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CHINESE EDUCATION FOR ETHNIC MINORITIES IN HONG KONG

Definition:

In Hong Kong, 'ethnic minorities (EM)' refers to the 'people from non-Chinese ethnicities', mainly belonging to the ethnic group of Indonesians, Filipinos, Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese, Whites, Japanese, Thais, Pakistanis, Koreans, etc.

EM students are

3x

University **Admission Rates**

4%

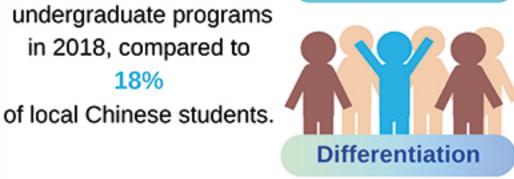
publicly funded

undergraduate programs

in 2018, compared to

18%

more likely to drop out by Secondary 6 than local of EM students entered



students.

Dropout Rates

depression linked to academic stress and social exclusion, compared to

Mental Health Survey

40%

of EM adolescents

reported symptoms of

25%

of local peers.

Chinese Language Proficiency as a Key Barrier

Education Bureau (EDB) Data:

- Acknowledges that EM students struggle with Chinese proficiency
- e.g., only ~30% of EM students meet the Chinese language requirement for tertiary education vs. ~80% of local Chinese students

Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) Report:

· 70% of EM students were placed in schools labeled as "lowband" (under-resourced institutions), perpetuating cycles of underachievement.

Key Insights

The Chinese curriculum is designed for native speakers, leaving EM students (e.g., South Asian, Filipino, Nepali) at a disadvantage, contributing a great differentiation in school performance.

CURRENT SITUATION

- Lack second language policy for students with different native languages
- Local mainstream Chinese schools normally do not want to admit ethnic minority students → lack of experience
- Teachers report stress from frequent policy changes and lack training to address student diversity
- Lack of funding from Education Bureau to implement cultural integration, design teaching materials for NCS students, hire specialist and implement training etc

• Language barriers and acculturation processes exacerbate their academic, emotional and social development challenges and limit their access to programs

93.2% principals expressed difficulties in employing teachers with related teaching skills for Chinese as a second language

Over 90% teachers expressed that the Education Bureau does not provide special supporting measures or guidance in communicating with non-Chinese speaking

parents and promoting cultural integration.

Hong Kong's Unique EM Context



"Chinese students never spoke to us, and we never spoke to them. It was like an invisible separation."

74.8% teachers expressed that they encounter greater difficulties in catering for the learning differences between Chinese and non-Chinese speaking students at the same time.

Failed Multicultural Policies: Beyond Language

Colonial legacies Monocultural Education

- South Asian communities (e.g., Indians, Nepalis) Chinese language education (CLE) prioritizes assimilation over integration. arrived under British rule for military/administrative EM students fluent in Cantonese still face exclusion due to symbolic violence roles, creating a "permanent outsider" status. (Bourdieu): Local cultural capital (e.g., knowledge of traditions, social networks)
 - **Legal Exclusion**
- Foreign domestic helpers denied permanent residency despite long-term residence; family reunification restricted.
- EM identities shaped by metic (resident alien) . status, not immigrant integration.
- remains inaccessible. **Social Psychology of Exclusion**
- Ingroup/Outgroup Dynamics: EM students internalize "foreigner" labels despite local birth/language skills.
 - Habitus Mismatch: EM students' cultural practices (e.g., religion, dress) clash with dominant Han-Chinese norms, limiting social capital accumulation.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Redefining EM Identity: A Bourdieusian Approach

Capital Deficits

- · Linguistic Capital: CLE policies fail to recognize EM students as second-language learners, denying tailored pedagogy.
- Cultural Capital: Local curricula erase EM histories (e.g., colonial contributions), reinforcing "otherness."

Habitus & Identity

EM students occupy an "in-between" habitus

- Disconnected from ancestral homelands (lack) of "authentic" cultural ties).
- · Excluded from local identity due to racialized stereotypes (e.g., "South Asians = low-status").



Hybrid Model

Integrate Top-down (policies provide framework) + Bottom-up (teachers adapt strategies) approach



Implement DEI

- · Systematically implement diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in curricula
- Social and cultural activities



More Training

Develop culturally responsive training programs to bridge the gap between policy and classroom reality



Increase Subsidy

- Teaching materials & trainings
- Add specialist/teaching post to support NCS students
- · Cultural exchange



Increase familial support

· Increase parent-school communication



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Help Adapt to New Learning Environments

 Local Kindergarten or Summer Bridging Programme to help adapt

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