

Perspectives of Teachers on the Implementation of Inclusive Education for Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Although there has been an increase in the number of local studies targeting ethnic minorities in the last decade in Hong Kong, research which is centred on educational support and services with respect to inclusive education is still lacking while there is, therefore, a research gap that the perspective of teachers is also missing. The perspective of teachers is the focus of this research because they are the front line service providers and key change agents. The objective of this study is to investigate teachers' perceptions of the inclusion of ethnic minority students within the education system and how this may be better achieved via educational support and services. The study concludes that most of the participants hold a broad definition of inclusive education and are positive about the inclusion of ethnic minority students. However, based on their experiences, they hold a negative view of the chance of successful implementation of the inclusive education policy of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. They believe that there should be more appropriate teacher training on curriculum differentiation and classroom management for inclusive classes, promotion of small class teaching in mainstream schools, school-based home school partnership policy and support groups, more experience-sharing among the teachers of different schools, better collaboration with local communities and, most importantly, improved consultation with and greater engagement of teachers.

Introduction

In Hong Kong, there is no multicultural education policy, at least partly because "the term multiculturalism is not often used in Hong Kong because Hong Kong is a predominantly Chinese community" (Mallozzi & Malloy, 2007:432). This is quite similar to Singapore, which is a multicultural nation, but in which "multicultural education is not a phrase used. Instead, multiculturalism is realized through the bilingual education policy" (Bokhorst-Heng, 2007:638). When educational issues concerning ethnic minorities are discussed in Hong Kong, the concept of inclusive education is generally applied (Heung, 2006). Even so, inclusive education of ethnic minorities has been afforded little emphasis in local educational policy and research, nor been a topic of significant discussion among education professionals in Hong Kong.

Studies of the educational concerns of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong have been undertaken in recent years, addressing issues such as language barriers and education needs (Yuen, 2007), emotional and behavioral issues for ethnic minority students (Heung, 2006), education of South Asian ethnic minority groups (Ku et al., 2005), inequality faced by ethnic minority students in the educational system (Aubourg, 2005; Loper, 2004; Unison Hong Kong, 2002), and *school life adaptation of school-age ethnic minorities* (Unison Hong Kong, 2001; YMMSS, 2000). Previous studies focussed on revealing the challenges faced by minority ethnic groups at different stages of the education system in Hong Kong in the areas of access to educational opportunities, educational provisions and curriculum design. All of these are interrelated and inter-affected but the challenges faced by teachers in providing education for ethnic minority students were rarely discussed before. The perspective of teachers is the focus of this study because they are the front line service providers and key change agents.

Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong Education System

According to the 'Thematic Report — Ethnic Minorities' published by the Census and Statistics Department in December 2002, the term ethnic minority applies to people of non-Chinese ethnicity in Hong Kong. 'Ethnic minorities' is the term used by government departments and non-government organizations (NGOs) in Hong Kong (e.g. C&SD, 2002, 2007, 2009; HKSARG, 2000, 2001, 2008; YMMSS, 2000, 2002). Ethnic minorities may include Caucasians who are English-speaking (C&SD, 2002) but are more often used to refer to South Asians (Ku et al., 2005; Loper, 2004; Sung, 2005; YMMSS, 2000, 2002). "As far as EMB¹ is concerned, children of ethnic minorities generally refer to South Asian children who are residing in Hong Kong" (Legislative Council Secretariat, 2007:1). Ethnic minority students are thus the students of non-Chinese ethnicity.

On the other hand, as interpreted by the Education Bureau (EDB), non-Chinese speaking (NCS) students are also referred to as ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. NCS students are students whose mother tongue is not Chinese and do not possess the necessary level of Chinese for everyday communication. In this study, the terms ethnic minority students and NCS students are interchangeable. As shown in Table 1, among the population undertaking full time study in primary, secondary and tertiary education in Hong Kong, there were 1,245,809 (97.75%) Chinese students and 28,722 (2.25%) ethnic minority students. These were South Asians (including Filipinos, Indonesians, Nepalese, Vietnamese, Thais, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sri-Lankans, Indians), other Asians (Korean and Japanese), Westerners (British, Americans, Canadians), mixed and others.

Table 1: Hong Kong Resident Population Studying Full Time in HK by Ethnicity in 2006

Ethnicity	2006	
	Number	% of total
Chinese	1,245,809	97.75
Filipino	2,194	0.17
Indonesian	211	0.02
Japanese	2,542	0.20
Nepalese	2,344	0.18
Thai	357	0.03
Indian	3,329	0.26
Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Sri-Lankan	3,434	0.27
Vietnamese	312	0.02
Korean	1,033	0.08
Other Asian	291	0.02
White	5,079	0.40
Black	72	0.01
Mixed	7,343	0.58
Others	181	0.01
Total	1,274,531	100.00

Source: 2006 Population By-census Office, Census and Statistics Department, Last review date: 22 February, 2007

Placement Arrangement : In Hong Kong, the educational system can be categorized into four types of school: designated school, mainstream school, designated class in mainstream school and others.

Designated School : Schools which have enrolled significant numbers of NCS children are invited to join the growing number of designated schools, which are provided with focused support for learning and teaching, especially with respect to Chinese language studies. There are now over 20 of such schools, with the majority in the primary sector. The number is expected to increase in the near future (EDB, 2008).

Mainstream School : The Government has introduced an Initiation Programme, which is available to newly-arrived NCS students. This is full-time of six-months' duration, and provides appropriate and timely support educational and community integration. For those using the Government's placement service for direct entry into mainstream schools, a 60-hour Induction Programme is provided through commissioned non-governmental organizations (NGOs) via an additional grant through School-based Support Scheme (SBSS) programmes (EDB, 2008).

Designated Class : Those NCS students taking advantage of the above provisions are said to be attending 'designated class'. The Initiation Programme thus provides a form

of classroom experience that aims to increase students' competency in both Chinese and English language, as well as helping with adjustment issues and fostering personal development. After completion of the programme, the students are assisted with placement into a mainstream school.

Others : The SBSS Grant scheme mentioned above can be accessed by all public sector schools to support the admission and assistance to eligible NCS students. A variety of access pathways is available, so that parents of NCS children can either approach a school directly, or work through a Regional Education Office or the Placement and Support Section of the EDB. Again, the SBSS grants are used for language and learning purposes, principally through the provision of Chinese or English language tutorials.

The government's supportive mechanisms have been designed for the ethnic minority students as a group, the South Asians, without consideration of inter-ethnic differences, their diverse culture and needs. Statistics (HKSARG, 2000, 2001; C&SD, 2002) have shown that there are basic differences in age structure, education attainment, occupation, income, and language competence among the minority groups. The EDB seems to identify language as the single major barrier to their achievement. This suggests that their supportive mechanisms may be limited in scope. In order to formulate plans that can better cater for them, studies on the educational needs and barriers to achievement of separate ethnic groups are required.

Inclusion of Ethnic Minority Students in Hong Kong

As mentioned at the introduction of this paper, previous studies focussed on revealing the challenges faced by minority ethnic groups at different stages of the education system in Hong Kong in the areas of access to educational opportunities, educational provisions and curriculum design. All of these are interrelated and inter-affected. The challenges faced by ethnic minority students, identified by the above and other studies, will now be discussed.

Public Acceptance and Perception : Two recent surveys have examined the degree of public acceptance of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. The first was reported by Chan and Wong (2005), who surveyed 512 Hong Kong residents. A major finding was that over 60 per cent believed that ethnic minorities are negatively perceived by Hong Kong people. Notwithstanding this, about 80 per cent of respondents agreed that equal educational opportunities should be provided for ethnic minorities. For respondents with children in schools with ethnic minority students, though, around a quarter disagreed with the statement. Given this, it seems apparent that there is a level of discriminatory attitude exhibited by the Hong Kong population with respect to the education of ethnic minority students. That is, while supporting equal opportunity principles, they are unsupportive of integrating ethnic minority students with their own children in school. This attitude of parents clearly has the potential to undermine

efforts towards the integration of ethnic minority students through educational opportunities (Chan & Wong, 2005).

Continuing this finding, it was found that those with a higher level of attainment in education were more aware of negative perceptions and the serious nature of the racial discrimination displayed by Hong Kong people towards ethnic minorities. Furthermore, they also tended to have more positive perceptions of ethnic minorities in general. With respect to age-related findings, older persons tended to be less aware of negative attitudes and racial discrimination, and held more positive attitudes towards ethnic minorities, though they were less supportive of affirmative action. Statistically significant positive correlations were also found between the perceptions of Hong Kong people with respect to attitude and acquaintance with ethnic minorities. That is, those who have more interaction with ethnic minorities have more positive perceptions of them, and vice versa (Chan & Wong, 2005).

In 2008, the Census and Statistics Department conducted an extensive survey of 10,000 households (a response rate of 75 per cent) in Hong Kong concerning racial acceptance. Randomly selected participants were interviewed about their level of acceptance of ethnic groups under a range of roles (such as service providers, parents, neighbours and employers). The interviews also sought to find the levels of awareness of existing channels for the promotion of racial acceptance and current efforts on the eradication of racial discrimination. Essentially, as over 95 per cent of interviewees were Chinese, the report provided evidence of the attitudes of Hong Kong's Chinese population towards racial acceptance (C&SD, 2009).

As parents, over 80 per cent of interviewees aged 15 and over considered it 'very acceptable / quite acceptable' to send their children to a prestigious school where most students were Chinese, Caucasian or Japanese / Korean. When the proviso was for a prestigious school with most students from other ethnic groups², the responses rating it 'very acceptable / quite acceptable' ranged from 55.5 per cent to 66.8 per cent. Awareness of the means of promotion of racial acceptance, along with efforts to eradicate racial discrimination was mixed, with over half (52.8%) of the Chinese interviewees aware of the use of radio and television. The percentage dropped significantly for other channels of communication, with awareness of the role of newspapers and magazines at just over a quarter (26.4%), "services, including hotline and complaint handling by Government departments" (19.4%), the role of schools and teachers (12.6%), the use of leaflets and pamphlets (11.4%) and "advertisements in MTR / buses" (10.8%) (C&SD, 2009).

Language Policy : "Exclusion from educational opportunities is one of the main factors leading to poverty among ethnic minorities. Exclusion results from many causes. For example, students who do not have sufficient command of the local language to perform well academically may find that their poor academic performance limits their chances of advanced education" (Oxfam, 2004). In the U.S., "the educational task of

becoming American is viewed as a matter of becoming English speaking" (Olsen, 1997:91). Hong Kong is facing a similar situation, relating to the speaking of Chinese/Cantonese. According to Chan and Wong (2005), there are four major difficulties that ethnic minorities face in their daily life, these being language (contributing 23.8%); communication/integration with majority (21.7%); living habit (11.9%) and others (10.9%) (Chan & Wong, 2005). This concurs with the findings of another Hong Kong survey (Aubourg, 2005) which reported that the majority (over 80 per cent) of ethnic minority parents believed that language barriers precluded them sending their children to Chinese schools. As Chinese was not taught as a second language, this made integration too difficult and reduced career prospects.

English was the medium of instruction until 1997, when the Education Department introduced the requirement to use Chinese as the Medium of Instruction (CMI) in the majority of secondary schools. The purpose of this change was to arrest the decline in the standard of Chinese. The outcome of this mother tongue teaching policy is that only 114 secondary schools are permitted to use English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI). Ethnic minority students who do not read and write Chinese thus have fewer choices of school (Aubourg, 2005).

Another outcome of this policy is that many ethnic minority children are forced to attend International Schools, which for many are prohibitively expensive. Some of such schools (e.g. English Schools Foundation) are subsidized by the Hong Kong Government, but fees still reach up to around HK\$78,000 (US\$10,000) per year. Many ethnic minority children speak Cantonese fluently, but are often unable to write Chinese, thus rendering them unable to sit public examinations. A marginalizing effect results, with not enough places in the public school system for ethnic minority students (Aubourg, 2005).

Another effect, reported by Loper (2004) is that significant numbers of ethnic minority students end up in the lowest band (Band 3) schools that offer language classes in their first language, such as Hindi or Urdu. Examples include the Sir Ellis Kadoorie Secondary School, with a student population dominated by Indian (38 per cent) and Pakistani (41 per cent) students. Loper (2004) also reports claims by the S.S. Guru Gobind Singh Ji Educational Trust that nearly all (90 per cent) of Punjabi (Indian) students attend such schools in Hong Kong.

Aubourg (2005) reports that language differences and consequent difficulties are at least partly responsible for seemingly lower standards within schools catering for ethnic minority students, with poor public examination results, communication difficulties between teachers and parents, coupled with a lack of professional development for teachers with respect to multicultural classrooms. None of this is surprising, given the key contribution of language in society and educational success. Discussion of educational integration is often in tandem with consideration of language education, so that consideration of the education of ethnic minorities tending to focus on language

learning (Yuen, 2007).

Integration Education Policy : The above-mentioned School-based Support Scheme (SBSS) has been available since 2000, and provides support services that match those given to new arrivals from mainland China. The block grants of HK\$2,750 per primary student and HK\$4,080 per secondary student are the product of Government policy targeted at integration education. This is also a focus of the earlier-mentioned Induction and Initiation Programmes to support the educational integration of NCS children who have never studied in Hong Kong (Sung, 2005).

The implementation of policy has had some seemingly negative outcomes, with Ku et al. (2005) reporting that over half of the ethnic minority students believing that their educational opportunities are less than those of local Hong Kong students. As the system changed, ethnic minority students no longer enjoyed first round placement in the allocation to NCS schools. Further, under EDB direction concerning integration education, seven NCS directly subsidized primary schools cancelled classes for ethnic minority students. Disappointed parents looked for alternatives, such as considering home study, sending their children to private primary schools or making application again in the following year. The impression gained by some groups was that the choice of schooling had been limited, rather than expanded or improved (Sung, 2005).

Segregation of Communities : The apparent segregation of communities has led to the expression of significant concerns.

"The central allocation system assigns ethnic minority candidates who do not speak Chinese exclusively to the schools traditionally accepting ethnic minority pupils, thus creating a dual system of separate communities. Clearly, there are few opportunities for Chinese children to come into contact with ethnic minorities as peers, and vice versa. Many of the ethnic minority youth in Hong Kong have few Chinese friends. This lack of interaction may worsen prejudices. The rejection of and discrimination against ethnic minority youth may seriously make vulnerable their formation of identity and affect their later growth" (Aubourg, 2005:14).

In Yuen's (2007) study on the barriers to achievement of Nepalese students in Hong Kong, she concludes that Nepalese students who study with local children seem to be better integrated, although they seem to prefer their own ethnic groups and there are reports of discrimination. In some schools, she finds that Nepalese students as well as students from other ethnic origins are semi-segregated by having an English stream specially created for them. In schools that cater mainly for ethnic minorities, they are segregated from the local pupils. The segregated arrangements may affect their integration into society in the long term, and constrain their opportunity to use Chinese (Yuen, 2007).

Concluding Remarks : There are a number of limitations with respect to existing literature concerning the education of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. First, the issue is under-researched. Second, there have been significant changes during the last few years, and some findings identified in earlier studies may no longer be relevant, and need to be brought up-to-date. For example, students' access to schools (Loper, 2004) may have improved since the formal opening of the new system.

Third, the focus of most local research has been on students in secondary schools (e.g. YMMSS, 2002; Loper, 2004; Unison Hong Kong, 2001). Many ethnic minority students begin their education in primary school, and little investigation has been done at this level.

The government's supportive mechanisms have been designed for the ethnic minority students as a group, the South Asians, without consideration of inter-ethnic differences, their diverse culture and needs. Statistics (HKSARG, 2000, 2001; C&SD, 2002) have shown that there are basic differences in age structure, education attainment, occupation, income, and language competence among the minority groups. In order to formulate plans that can better cater for them, studies on the educational needs and barriers to achievement of separate ethnic groups are required.

Fifth, although people generally supported that equal educational opportunities should be provided for ethnic minorities, they are not supportive of integrating ethnic minority students with their own children in school (Chan and Wong, 2005). This discriminatory attitude of parents has the potential to undermine efforts of inclusive education of ethnic minority students through educational opportunities.

Sixth, according to international literature, ethnic minority students encounter various barriers in their school achievement, but in Hong Kong, the EDB seems to identify language as the single major barrier to their achievement. This suggests that their supportive mechanisms may be limited in scope. Finally, very few local researches such as Yuen's study (2007) has studied the schools' strategies to support these students from the teachers' perspectives.

Research Methodology

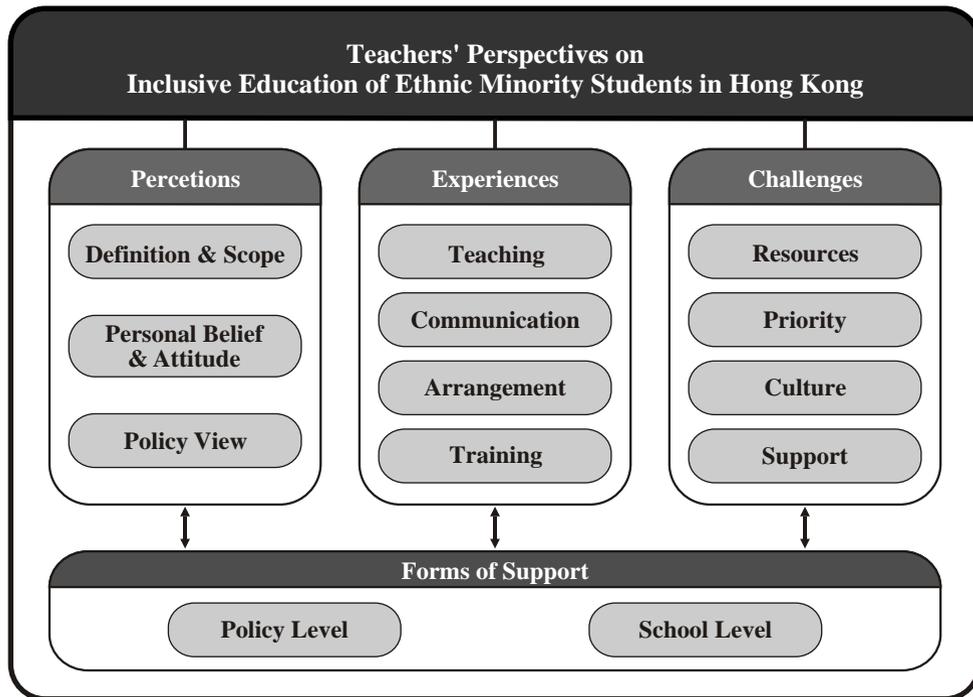
This study employed Grounded Theory method and was a qualitative study, analyzing the data collected from 20 in-depth individual interviews with teachers who had experience with ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. These teachers were from various types of schools: designated and non-designated, primary and secondary. Three quarters of them were teaching in mainstream schools, and one quarter teaching in designated schools. Over half (65%) were teaching in primary schools, with the remaining 35 per cent in secondary schools. A quarter of the teachers had experienced inclusive education training organized by the EDB.

The research study focused on creating conceptual frameworks through applying inductive analysis to the data. The collected interview data were coded into 'text units', comprising at most a few sentences, expressing a particular view. The transcripts were further content-analyzed. This analysis of comments and views led to the development of an analytical framework. This framework, made up of categories and sub-categories, was thus directly derived from the interview data. It underwent several iterations of modification and revision to ensure that it reflected an accurate and comprehensive coverage of the expressed views.

Achieved Analytical Framework : Challenges Facing the Teachers

After coding the collected interview data, an analytical framework of teachers' perspectives on inclusive education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong consisting of themes, categories, and sub-categories was achieved. The framework was revised and the categories were re-arranged several times in order to reflect a comprehensive coverage of all the various views expressed during the interviews with teachers. As shown in Chart 1 below, the framework consists of four main themes: Perceptions, Experiences, Challenges and recommended Forms of Support. Depending on the depth and breadth of details provided by respondents, the themes were further broken down to the category and sub-category levels.

Chart 1: Framework of Teachers' Perspectives on Inclusive Education of Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong

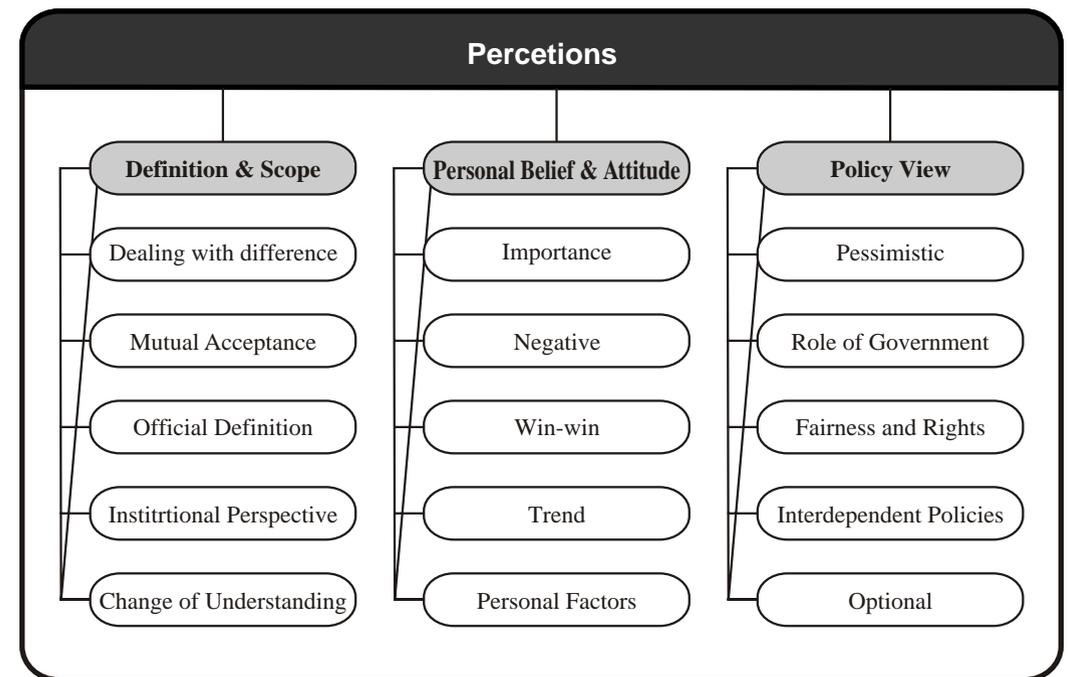


Essentially, the logic of the framework is that teachers in Hong Kong have a range of perspectives of inclusive education, based on their individual perceptions, which are in turn shaped by their experiences. These perceptions and experiences allow them to identify a number of challenges facing inclusive education in general and the teaching of ethnic minority students in particular. Given this level of understanding of inclusive education, teachers find themselves in a position to make what they believe are informed recommendations with respect to the forms of support that are needed to improve the education of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. Furthermore, it is a two-way process, as indicated by the double-headed arrows in the framework chart. This means, for example, that teacher perceptions influence recommended forms of support and, conversely, existing forms of support can affect teacher perceptions. Similarly, the accumulation of experience introduces the participants to fresh challenges, just as challenges themselves add to the teachers' experience.

Perception

The theme of Perception was shown to consist of three categories: Definition & Scope, Personal Belief & Attitude, and Policy View. For each category, three sub-categories were identified, as shown in Chart 2: dealing with difference, mutual acceptance, official definition, institutional perspective and change of understanding.

Chart 2: Perception Theme



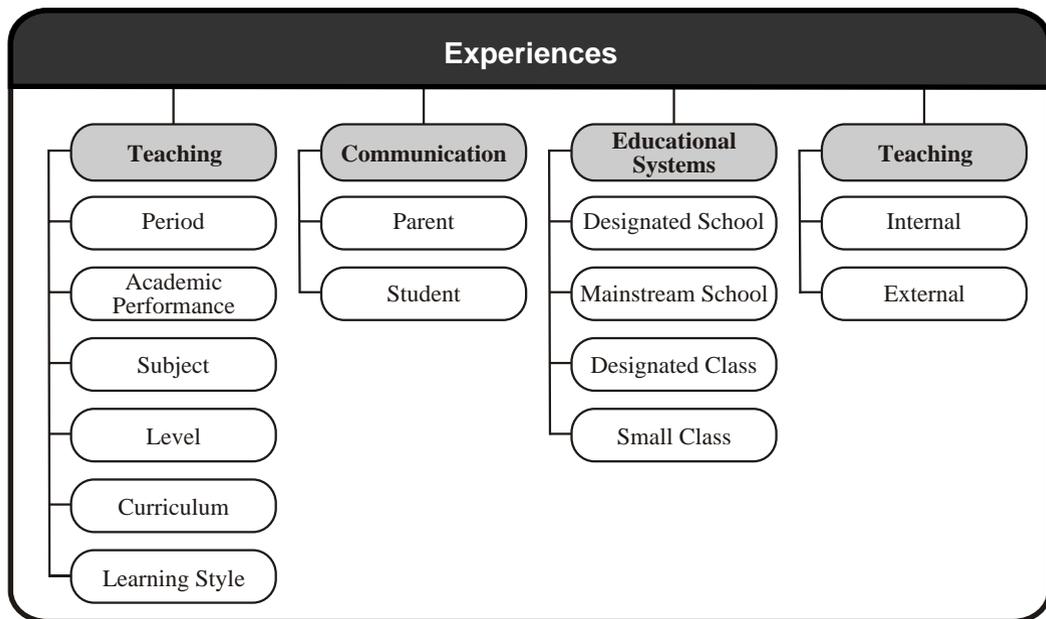
The perceptions of teachers towards the inclusive education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong are dynamic, rather than static. Most of the participants held a broad definition of inclusive education and thought that inclusive education policies should include ethnic minority students. However, most of them held a negative view on the chance of successful implementation of the inclusive education policy of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. The following concerns were expressed by teachers during the interview process: the practical realities of inclusive education; unsuccessful experiences in mainstream schools; and funding and resources (some teachers did not trust schools to spend money devolved to them for the intended purpose).

Most of participants did not agree that the policy of inclusive education of ethnic minority students was highly supported and strongly promoted by the Government or EDB. Nevertheless, most participants showed positive attitudes and beliefs toward the inclusive education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong.

Experiences

The theme of Experiences was divided into four categories: Teaching, Communication, Arrangement, and Training. For each category, a number of sub-categories were further determined, as shown in Chart 3.

Chart 3: Experiences Theme



The experiences of teachers with the inclusive education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong are also dynamic. Somewhat at odds with the evidence of previous research in other contexts, participants with longer teaching experience are

more supportive of inclusive education policy.

However, they found it difficult to improve the underachievement in academic performance of ethnic minority students because the current curriculum did not address the needs of these students from disadvantaged backgrounds and did not focus sufficiently on raising achievement. Nearly all participants shared a concern for maintaining existing academic standards for all students. However, given the tight timetable and curriculum syllabus, very few attempted to tailor the curriculum to the diverse needs of the students and, of those who did, their strategy was to reduce the quantity of curriculum materials.

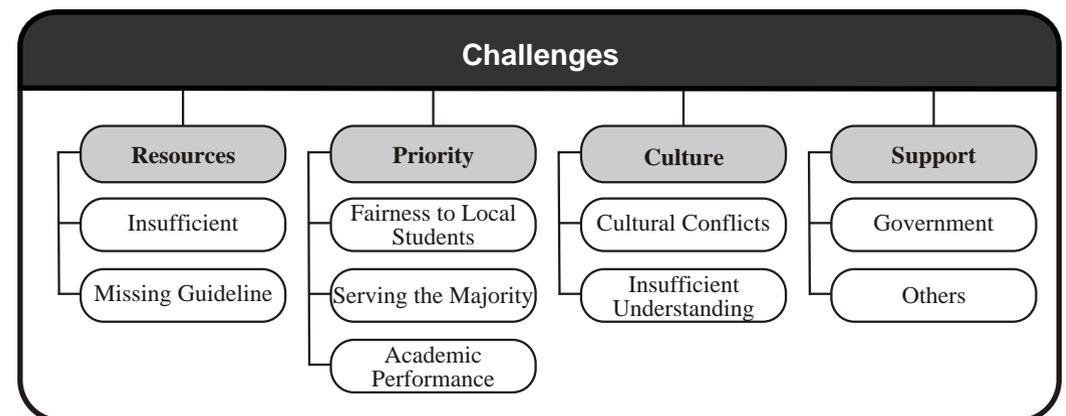
Some participants thought the students created the learning barriers themselves. Other participants focused on their parents, believing that they did not support their children in learning Chinese and hence such students could not follow the daily lessons in mainstream schools. Moreover, the local teachers and students do not understand the learning styles of ethnic minority students and thus the teaching and learning experiences of ethnic minority students are negatively affected.

According to the participants, to balance the trade-off between achieving high academic performance and successful inclusive education, the preferred option is a designated class or small class teaching in mainstream schools, as their experience of such arrangements was positive. Moreover, the participants indicated that without in-service and pre-service teacher education on curriculum differentiation and the delivery of the curriculum to all students, they would have found it very difficult to teach the inclusive class with ethnic minority students at the beginning.

Challenges

The theme of Challenges was deemed to consist of four categories: Resources, Priority, Culture, and Support. Under each category, further sub-categories were identified, as shown in Chart 4.

Chart 4: Challenges Theme



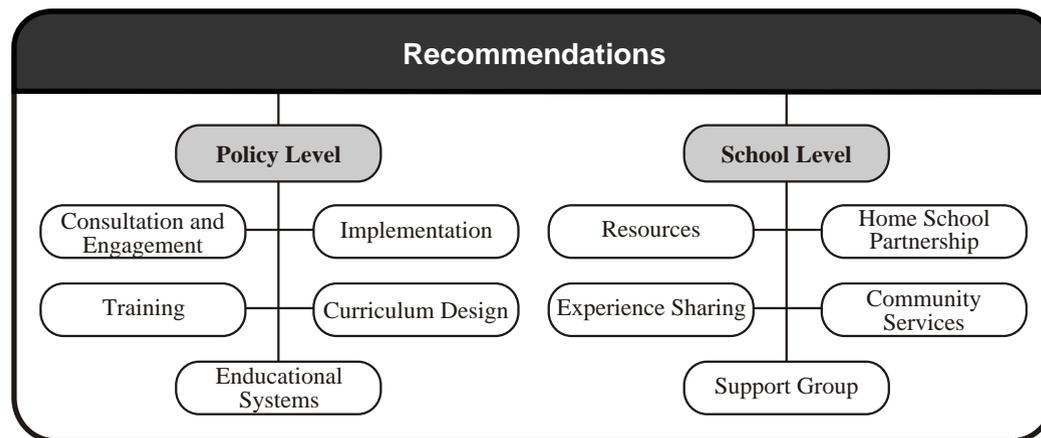
The challenges faced by the teachers relating to the inclusive education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong are quite similar for all those teaching in mainstream schools, irrespective of the school setting arrangements. They believed that their schools could not enjoy government funding via the School-based Support Scheme, even though the resources were insufficient in their schools. As for the participants teaching in designated schools, they thought the guidelines for using the funding were insufficiently clear.

Some participants expressed that there was an inherent dilemma between the government and school expectation of inclusive education and academic performance. Moreover, different values on academic performance and school discipline among the schools and students and parents comprised the main cultural conflicts expressed by the participants. Insufficient understanding about the cultures of ethnic minorities negatively affected the teaching experiences of teachers and learning experiences of students.

Recommended Forms of Support

The theme of Forms of Support was found to consist of two categories: Policy Level and School Level. For each category, further sub-categories were identified, as shown in Chart 5.

Chart 5: Recommendations Theme



The forms of support perceived as needed by teachers to support the inclusion of ethnic minority students within the education system are grouped at policy and school levels.

At policy level, to provide proper forms of support, consultation and teacher engagement in policy formulation and planning implementation details are crucial, because teachers are the key change agents. This recognition of the central role of

teachers was a prime motivator for the explorations in this study.

In addition, initial teacher education is crucially important in familiarizing new entrants to the profession with the nature of inclusive education, and in providing them with relevant skills for teaching ethnic minority students in mainstream schools. Limited access to appropriate training has often resulted in the perpetuation of negative perceptions towards ethnic minority students. Newly qualified teachers require at least a basic understanding of inclusive education of ethnic minority students. This lays the foundations for good practice on which later generations can build and provides a critical mass of young teachers who have understanding and experiences of inclusive practice with ethnic minority students. Teacher education on general principles of curriculum differentiation and delivery should aim to help teachers identify the essential features of curriculum items in order to facilitate the learning of these features into manageable steps for inclusive classes.

It is also important to reach principals in mainstream schools, since their active leadership and support are essential to the achievement of change along inclusive lines. Although different arrangements in school settings have their advantages and disadvantages, small class teaching is the preferred arrangement to meet the learning needs of ethnic minority students and local students; to improve the quality of inclusive education; and to balance the trade-off between the expectation on academic performance and the implementation of inclusive education.

At school level, apart from funding to designated schools, mainstream schools should also be sponsored to increase additional resources for ethnic minority students. Such resources can be used to provide Chinese language tutorial services and employ teaching assistants who are also ethnic minorities but can speak Cantonese fluently and read and write Chinese. These assistants can help with communication among the schools, students and parents.

Local students can also be taken as a resource. Study groups and mentorship programmes should be introduced. Inclusive education is about all students, not just a few. It involves changing the culture of the school to ensure access and participation for all students currently in the school and also for others who are now in segregated provision but who may be joining the school in the future.

Moreover, home school partnership should be promoted. It is sometimes claimed that attempts to bring parents and teachers together will not work for the poorest families, those who have literacy difficulties themselves or those whose first language is not Cantonese/Chinese. During the interviews, participants usually blamed the parents failing to ensure that children do their homework and do not roam the streets. Due to different composition of the family backgrounds of students, every school needs its own home school partnership policy and includes concrete proposals for achieving better working relationship with parents.

"No school is an island and no school can succeed without developing networks of partnerships with its local community, with parents, past, present and future and with other schools and other agencies." (Mittler, 2000:178) Apart from parents, effective partnerships among teachers within the same school can be introduced in the form of support groups, while teachers from other schools can share their experiences, and the expertise of local communities should not be neglected.

Conclusion

The findings and conclusions presented in the analysis and discussions reveal that teachers, although generally positive about inclusive education, do not display a shared approach to inclusive education. This study also reveals that the evidence regarding the factors affecting the perceptions are inconsistent and none of them emerges as a single strong predictor of the perceptions of teachers. What can be reasonably concluded from the study is that increases in resources and support would impact positively on the perceptions of teachers.

Both pre- and in-service teacher training must also be priorities. It seems clear that teacher commitment and effectiveness will increase through the mastery of required teaching skills in the implementation of inclusive education. In similar vein, another conclusion is that although most teachers might initially resist an innovative policy, as skills and experience in implementing the policy are developed, they eventually become more supportive because of their success.

Fundamentally, inclusive education implies that all teachers are responsible for the education of all kinds of students. In this task, the teachers are entitled to expect and to receive appropriate preparation in initial teacher education and continuing professional development throughout their careers. They also deserve support from their schools, principals and the Government, as well as from the external support services to the school. This should be clearly expressed in the school development plan and the inclusion education policy for ethnic minority students.

Notes

1. Education and Manpower Bureau (EMB) was re-organised as Education Bureau (EDB) in 2007.
2. Including Indonesian / Malaysian / Filipino; Thai / Vietnamese / Cambodian; African; Indian / Pakistani / Bangladeshi / Nepalese and Arabian.

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