better fulfilled.

- Teachers should enrich their knowledge about the culture and religion of ethnic minority students.
- Ethnic minority students and parents should be helped to understand the culture and practices of teaching and learning in Hong Kong schools, as well as the social expectation of Chinese students' roles and learning behaviour where are held by teachers and the school.
- Pastoral care has a crucial role in fulfilling the diverse need of ethnic minority students through building up a connection between school and parents; and parents and community.
- A pastoral care system should be established, on the basis of understanding and respecting the various cultures of ethnicities and their practices of parenting, schooling and religion.
- Curricular on school subjects (especially on languages and mathematics), classroom management, school discipline and instructional design should be modified and developed further in relation to the social, academic and affection development of ethnic minority students' self-identity.
- There is a need to provide ethnic minority students with some programmes, aimed at offering them strategies for coping with all difficulties they encounter with in the school and the host society of Hong Kong and helping them and their parents integrate into local community, and building up an aspiration of their education and future careers in the host society or where else they want to be.
- There is a need to offer additional language classes in Cantonese and English to support the learning of ethnic minority students and to help them practice their

daily life in the host society.

Catering for the diversity is an educational challenge for teachers and school managers. It is also the crucial aim of pastoral care. The strategies suggested above may not be the only ways to cater the diverse needs of students By adopting a culturally responsive and school-based approach, it would be more possible for the school to find out effective strategies for putting through the notion of pastoral care. And it is believed to be one of the ways to create a just and fair society. Teachers and school managers have an important role to play if this important goal is to be achieved.

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Ethnic Minority Students in a Chinese Society:
School practitioners' narratives of caring in
Hong Kong Secondary Schools

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Background

In Hong Kong Schools

- All teachers have a caring role.
- A team of teachers is formed to support students who experience personal difficulties and offer counselling service to students in needs.
- Caring = School Guidance and Counseling or Pastoral Care
  - To support the diversity of the pastoral needs of all students
  - To promote their whole person growth and self-esteem
  - To make caring become an integral part of any whole-school programmes

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Objectives

- To examine teachers', students' and parents' constructs of the pastoral needs of ethnic minority students (EMS) in Hong Kong secondary schools.
  - how they constructed the cross-cultural experience of EMS;
  - what challenges and difficulties they had in relation to cultural, social and psychological changes;
  - the school and classroom experiences of EMS;
  - teachers' constructs of caring and how they defined their roles in fulfilling the diversity of the pastoral needs of EMS.

Research Methods

- The study was qualitative in nature.
- The data was collected from unstructured interviews.
- 24 teachers and 24 students from three secondary schools were involved.
- Three focus group interviews for 15 parents were conducted.

Findings – Challenges of Caring

1.Dealing with segregation between CS and EMS

- Language was regarded as the key diversity, which needed to be urgently dealt with by the school.
- The streaming policy was adopted for supporting the learning of EMS.
- Students were streamed into three different classes.

The % of EMS and CS in the classroom	Diversity of Three Types of Classes				
	CS Classes	Mixed Classes			EMS Classes
	Classes where all students were Chinese	Classes where EMS are in small number	Classes where CS and EMS were mixed	Classes where CS in small number	Classes where all students were ethnic minority.

- This streaming policy was considered as "the no-other-alternative-strategy" or "the-relatively-good-strategy" for supporting the learning of EMS.
- Some effects of the streaming policy created challenges for school guidance, e.g.:
  - CS and EMS were seemingly segregated at both language and social levels.
  - In terms of learning Chinese, EMS' opportunities to interact with their second language peers of CS became less.
  - In particular, in the school which had a large proportion of EMS, the opportunities of learning Chinese were even less, because English was used as the most common medium of communication; and CS were regarded "the minority" who were supposed not to speak Chinese in the school.

- Effects:
  - In the Mixed Classes, the same phenomenon of segregation could be seen.
  - The social interaction between CS and EMS tended to be limited.
  - They were only "connected" when requested by their teachers to engage in collaborative learning activities or school programmes.
  - Mostly, CS stayed along together; and EMS did the same, while teachers worked hard to make them 'connected' in some ways.

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2. *Developing an ability of intercultural sensitivity*
- Made sense of the pastoral needs of four categories of students from an intercultural perspective

Diversity	Pastoral Needs of Four Categories of Students			
The % of four categories of students in the classroom and the school	The local Hong Kong Chinese students	The EMS born in Hong Kong	The new immigrants of EMS	The new immigrants of Chinese students from the Mainland
	Mastered Chinese and Cantonese, but relatively weak in English language.	Mastered English; and could speak Cantonese, but found hard to write and read Chinese.	Good at their mother language; some mastered English but most could hardly speak a single word of English.	Good at Mandarin. They picked up Cantonese very fast. Excellent at the reading and writing of Chinese, but were very weak in English
			They picked up either one of the languages very fast. Hard to master two second languages at a same time.	
	Quite knowledgeable about the culture of other ethnicities.	Knowledgeable about the culture of Hong Kong society and other ethnicities.	Felt alienated to the culture of local society	Knowledgeable about Chinese culture; and could be easily assimilated into the culture of Hong Kong society.

- Each category of students brought unique characteristics and diversities to the school and the classroom, for example, in terms of the following differences:
  - classroom behaviour,
  - language ability of Chinese and English,
  - academic self-concept,
  - ways of thinking numbers and mathematics,
  - styles of communication,
  - ways of emotional expression,
  - cultural values, and
  - concepts of themselves as learners.

- Regarding classroom behaviour:
- Compared to CS,
  - EMS engaged more actively in learning activities;
  - more enthusiastic in learning;
  - more respectful;
  - more friendly;
  - more able to interpret teachers' intention in positive ways.

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3. *Working against the grain of examination-oriented culture*

- Helped EMS cope with the overwhelming of the examination-oriented culture in school; and tried not to merely teach to public examination.
- However, in practices, they felt being bonded by many factors, such as examination syllabus, the large number of EMS in a class and the limit of teaching hours in the classroom.
- They felt the low level of professional autonomy while experienced difficulties in putting through what they thought were right into their classroom, and adapting the curriculum in the ways they wished.

4. Raising students' learning motivation

- Concerned about how to raise EMS' learning motivation, especially in the subjects of Chinese Language, English Language and Mathematics.
- It was crucial to raise EMS' learning motivation and positive attitude towards being trilingual and bicultural.
- EMS were more able to master English for practicing their daily life, but not Chinese Language.
- From teachers' point of view, 'picking up Chinese Language' was crucial for EMS, as it was regarded as a way of acculturation into the local culture of Hong Kong society.

- Students' explanation of their low learning motivation of Chinese Language:
  - In general, they experienced vast difficulties of writing and reading Chinese.
  - For those in senior forms, they did not choose Chinese Language, as they preferred to do the subjects which they felt more confident in getting good results in the public examination.
  - For those students, who planned to further their study aboard, learning Chinese became totally irrelevant to them.

Implication for developing culturally responsive caring

- When any policies and strategies are made on the educational provision for EMS, it is necessary to enhance school practitioners' ability of intercultural sensitivity, including teachers, students, parents, school managers and other professional parties.
- Contextualize whatever suggested into the specific situation of the schools, the specific type of classrooms and the specific combination of the various categories of students.
- In different contexts and situations, the problems and challenges are different.

Implication for creating culturally responsive classrooms

- Caring, discipline and learning are tightly linked together.
- Any approaches to culturally responsiveness to diversity should consider these three elements altogether.
- Lead students to better recognize the diversity at classroom and school levels;
- Fulfill the diversity of pastoral needs of all students, in terms of the diversities of their culture, religion, customs, learning motivation and classroom behavior.

Implication for further research

- More research should be done to examine the impacts of the two factors upon
  the educational provision for EMS and the practices of caring, i.e.
  - the adoption of school policy on classroom arrangement and its effects;
  - the proportion of the different categories of students/EMS in a school and a classroom.

THANK YOU