

Equitable Educational Provision for Hong Kong's Ethnic Minority Students: Issues and Priorities

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There is a growing body of literature highlighting issues concerning current educational provision for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. The popular media is also featuring these issues. In addition, the Equal Opportunities Commission has formally notified the Education Bureau of its concerns about the education of ethnic minority students. This article reviews a range of issues and concerns that have been raised regarding educational provision for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. It particularly raises the issue of "out of school" ethnic minority children in Hong Kong. To date, most of the existing literature has been on ethnic minority students who are already in the school. Yet a careful analysis of the reports and tables published from the 2006 census data suggests that a good number of ethnic minority children are probably not in school, including pre-primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary age groups. Despite the fact that some legislation is in place to protect the educational rights of ethnic minority children in Hong Kong,

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they are nevertheless facing a number of issues and challenges inside school. In addition, the fact that ethnic minority children are “out of school” raises new issues about access and equity in Hong Kong’s education system.

Keywords: “out of school” children; ethnic minority students; equitable educational provision

Background and Rationale

It was not until 2001 that there was any official mention of ethnic minorities as a subgroup of Hong Kong’s population (Census and Statistics Department, 2002), even though such groups were present from the beginning of the British colonial period (Plüss, 2000, 2005; Vaid, 1972). In 2004, the specific need for the legislative protection of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong was brought to public attention, with the publication of a consultation document for legislating against racial discrimination (Home Affairs Bureau [HAB], 2004). The *Race Discrimination Bill* was introduced to the Legislative Council in 2006 (HAB, 2006) and finally passed into *Race Discrimination Ordinance* (RDO) in 2008 (HAB, 2008) and enacted in 2009.

The RDO is not the only instrument that seeks to protect ethnic minorities, and indeed all Hong Kong people. International instruments and some domestic legislation are in place to protect the rights of equal opportunities to education: the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Sex Discrimination Ordinance; the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (Equal Opportunities Commission [EOC], 2011, pp. 1–2). The RDO is the most recent of these and its focus is exclusively on the removal of any form of discrimination against ethnic minorities.

While the RDO is broad in its concerns for the protection of ethnic

minorities from discrimination, there are significant implications for education. This is evidenced by literature reporting many issues about current educational provision for the ethnic minority students in Hong Kong (Chong, 2011; Connelly, Gube, & Thapa, in press; Heung, 2006; Hong Kong Unison, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Hue, 2011; Kapai, 2011; Kennedy, 2011a, 2011b; Kennedy & Hue, 2011; Kennedy, Hue, & Tsui, 2008; Ku, Chan, & Sandhu, 2005; Loper, 2004; Novianti, 2007, Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, 2000, 2002). Many popular media articles also feature these issues (e.g., Benitez, 2011; Bhowmik, 2012; Cheng, 2011; Deng, 2011a, 2011b; "Minority Interest," 2006; Thapa, 2012; Zhao, 2011). In addition, the EOC has formally notified the Education Bureau (EDB) of its concerns about the education of ethnic minority students (EOC, 2011).

To date, most of this literature has been on ethnic minority students who are already in school. Yet it has been suggested that there may be groups of ethnic minority students who are not in school, including pre-primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary age groups (Bhowmik & Kennedy, 2012). The EOC (2011) in Hong Kong also recognizes this issue to some extent with reference to the disproportionately low participation rates of ethnic minorities in upper secondary and post-secondary education compared to Chinese children. Yet even for the students, who are in schools, very little is known about the "meaningful participation" or about those ethnic minority children who are "at risk of dropping out." Both of these issues have a significant relationship with the access to, transition through and exclusion from education (Lewin, 2007; UNICEF & UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010).

The purpose of this article, therefore, is to examine educational provision for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong with a view to going beyond the usual data sources to identify whether there are any access, participation and outcome issues not previously recognized. Given the recent attention to the issue, as identified above, this will be a preliminary analysis that will examine both conceptual issues and data sources that can help to elucidate the current situation. This article

will not in itself provide all the answers to what are very complex social questions. Rather, it seeks to provide a foundation for conducting new research that can be helpful to both policymakers and practitioners in seeking to provide a fair and just education to all Hong Kong residents.

Why the Issue of Ethnic Minority Education Is Important: Values for an “International” City

There are two broad answers to the question “why is the issue of ethnic minority education important” — one concerns social rights and the other concerns equity. While these two concepts are related, they will be treated separately below.

Educational Rights

Lewin (2007) argues:

Rights to education, and their realisation through meaningful participation, are fundamental to any recent conception of development. (p. 36)

Research on access has to be concerned whether efforts to expand participation contribute to improved equity in general and are themselves equitable. As with more general debates on development, growth and expansion of education systems which exacerbate existing inequality is unlikely to contribute much to inter-generational mobility out of poverty. Education systems are one arena in which States can seek to limit inherited advantages and promote greater equality of opportunity, albeit that greater equality in outcomes will always prove elusive. Access to education is very unevenly distributed in relation to household wealth in most poor countries. Discrepancies related to location, gender, cultural affiliation and many other signifiers of advantage may also be very conspicuous. And of course access narrowly defined as enrolment conceals vast differences in educational quality, resource inputs, and measurable outcomes. (p. 3)

While Lewin’s (2007) argument has been made mainly in the context of South Asian and Sub-Saharan African countries, it will be argued in this article that concepts such as “meaningful participation” and “equitable provision” are universal. That is, it is not enough simply to have students in schools — but they must be meaningfully engaged. In a multicultural society such as Hong Kong, issues of equitable access and engagement need to be a priority if Hong Kong values its reputation as an “international” city bridging East and West. This naturally raises questions about the nature of equity and how it can be pursued.

Equity in Education

Equity is a broad term and has been interpreted in different ways. In an OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) review of equity in education of several OECD countries, it was agreed that the following definition would be used by the participating countries (Opheim, 2004):

“Educational equity refers to an educational and learning environment in which individuals can consider options and make choices throughout their lives based on their abilities and talents, not on the basis of stereotypes, biased expectations or discrimination. The achievement of educational equity enables females and males of all races and ethnic backgrounds to develop skills needed to be productive, empowered citizens. It opens economic and social opportunities regardless of gender, ethnicity, race or social status.” In summary, the activity will explore “equity of opportunities” in a broad sense. It will acknowledge existing inequities in access, participation, achievement and educational outcomes and creation of fair learning environment for all regardless of socio-economic background, place of residence, ethnic background, and gender. (p. 8)

This definition shows the scope of the discourse of educational equity beyond mere opportunities of access and participation; it also includes educational achievement and outcomes. Worldwide this focus on outcomes is now fundamental because it ensures that irrespective of

factors such as gender, ethnicity and class, the goal posts and the expectations are the same for everyone. Ethnic minority students, therefore, cannot simply be relegated to the “low achieving” group — expectations for them must be the same as for Hong Kong’s best and brightest students and the resources needed to achieve this must be provided. Equitable provision means provision that can bring out the best in all students. It therefore may not mean the same provision for all students but it does mean provision that will bring about valued outcomes for individuals and for society. This is the challenge of equity for Hong Kong’s policymakers in developing an equitable society that values its multicultural citizens.

But what is the scope of the ethnic minority issue in relation to the total educational provision in Hong Kong?

Ethnic Minority Population in Hong Kong

The general discourse encouraged by the Hong Kong government about “ethnic minorities” refers to the “persons of non-Chinese ethnicity” (Census and Statistics Department, 2002, p. 2). According to the 2006 by-census, about 5% (342,198 persons) of the total population of Hong Kong were ethnic minorities mainly belonging to the ethnic group of Filipinos, Indonesians, White, Indians, Nepalese, Japanese, Thais, Pakistanis and Koreans (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 15). The recent summary result for 2011 census shows an increase of the total number of ethnic minority population, which does now account for 6.4% (451,183 persons) of the total Hong Kong population (Census and Statistics Department, 2012, p. 37).

Although Whites, Koreans and Japanese have been classified as ethnic minorities by the census report in terms of their non-Chinese ethnic status, they mostly belonged to a higher socio-economic group than other ethnic minority groups (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 75; Heung, 2006). Filipinos and Indonesians usually belong to their temporary status as foreign domestic helpers (Bell & Piper, 2005). Yet, the presence of 7.0% young Filipinos of the age less than 15 cannot be

fully explained by their temporary status. The remainders are mainly South Asians including Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, etc. Census data shows that the median incomes for these South Asian groups are the lowest among all major ethnic minorities if we exclude foreign domestic helpers (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 75). While “ethnic minority” is a word commonly used in the literature in this area, the issues we raise in this article, however, are probably applicable for South Asians based on the assumption that socio-economic status (SES) has a strong bearing on the “out of school” phenomenon, and ethnicity and SES also has a relationship. Nevertheless, research in different parts of the world including South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the United States identify SES as only one of the many factors influencing the “out of school” phenomenon (Hunt, 2008; Rumberger, 2011).

The 2006 by-census reports that 11.1% of the total ethnic minority population were born in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 34) but it does not provide further information on the age group to which they belong. The age group below 15 having a total number 32,289 (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 36), which is about 9.4% of the total ethnic minority population, is actually less than the total Hong Kong-born ethnic minority population (11.1%). Therefore, it can be assumed that all ethnic minority population of age group below 15 was born in Hong Kong. It is then also fair to say that all the school-aged children from ethnic minority groups were predominantly born in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, there is no evidence for making this assumption and there is very little data on new arrivals from places like Nepal.

Another noteworthy statistic from the 2006 by-census is that only 44.1% of the total ethnic minority population have resided in Hong Kong for seven or more years (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 34), meaning that they are likely to have permanent residence status. At the same time, this also means that over 50% of the ethnic minority population does not have any permanent resident status in Hong Kong. Thus ethnic minority children eligible for entry to Hong Kong’s education system have different status in relation to residence and

especially citizenship. While this article will not address these issues specifically, it is important to note that they are important issues that may affect the ways in which students and their parents regard school.

Ethnic Minority Children in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the numbers of ethnic minority children below 15 years and in the 15–24 age group are 32,289 and 41,936 respectively (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 36) which is about 15% less than the corresponding figures for the year 2001. About 9.4% (32,289) of the total ethnic minority population belongs to the age group below 15 years. Of these, 32.2% are from South Asian ethnicities (Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese) and 11.6% are from Japanese and Korean ethnicities. There is about 12.3% (41,936) of the ethnic minority population who are in the 15–24 age group. The South Asian ethnic minority population accounts for 12.4% where the Japanese and Korean groups only account for 2.1% (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 23).

“Out of School” Ethnic Minority Children

Educational statistics on ethnic minority children in Hong Kong are not readily available and there are significant inconsistencies in ethnic minority data not only in education but also in other areas (Chung & Leung, 2011; Kennedy, 2011b). The EOC (2011) has also asserted the need for using the 2011 population census to capture the information on the ethnic minority population in general, and school-aged children in particular in order to formulate appropriate education policies and support measures. Table 1 shows the inconsistencies in data set about the number of ethnic minority students who are in school where there are different sources of information available:

Irrespective of which data is used from Table 1 to establish the extent of numbers of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong, Table 2 raises issues about the consistency of student attendance at school.

Table 1: Data Sources and Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong

Level	2006 [^]	2007–08	2008–09 [*]	2009–10 [*]	2010–11 [®]
Pre-primary	6,777	9,242 [*]	10,214	10,013	11,192
Primary	12,879	5,583 [*] /5,671 [#]	6,034	6,480	7,237
Secondary	7,036	3,272 [*] /3,097 [#]	3,842	4,406	5,236
Sixth form	737				
Post-secondary	1,293				
Total	28,722				

[^] Census and Statistics Department (2007, p. 51).

^{*} P. Y. Shek (personal communication, September 24, 2010).

[#] Bills Committee (2008, p. 6).

[®] C. Yeung (personal communication, November 10, 2011).

Table 2: School Attendance Rates (%) of Ethnic Minority Students by Age Group

Age group	Ethnic minority		Whole population	
	2001	2006	2001	2006
3–5	86.0	83.9	94.7	89.1
6–11	99.3	99.5	99.9	99.9
12–16	96.0	98.0	97.5	98.9
17–18	54.7	74.3	71.0	82.8
19–24	3.7	6.7	26.4	37.3
25+	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.4
Aged 3 and over	9.7	9.5	21.4	20.0

Source: Census and Statistics Department (2007, pp. 42–43).

In 2006, about 16% of ethnic minority children were not attending school in their pre-primary ages while this rate for the whole population was 11%. There was also a considerable gap in the school attendance rates of ethnic minority students under the age group of 17–18 compared to the whole population. The most important statistic was the school attendance rate for ethnic minority students at the age group of 19–24 which was only 6.7% where the rate for the whole population was 37.3%. These age groups (17–18 and 19–24) are the crucial time for potentially attending in upper secondary schools and higher education. The school attendance rates for ethnic minority students and the whole population for age group 12–16 were 98% and 98.9% respectively.

The proportion of ethnic minority students studying full-time courses in Hong Kong was about 4.0% in 2006, among them 2.9% belonged to the age group below 15 and the rest were 15 and over (Census and Statistics Department, 2007, p. 51). The census dataset also shows that, a total of 8,845 students (27%) in the age group below 15 were not in any full-time course at school. What is not clear though from these statistics is to which education level they belong. But it can be assumed that they probably belong to pre-primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and higher education group which is also consistent with the analysis that has been presented in the case of school attendance in the previous paragraph. If we assume the primary enrolment figure (12,819) is stable over time, a number of interesting points could be made based on the statistics of number of students studying full-time courses in Hong Kong (Kennedy, 2011b, 2012): about 48% of ethnic minority children are not receiving any pre-primary education in Hong Kong. Only 28% of primary-age cohort ethnic minority students can move into lower secondary level; and about 19% and 6% of that cohort can make it into upper secondary and sixth form respectively. The participation rate of that primary cohort in all sorts of post-secondary education is only 10%.

The analysis above indicates that there is a high possibility that a good number of ethnic minority children may be said to be “out of school” in Hong Kong. While the above has referred to “out of school” students in quantitative terms, it is important to understand the construct within a broader theoretical framework.

“Out of School” Students — Theoretical Issues

UNICEF and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2010) use “Five Dimensions of Exclusion” as a framework for better understanding “out of school” students. According to the framework, Dimension 1 considers children of pre-primary school age who are not in pre-primary or primary school; Dimension 2 considers children of primary school age who are not in primary or secondary school; Dimension 3 considers

children of lower-secondary school age who are not in primary or secondary school; Dimension 4 considers children who are in primary school but at risk of dropping out; and Dimension 5 considers children who are in lower-secondary school but at risk of dropping out. If we consider these dimensions in the Hong Kong education context (Table 3), Dimensions 1 and 3 may prevail in the case of ethnic minority children based on the data and statistics available. It is not clear whether Dimension 2 is prevalent, because the specific population data of the particular age group (6–11) is not available in the census report; therefore, it is difficult to reach any conclusion. Since major transition issue from primary to lower secondary and lower secondary to upper secondary exists in the Hong Kong school system as analyzed above, it is likely that many ethnic minority students in primary and lower secondary levels are not meaningfully participating in their school and learning activities which ultimately leads to the risk of them dropping out. Therefore, it is fair to say that Dimensions 4 and 5 may also prevail in the Hong Kong education system in the case of ethnic minority students.

Another framework is provided by the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE). It proposes 7 “Zones of Exclusion” to understand “out of school” children (Lewin,

Table 3: “Out of School” Ethnic Minority Children in Hong Kong

“Out of school” children	Five Dimensions of Exclusion (UNICEF & UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010)	CREATE’s “Zones of Exclusion” (Lewin, 2007)	Ethnic minority children in Hong Kong
Not in pre-primary/primary school	Dimension 1	Zone 0	Prevails
Not in primary/secondary school, dropped out from primary, at risk of dropping out	Dimension 2	Zone 1 Zone 2	not clear yet due to lack of data
	Dimension 4	Zone 3	prevails
Not in primary/secondary school, no transition to lower secondary, dropped out from lower secondary, at risk of dropping out	Dimension 3	Zone 4 Zone 5	prevails prevails
	Dimension 5	Zone 6	prevails

2007). Zone 0 refers to children who are out of pre-primary school; Zone 1 contains those children who are never enrolled in primary school; Zone 2 considers those primary children who dropped out at the early stage or before completing the cycle; Zone 3 includes those primary children who are in school but at risk of dropping out; Zone 4 includes those children who failed to transit to lower secondary school; Zone 5 considers those lower secondary children who dropped out before completing the cycle; Zone 6 contains lower secondary children who are in school but at risk of dropping out.

If this frame of reference is now considered for the Hong Kong context (Table 3), “out of school” ethnic minority children can be seen to prevail in Zone 0, Zone 4 and Zone 5 based on the data and statistics available. It does mean that there may be some ethnic minority children who are not attending any pre-primary school, and also some ethnic minority students who are not attending lower secondary school or dropping out of school before completing their lower secondary forms. It is not clear whether “out of school” ethnic minority children prevail in Zone 1 and Zone 2, because the population data of the particular age group (6–11) was not made available in the census report; therefore, no conclusion can be reached on whether the dropping out happens in primary school. Since a major transition issue from primary to lower secondary and lower secondary to upper secondary exists in school, as analyzed above from the census data, it is likely that many ethnic minority students in primary and lower secondary levels are not meaningfully participating in their school and learning activities, which ultimately leads to the risk of them dropping out. Therefore, it is fair to say that ethnic minority students may also prevail in Zone 3 and Zone 6.

It needs to be mentioned here that there is a dearth of literature both nationally and internationally examining the overall situation of “out of school” children in the context of Hong Kong. For example, UNESCO (2010, 2011) does not report in its *EFA Global Monitoring Report* on educational statistics of Hong Kong while providing all the basic educational statistics for the rest of the world. However, *Global*

Education Digest report by the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2011) provides some statistics on overall “out of school” children not only in Hong Kong but also in other jurisdictions in the region.

Global Education Digest reports that 13% pre-primary age-group children in Hong Kong were not in school in the year 2009 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011, p. 95). Pre-primary education is neither compulsory nor free in Hong Kong with compulsory education covering nine years from Primary 1 to Secondary 3. The typical compulsory education age group is 6–14. *Global Education Digest* also reports on the percentage and number of “out of school” children of primary and lower secondary age groups in the year 2009. While the percentage of “out of school” children for the primary age group was about 2%, the percentage for the lower secondary age group was 9% (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011, pp. 134–135).

The World Bank (2012a, 2012b) data center also provides some useful statistics about “out of school” children at the primary level in Hong Kong. It is to be noted that there are inconsistency in 2009 “out of school” children data between the two datasets. While *Global Education Digest* reports “out of school” figure for Hong Kong primary age group children at about 6,000, the World Bank data center reports primary “out of school” children at about 12,000.

These international reports make it very clear that “out of school” is a feature of the Hong Kong context drawing on the *Global Education Digest* report by UNESCO Institute for Statistics as well as the data drawn from the World Bank statistics. Yet this issue is rarely discussed in Hong Kong. A key issue for future research is to try and disaggregate this data to see how many ethnic minority students fit into the “out of school” category and whatever groups might also be included.

Implications for Hong Kong

Although part of the RDO (Section 26(1)) protects ethnic minority children against the racial discrimination caused by any educational establishment, section 26(2) of the RDO did not bind schools with

any mandatory requirement in order to make any change or special arrangement for people of any race or ethnicity (HAB, 2008). Besides, it has been well argued that the development of this legal framework was only to protect the ethnic minority population in Hong Kong from the exploitation, mainly in the employment areas, where little thought has been given to schools and education (Kennedy, 2011a).

While the government's existing policy and support measures (EDB, 2011a, 2011b) toward ethnic minority education do not contravene the requirements of the RDO, there is nevertheless a strong demand for additional support in order to remove the barriers and to provide ethnic minority children with more equal opportunities (Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor et al., 2009; Hong Kong Unison, 2009; Kennedy & Hue, 2011). It is clear from the data presented here that the participation of ethnic minority children in pre-primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary education is probably disproportionately low despite the fact that Hong Kong has a policy of 12-year free education of which 9 years are compulsory. This article, therefore, supports, and to some extent, strengthens the growing discourse that there exists complex issues that ethnic minority children are facing in Hong Kong by focusing on a new research area of "out of school" ethnic minority children.

Hong Kong has gone through a significant education reform process between 2001 and 2011. Much of it has been concerned with coping with the changing nature of the world economic structure and the demand for a knowledge-based society (Education Commission [EC], 2000). One main guiding principle for this education reform in Hong Kong was to bring new learning opportunities to every citizen (EC, 1999). It has been eventually translated into the main reform document as one of the five principles of reform — the "no-loser" principle. The EDB has periodically reported on the updates of different reform initiatives that show more or less progress to date (EC, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2006). Among them, the "through train" concept, reform of the primary and secondary admissions system, a full six years of secondary education for all students, support for students with special needs, a core

curriculum for all students and the reduction in public examinations directly address the “no-loser” principle. Yet, the “no-loser” principle is open to question when it comes to ethnic minority students in Hong Kong (Kennedy, 2011b). The important question is how Hong Kong’s education reform can promote the “no-loser” principle when there remain a good number of ethnic minority students “out of school.” Or does “no-loser” principle have a different meaning when it comes to the ethnic minority children? Since the EC adopted a phased approach in the implementation of the total reform (Curriculum Development Council, 2001), proper thought must be given in order to increase the participation of ethnic minority children in Hong Kong schools.

It was mentioned earlier that there is a growing body of literature reporting many issues and challenges that ethnic minority students are facing within school; this article has not repeated those issues here. Rather, it has provided a summary statement that the main issues and challenges are centered on the areas of admissions, language, assessment, curriculum, teaching, resource support, supervision and monitoring, and overall policy toward multicultural education regarding the educational provision of ethnic minority children in Hong Kong schools (for details, see Connelly et al., in press; Heung, 2006; Hong Kong Unison, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b; Hue, 2011; Kapai, 2011; Kennedy, 2011a, 2011b; Kennedy & Hue, 2011; Kennedy et al., 2008; Ku et al., 2005; Loper, 2004; Novianti, 2007). When these issues are added to the central focus of this article — “out of school” ethnic minority students, the vulnerability of ethnic minority students can be fully recognized.

Conclusion

Despite the fact that some legislation is in place to protect the educational rights of ethnic minority children in Hong Kong, yet they face a huge number of issues and challenges inside school. Statistics and analysis show that a good number of ethnic minority children may be also “out of school” which adds a new dimension to ensuring equitable educational provision. There are some general support measures in place

(although inadequate and inappropriate) but no one is actually giving attention to students who are receiving either no or limited education. This raises the question of Hong Kong's overall attitude toward its ethnic minority children. The mainstream attitude toward ethnic minorities in general can be understood by one of the findings of a survey carried out by Census and Statistics Department (2009). The report indicates that only 56–67% of Chinese parents are comfortable sending their children to schools where a majority of students are from other ethnic minority groups (Indonesian, Filipino, Malaysian, Indian, Pakistani, Nepalese, Bangladeshi) (Census and Statistics Department, 2009, p. 3). The same kind of tone was also evident in a recent survey on racial acceptance by Hong Kong Unison (2012a). From a more optimistic view, the study commissioned by the EOC and conducted by Centre for Civil Society and Governance and Policy 21 (2012) reported that South Asians in Hong Kong had been accepted as full members of Hong Kong society, thus were entitled to the same rights and benefits as the local Chinese. However, the study also asserted that there had not been a high degree of integration between local Chinese and South Asians and they lived in two separate communities without much interaction (Centre for Civil Society and Governance & Policy 21, 2012).

Ensuring access and meaningful participation in education for ethnic minority children will ultimately contribute to Hong Kong's future and its development. What are needed are new policies to recognize the need to deal with school issues such as curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, and to ensure access and progression so that ethnic minority students remain in school and transfer eventually to university. These are significant challenges for the government and for the Hong Kong community, but most of all, they are important for ethnic minorities if they are to be accorded the basic rights of all Hong Kong citizens.

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