

Article for Public Policy Digest

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Project Title:

Educational Provision for Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong: Meeting the Challenges of the Proposed Racial Discrimination Bill

Research Team:

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Topic

(Please provide a brief introduction of the study including project objectives)

Topic:

- This project was concerned with the education of ethnic minority students in the light of the Racial Discrimination Ordinance

Research Objectives:

- There were four major objectives:
 1. Outline the system level policy context in which education is provided for ethnic minority students and compare it with international trends.
 2. Explore the way in which schools develop policy and adapt practice to meet the needs of ethnic minority students.

3. Appreciate the aspirations that ethnic minority parents and students have for education and the barriers they perceive to be operating at different levels.
4. Assess the extent to which the Hong Kong SAR government may be exposed to possible litigation under the proposed Racial Discrimination Bill and suggest new policy directions for policy and practice to meet this challenge.

Methods Used

(Please describe in layman's terms)

The research team adopted a “macro-micro” approach to address the research questions. The research focus began with a broader policy concern and was then narrowed down to school practices and finally the daily lives of ethnic minority students. Data was collected from policy documents at system and school levels, policy makers, principals, teachers, students and their families. Document analysis, surveys, and focused interviews have been used as the main methods of data collection.

Summary of Findings

(Please describe in layman's terms)

- The presence of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong's schools is not new but the Racial Discrimination Ordinance has highlighted the multicultural nature of the school population and the need to take special measures to ensure that all students are treated equitably.
- At the school level, additional resources provided by the government are supporting ethnic minority students, yet not all ethnic minority students attend such schools. The needs of these students where they represent a very small proportion of a school's population require attention in terms of resource support and professional development for teachers.
- Chinese language education remains a core issue for schools, students and teachers. There is no doubt that learning to speak Chinese will be of great benefit to the future of ethnic minority students. The unresolved issue is how to deliver curriculum and the teaching of Chinese for second language learners.

- The teachers of ethnic minority students face considerable challenges, especially in terms of language. Yet our surveys found that teachers hold very positive attitudes toward ethnic minority students, despite their relatively weaker academic performance.
- Home-school liaison and communication can be very difficult for ethnic minority students given language on the one side and culture on the other. Yet there was no doubt from our interviews with ethnic minority students and their parents of the aspirations that both have for the future and the importance they attach to education.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

(Please describe in layman's terms)

- The Equal Opportunities Commission needs to devote attention to the status of ethnic minority students in relation to the Racial Discrimination Ordinance. A recent report from the EOC Working Group on Education for Ethnic Minorities has raised important issues that need to be addressed by the Education Bureau.
- Developing deliberate educational policies that will increase participation of ethnic minorities beyond primary school is a fundamental issue. A target should be set that will enable all ethnic minority students to proceed to secondary education by 2020 and provide them with the support that will ensure that they succeed.
- A new policy approach is needed that values multiculturalism and its potential to contribute to the social and economic development of Hong Kong. Real attempts need to be made to show how harmony can only be achieved in multicultural contexts.
- The changing discourse in education policy where reference to “ethnic minority students” is being replaced with a description of these students as “non-Chinese-speaking students (NCS) is counterproductive. It signals that ethnic minority students suffer from a deficit – in this case a language deficit. Such approaches to ethnic minorities need to be avoided.
- More attention needs to be paid by the Education Bureau to curriculum development, resource support and professional development for teachers in the context of students learning Chinese as their second (and sometimes third) language. This has been an issue of public debate – one that continues because ethnic minority communities do

not believe that current curriculum arrangements are meeting the needs of their students.

- Additional support for ethnic minorities should be extended to other aspects of schooling such as learning mathematics, offering pastoral care for students with emotional and psychological difficulties, helping these students adapt to local culture, and promoting home-school collaboration.
- The government should introduce specific programmes to prepare ethnic minority teachers for Hong Kong's schools.

Selected publications Related to the Study

(Please list in order of priority, Complete list may not be published due to space limitation)

Book Chapters (priority)

Hue, M.T. (2011). Building up a culturally responsive school: Cross-cultural experience of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong schools. In: Pillion, J., Hue, M.T. & Wang, Y.X. (Eds.) *Minority Students in East Asia: Government Policies, School Practices and Teacher Responses* (pp. 141-154). New York: Routledge.

Kennedy, K (2011). The “long march” toward multiculturalism in Hong Kong: Supporting Ethnic minority students in a Confucian state. In: Pillion, J., Hue, M.T. & Wang, Y.X. (Eds.) *Minority Students in East Asia: Government Policies, School Practices and Teacher Responses* (pp. 155-173). New York: Routledge.

Journal Articles (priority)

Hue, M.T. (2010). Educational planning for school guidance: Teachers' narratives of the diverse needs of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Educational Planning*, 19 (2):34-45.

Hue, M.T. (2010). The challenge of making school guidance culturally responsive: Narratives of pastoral needs of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Educational Studies*, 36 (4), 357-369.

Hue, M.T & Kennedy, K. (in press). Creating culturally responsive classrooms: Teachers' narratives of parents and their influence on ethnic minority students' performance in Hong Kong secondary schools. *Intercultural Education*.

Kennedy, K. & Hue, M.T. (2011). Researching ethnic minority students in a Chinese context: Mixed methods design for cross cultural understanding. *Comparative Education*, 47(3), 343-354.

Biography of Principal Investigator

(Please include the post title, department name and research interests of the PI)

Professor Kerry J. Kennedy is Chair Professor of Curriculum Studies at the Hong Kong Institute of Education. His main research interests are in curriculum policy and theory and citizenship education. He has been particularly interested in citizenship values in Asia and has written extensively in this field. His current research is focused on educational provision for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong and more generally student attitudes to key citizenship issues such as political trust, civic engagement and broader civic responsibilities.