

EdUHK Forum on Inclusive and Equitable Education for All in Hong Kong

Briefing Paper No. 1

The Education University of Hong Kong

October 2015



EdUHK UNESCO Chair
Minorities Project

Summary

Minority language students face a number of challenges from the current education system. Whilst the number of minority language students, including South Asians (e.g. Pakistani, Nepalese and Indian) and Southeast Asians (e.g. Filipino, Thai, Indonesian) attending school full-time in Hong Kong has increased since 1997, the number of schools offering English as a medium of instruction has reduced.

Many minority language students attend government schools where Cantonese is the medium of instruction or attend schools (formerly known as “designated” schools) where they are streamed into English-medium of instruction classes. Provision for learning Cantonese as a second language at such schools is often limited. This places minority language students at a disadvantage when applying for jobs and higher education (academic and vocational) in Hong Kong.

This forum series was developed by the EdUHK as a way for stakeholders to meet to discuss how education can be improved for minority language students and the role of the University as the trainer of many of Hong Kong’s teachers.

This series of Briefing Papers presents the findings of these Forums.

Inclusive and Equitable Education for All in Hong Kong: Briefing Papers Series
Editors: Bob Adamson and Will Douglas (Education University of Hong Kong)

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Views expressed are those of the authors.

Prioritization of issues relating to the education of minority language students in Hong Kong

Introduction

This Forum is the first in a proposed series organized by the UNESCO Chair in TVET and Lifelong learning of the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK). It was co-organised with the EdUHK Centre for Governance and Citizenship and Yew Chung Community College. It took place on 30th October 2015 at the EdUHK.

One key area was the role of the EdUHK in enhancing pre-service and in-service teachers' cultural sensitivity and competence in handling classes of students with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

The Forum brought together fifteen relevant stakeholders and specialists from the EdUHK and minority and concern groups.

The Forum began with a keynote presentation by Professor Kerry Kennedy (EdUHK).

Background

The number of minority language students, including South Asians (e.g. Pakistani, Nepalese and Indian) and Southeast Asians (e.g. Filipino, Thai, Indonesian) attending school full-time in Hong Kong has increased since 1997. However, minority language students face a number of challenges from the current education system, including access and language barriers. For instance, the number of schools offering English as a medium of instruction has reduced.

Many minority language students who do not have the socioeconomic means to attend private international schools instead attend government schools where Cantonese is the medium of instruction or attend schools with large concentrations of ethnic minority students. Provisions for learning Cantonese as a second language at such schools are limited. Despite the introduction of the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework by the Education Bureau in 2014, there are concerns that minority language students do not have enough language support to achieve sufficient levels of Cantonese. This places these students at a disadvantage when applying for jobs and higher education (academic and vocational) courses in Hong Kong, which frequently require a high level of Cantonese.

Aside from Cantonese language proficiency, there are also concerns that these students are further disadvantaged by institutional factors, such as having separate classes from Chinese students. There are also reports of students facing discrimination, feeling isolated and high drop-out rates.

This forum therefore sought to uncover the main concerns surrounding minorities, particularly in education, not only in policy and practice, but in teacher education. Given the Education University of Hong Kong's focus upon teacher training, the forum was a means through which these issues could begin to be addressed, and subsequently feed into teacher education at the University.

Outcomes

Topics of discussion in the forum focused around language policies in Hong Kong, the need for a policy on multiculturalism by the government, teacher training and sensitivity, and recognition of children's right to education. Areas of consensus amongst the group included the importance of involving the community, embedding diversity within the curriculum, the need for positive student role models, and for greater attention to be paid to students failing. Informal education, such as through sports, was also suggested as a means of boosting interaction and language skills.

Moving forward, the group suggested the need for similar forums in the future with more stakeholders, including the Education Bureau, along with further research investigating factors affecting education for ethnic minority students. This report begins with key points from Professor Kerry Kennedy's keynote presentation, before moving on to key areas of consensus amongst participants.

Keynote presentation

Prof. Kerry Kennedy, Director of the Centre for Governance and Citizenship, the Education University of Hong Kong

Key points:

- Universities can contribute to the area of ethnic minority education by bringing together research and advocacy, particularly when researchers have a commitment to social justice and equity. This can have an impact on the way that we live and work together.
- There are two ways of exploring issues facing ethnic minority students – looking at students in school and those out of school
- For students in school, policy has tended to focus on Chinese Language education. However research has identified that there are problems not only with Chinese Language education but also with school policy, school practices and schooling processes. There are also ‘move on’ policies where ethnic minority students who do not achieve certain grades are then moved on to other schools, and if they do not achieve certain grades at their next school, they can also be moved on again. These ‘move on’ policies can be quite destructive on the education of young people.
- Ethnic minority students in school often report being more harshly treated (from their perspectives) and punished more by teachers. Many students feel quite isolated and neglected, often because of the way they are allowed to fail. One concern is that students who are dissatisfied with school leave early to start work.
- Schools often find it very difficult to liaise with ethnic minority parents. Despite efforts from the Education Bureau and many committed teachers, many educators do not understand the specific problems facing ethnic minority students, such as why long working hours at a construction site may prevent a father from attending parental meetings.
- Schools and students are embedded in social and institutional contexts. It is crucial to understand how these contexts influence schools and students.
- The first very large institutional context is that ethnic minorities in Hong Kong in general are neither immigrants nor citizens. The term “immigrant” in education policy literature is only applied to immigrants from China and is never applied to ethnic minorities in Hong Kong except when they are illegal, at which point they are then called illegal immigrants.
- The second major institutional context is that multiculturalism is missing from Hong Kong’s policy discourse. The Education Bureau

mentions inclusion, but there is the need to first recognize diversity as a basis for policy on inclusion.

- The third institutional context is that racism is part of Hong Kong's social fabric

How do we move forward?

- Research in the area of ethnic minority education in Hong Kong is currently under theorised and we need a more sophisticated framework
- Researchers must stop essentialising 'ethnic minorities'; there are many differences between ethnic groups, however there are also enough commonalities amongst groups
- Recognising community, and communities. There is a very close set of connections between different communities, associations and groups, which offer a lot of support to ethnic minorities.
- Establishing research partnerships – with groups represented at the forum, so that we can do research *with* ethnic minority students, not *to* them. It may be that researchers identify different issues to what communities see. For instance, some research within communities show that they have more concerns with the labour market and job transitions, rather than education per se.

Key areas of consensus

Curriculum and policy

1. Curriculum relevance

How teachers could be guided to make curriculum more relevant for ethnic minority students was discussed. The advantages of the Hong Kong Diploma for Secondary Education (HKDSE) were extolled by Chura Bahadur Thapa, who had previously taught ethnic minority students. Chura commented upon how well designed the HKDSE is and the flexibility it offered for teachers. Despite this though, the HKDSE Chinese exam remains challenging for students and he believed there needed to be a separate curriculum and language assessment framework for ethnic minority students.

2. Embedding diversity in the curriculum

Chura mentioned that many schools have one-off ‘multicultural days’ where students wear traditional dress, but said that these practices were not considered knowledge in the classroom. There is therefore the need to embed diversity deeply into the curriculum, rather than just ‘showing’ culture through such displays. He also mentioned the various means through which teachers could use the curriculum for students from different communities, such as through movies and books, instead of relying solely on textbooks.

Jan Yumul, who formed a Filipino youth group, Section Juan, also mentioned the role of engaging consulates in developing cultural knowledge and understanding. She cited the Consulate of the Philippines as having tried to break stereotypes regarding domestic helpers and had organized a Hong Kong Philippine film festival, which had shown Filipino films and translated them into Chinese. Her youth group was also collaborating with the Consulate to arrange talks on Filipino culture and to write a book tracing Filipino history, particularly in Hong Kong. The role that other consulates could play in embedding diversity into school curriculum was discussed. Jan felt that consulates would help youth “have a three-dimensional way of looking at their own community”.

3. Revive institutional knowledge that has been lost

Schools such as Delia Memorial School were cited as having developed a lot of experience teaching ethnic minority students. Chura however expressed concern that many similar schools had begun developing specific knowledge and practices for ethnic minorities but that these were beginning to be lost with policy changes.

4. Ideology of assimilation

All participants shared concerns over a lack of multiculturalism in Hong Kong and the prevailing ideology of assimilation. Holing Yip, of UNISON, mentioned that Hong Kong’s educational policy aimed to make all students as similar as possible. Likewise, Chura raised concerns that the Education Bureau’s policy

referred numerous times to ‘migrating’ ethnic minority students into classes with mainstream Chinese students.

How best to address assimilation was discussed, along with the need to research other models that might promote the kind of multiculturalism that could be adapted and learnt from. Jan Yumul mentioned the importance of students maintaining and having a sense of pride over their ethnic identity, as well as being proud of being in Hong Kong, rather than forcing everyone to assimilate.

Many participants hoped that Hong Kong would embrace multiculturalism, but others such as Dr Victor Ng, of the Education University, mentioned that multiculturalism was seen to be less important in the public discourse, compared to other topics such as relations between Hong Kong and Mainland China. Holing concluded by asking if multiculturalism was not possible, what could be done within the current framework, without jeopardizing the ultimate goal of a diverse Hong Kong.

5. Affirmative action programmes

The need to explore affirmative action programmes was discussed, particularly ones that create consistent standards that allow opportunities for the diversity of individuals, rather than creating a ‘subclass’ or categorising some individuals as ‘lower’ in status.

Language

6. The issues around identity and language

The issues around identity and language were seen to be crucial by all participants, particularly with regards to parental choice for medium of instruction and schools. The rights of the child to their sense of identity, access to their own language and access to languages of power was agreed to be essential. All felt that children should have the right to access languages of power and high status, which includes English, Cantonese and Putonghua. Acknowledging the diversity of each child was key to Paul Tarrant, Chairman of the Yuen Long Minorities Parents’ Concern Group, who cautioned against the current approach of creating policies and teaching based upon fear.

Concerns that ethnic minority students were being pushed to learn Chinese and to attend schools using Chinese as their medium of instruction were discussed, particularly for primary schools, along with the difficulties many ethnic minority students face from learning in Chinese.

7. The lack of sophistication regarding language policies in Hong Kong

Participants in the forum referred to a lack of clarity and sophistication in language policies in Hong Kong. The need for biliteracy and trilingualism was emphasized, but that instead of aiming for total trilingualism, there should be a balance of languages to suit individual lifestyles, situations and experiences.

Holing in particular felt there had been a lack of a serious discussion in Hong Kong on the status of English, Cantonese and Putonghua. UNISON had observed that there is an expectation in Hong Kong that individuals know Cantonese and if they do not, they frequently miss out. Whilst Jan Gube, the research officer for Section Juan, believed that many ethnic minorities could be successful without knowing Cantonese or Putonghua and that other skills were more important, Deepen Nebhwani, an ethnic minority student, argued that that was only the case for well-established individuals.

There was discussion over how language policies should be implemented and how languages should be taught within schools, for instance over the use of Cantonese pinyin. Deepen Nebhwani cited the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages as one model to borrow from to enable students to be proficient at a particular language level.

Working with communities and parents

8. Working on ways to build engagement with local communities

This was mentioned throughout the forum, and reflected Professor Kennedy's point regarding establishing research partnerships with communities, so that research can be done with ethnic minorities rather than to them.

As Chura mentioned, this also means acknowledging the diversity within each community. He cited the Nepalese community as having very diverse views, expectations and beliefs, particularly about what language children should learn and what language to learn in.

9. Acknowledging the role of parents in the education pathways of their children

Paul Tarrant stated that before making educational changes, the government and schools should consult parents as to whether such changes are acceptable. He firmly believed in the right of the parent to such information and to choose their child's education. Many participants also agreed that there was little to no dissemination of information to parents and that better communication between schools and parents was necessary.

Phyllis Cheung, the director of UNISON, felt that many ethnic minority parents did not understand the Hong Kong education system well and many did not realise the importance of learning Cantonese. UNISON had conducted a lot of parent outreach and workshops to explain to parents about the different educational systems, as Phyllis felt that many did not realise that once a school had been chosen, a particular path had been set for their child and it would be hard to change. Jan Gube also agreed with this and argued parents needed to know what paths their children could follow afterwards, including possible career paths.

Student and teachers

10. Paying greater attention to students who are failing

This reflected Professor Kennedy's concern that poor records were kept in schools, particularly for students who had been 'moved on' from other schools. Participants agreed there was a need to ensure that every child received the kind of help that they require. One such help is providing encouragement to ethnic minority students who may have been separated into lower classes. Deepen mentioned at his previous school, students were categorised in A to D classes, with Class A and B students going on to further education whereas D class students having very low scores. Such students he said received little encouragement and were not told of the importance of learning.

11. Giving a voice to marginalised teachers

Dr Celeste Yuen, from the Education University, and Chura, both mentioned that many teachers of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong had difficult jobs, facing different student needs. Holing added that many teachers felt overwhelmed and overworked. All participants agreed on the importance of examining ethnic minority education from a classroom perspective, and to give a voice to marginalized teachers, particularly to those advocating for diversity within schools. Dr Manynooch Faming of Yew Chung Community College, mentioned that time constraints meant many teachers had to focus more on giving tests and exams, rather than teaching towards diversity.

12. Presenting and celebrating positive student role models

Dr Celeste Yuen commented that Deepen Nebhwani served as an excellent role model to other ethnic minority students. He spent nine years at a school with a high concentration of ethnic minority students, before moving to Diocesan Boys School (DBS). Deepen mentioned that at his previous school, he had little chance to interact with classmates from different nationalities, particularly local Chinese students. He felt that he had never understood the importance of learning, particularly of learning Putonghua, until he moved schools. Deepen suggested encouraging students to be involved at schools. He also mentioned the importance of helping to break glass ceilings that ethnic minority children are given, and to inspire them to value education and succeed. He felt this also included explaining different educational options to students and to give them the power to choose between such options

Dr Celeste Yuen agreed these steps were key to encouraging ethnic minority youth to have a future in Hong Kong. She had encountered ethnic minority students who were content with their life and felt that if they didn't have a future in Hong Kong, that they could go overseas. Yet she felt it was crucial for such children to be encouraged to nurture their specific talents and to create a future for them in Hong Kong, through Deepen's example.

13. Using informal education to break down barriers between ethnic minority and Chinese students

Sports were one such means discussed to help boost integration between ethnic minority and Chinese students and form friendships between different cultural groups. Holing Yip said that there were some institutional barriers to doing this, and that UNISON had initiated programs such as basketball, pen pal programs and marathons, which had varying degrees of success. A few participants mentioned how ethnic minority students tended to be isolated from Chinese students and that it was only after secondary school did students begin to have Chinese peers and so sports could provide a platform for students to meet after secondary school.

14. The role of the Education University to enhance teacher education and cultural sensitivity

Dr Celeste Yuen mentioned the role of the Education University as a teacher education institute, to implement measures to improve teacher education for ethnic minorities, including cultural sensitivity and helping trainee teachers to build relevant cultural knowledge within their classrooms. This was echoed by Dr Manynooch Faming who stated the importance of educating trainee teachers about issues such as multiculturalism and racism. Jan Gube also called on the need for educators to look inward and try to situate themselves in the social world of ethnic minority children, beginning by confronting their own Chinese ethnic identity.

Holing Yip, from UNISON, cautioned the need to examine cultural sensitivity training carefully. She cited research from Puja Kapai, of HKU, who found that there were stereotypes within cultural sensitivity training itself. She also called into question where such cultural sensitivity training courses were currently taking place, the type of services being offered and whether isolated training was enough.

Phyllis Cheung, Director of UNISON, also expressed some concerns that the lack of cultural sensitivity and multiculturalism within schools might be hard to change if educators were not accustomed to teaching different nationalities. For example, UNISON had received calls from schools asking if they could get ethnic minority students 'to behave'. However, Dr Celeste Yuen argued that it would not be too late to improve cultural sensitivity and cited her service learning and cultural awareness courses that Education University students participated in. She believed that placing individuals within an intercultural environment was the first step to creating cultural sensitivity. She also pointed out that from a Hong Kong Chinese perspective, it could be hard without hands on experience to understand different ethnicities but that "misunderstanding happens when there isn't dialogue".

Holing was also concerned that educators teaching Cantonese have no experience teaching it as a second language or for ethnic minorities, and in some cases were only teaching Cantonese for hospitality and services. Broadening educators' cultural perspectives would then create more opportunities and choices for ethnic minority students.

15. Involving the Education Bureau in future forums

Many participants pointed out that it would be beneficial for the Education Bureau (EDB) to attend similar forums in the future. Dr Celeste Yuen pointed out the importance of each stakeholder being on an equal footing, including individuals from different ethnic minority communities, and subcommittees of the EDB for curriculum development.

Holing expressed concerns that the EDB had held meetings before introducing the Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework, yet some of the invited minority representatives did not have children attending local schools and so were unaware of many of the issues facing ethnic minority children. The question of who represents the ethnic minority community is key.

There were calls for a holistic approach to education for ethnic minorities and to examine different perspectives, including from students, parents, schools and policy makers. Jan Yumul mentioned also including the Labour Department in the future as she was concerned that job fairs marketed towards ethnic minority students were focused on jobs in the service industry such as at restaurants, cleaning services and supermarkets.

Conclusion

This forum provided 15 key areas of consensus amongst stakeholders on priority areas for education for ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. It is hoped that this forum provides the beginnings of the next steps for improving educational pathways and opportunities for ethnic minority students.

Contact details:

For more information, please contact: @EdUHK.hk

Appendix One: Forum programme

Forum on Inclusive and Equitable Education for All in Hong Kong

The Education University of Hong Kong
30th October 2015. 9:00am-12:45pm

PROGRAMME

08:30 – 09:00am	Arrival
09:00am	Welcome Speech Professor Bob Adamson, Director of Centre for Lifelong Learning Research and Development, EdUHK
9:30-10:00am	Keynote Presentation Professor Kerry Kennedy, Director of the Centre for Governance and Citizenship, EdUHK
10:00-11:00am	Discussion Session One What are the key issues in education for ethnic minority students?
11:00am- 11:30am	Group Photo Session – Short Break
11:30-12:30pm	Discussion Session Two Exploration of key issues in further detail
12:30pm	Summary and consensus on areas of focus for further workshops
12:45pm	Way forward. Thanks to participants (Professor Bob Adamson). End Forum.

Appendix Two: Forum attendees

Professor Bob Adamson (EdUHK)
Ms Phyllis Cheung (UNISON)
Dr Manynooch Faming (Yew Chung Community College)
Mr Jan Gube (Section Juan)
Professor Kerry Kennedy (EdUHK)
Dr Joanna Lijuan Li (EdUHK)
Mr Deepen Nebhwani (ethnic minority student)
Dr Victor Hoi Yu Ng (EdUHK)
Ms Lucinda Pike (EdUHK)
Mr Paul Tarrant (Yuen Long Minorities Parents' Concern Group)
Mr Chura Bahadur Thapa (Yuen Long Minorities Parent's Concern Group)
Dr Linnie Koon Li Wong (EdUHK)
Ms Holing Yip (Research Officer, UNISON)
Dr Celeste Yuen (EdUHK)
Ms Jan Yumul (Section Juan)

EdUHK Forum on Inclusive and Equitable Education for All in Hong Kong

Briefing Paper No. 2

The Education University of Hong Kong

6th May 2016



EdUHK UNESCO Chair
Minorities Project

Summary

Minority language students face a number of challenges from the current education system. Whilst the number of minority language students, including South Asians (e.g. Pakistani, Nepalese and Indian) and Southeast Asians (e.g. Filipino, Thai, Indonesian) attending school full-time in Hong Kong has increased since 1997, the number of schools offering English as a medium of instruction has reduced.

Many minority language students attend government schools where Cantonese is the medium of instruction or attend schools (formerly known as “designated” schools) where they are streamed into English-medium of instruction classes. Provision for learning Cantonese as a second language at such schools is often limited. This places minority language students at a disadvantage when applying for jobs and higher education (academic and vocational) in Hong Kong.

This forum series was developed by the EdUHK as a way for stakeholders to meet to discuss how education can be improved for minority language students and the role of the University as the trainer of many of Hong Kong’s teachers.

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The role of the Education University of Hong Kong to enhance teacher education and cultural sensitivity

Introduction

This Forum is the second in an ongoing series organized by the UNESCO Chair in TVET and Lifelong learning of the Education University of Hong Kong (EdUHK). It was co-organised with the EdUHK Centre for Governance and Citizenship and Yew Chung Community College. It took place on 6th May 2016 at the EdUHK.

The first Forum was held in October 2015 which identified a number of priority areas in education for minority language students in Hong Kong. One area was the role of the EdUHK in enhancing pre-service and in-service teachers' cultural sensitivity and competence in handling classes of students with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. The aim of this second Forum was to continue dialogue on issues raised by the first Forum, and to focus upon the specific theme of raising awareness of multiculturalism and diversity through teacher education programmes at EdUHK.

The Forum brought together seventeen relevant stakeholders and specialists, predominantly from the Education University of Hong Kong, along with members from minority and concern groups.

The Forum began with a keynote presentation by Mr Paul Tarrant, Chairman of the Yuen Long Minorities Parents' Concern Group.

Background

Key issues in education for minority students in Hong Kong

Minority language students face a number of challenges from the current education system, including access and language barriers. Whilst the number of minority language students, including South Asians (e.g. Pakistani, Nepalese and Indian) and Southeast Asians (e.g. Filipino, Thai, Indonesian) attending school full-time in Hong Kong has increased since 1997, the number of schools offering English as a medium of instruction has reduced.

Many minority language students who do not have the socioeconomic means to attend private international schools instead attend government schools where Cantonese is the medium of instruction or attend schools (formerly known as "designated" schools) where they are streamed into English-speaking classes with other minority language students. Provisions for learning Cantonese as a second language at such schools are often limited, with lack of curriculum support and educational resources. Many students sit alternative assessments such as GCSE and GCE Chinese, which do not equate to local Chinese proficiency requirements. This places minority language students at a disadvantage when applying for jobs and higher education (academic and

vocational) in Hong Kong, which frequently require a high level of proficiency in spoken Cantonese and written Chinese.

Despite the introduction of the “Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework” by the Education Bureau in 2014, there are still concerns over how this framework will be implemented and the lack of a corresponding examination that is accepted by tertiary institutions. Aside from Chinese language proficiency, there are also concerns that minority language students are further disadvantaged by institutional factors, such as streaming, which often prevents interaction with Chinese students.

Outcomes

Areas of consensus amongst the group discussion at this second Forum included linguistic issues, such as the recognition of linguistic minorities, mother tongue learning and the role of storytelling in learning Cantonese. Further areas of consensus included the need for parental support, classroom management and taking into account the diversity of minority language students. Other forms of learning were discussed, including vocational Chinese learning and diversifying pathways for minority language students.

This report begins with key points from Mr Paul Tarrant’s keynote presentation, before moving on to key areas of consensus amongst participants.

Keynote presentation

Mr Paul Tarrant (Chairman of the Yuen Long Minorities Parents' Concern Group)

Key points:

- it is crucial to recognize that every child is unique. A holistic education system is needed that is customized continually for the needs of each child;
- the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child has not been fully implemented in Hong Kong despite the UN expressing concern that child sensitive environments have not been provided;
- Article 30 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child states that “in those States in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities or persons of indigenous origin exist, a child belonging to such a minority or who is indigenous shall not be denied the right, in community with other members of his or her group, to enjoy his or her own culture, to profess and practise his or her own religion, or to use his or her own language.” Our discussion should therefore include not just ethnic minorities, but indigenous people too;
- assimilation is happening in Hong Kong, whereby Cantonese is replacing the mother tongue of minority language students. Chinese has become the Medium of Instruction (CMI) for many minority language students. This was reflected by a student in the first Forum, Deepen Nebhwani, who despite speaking Cantonese and English well, admitted that his native language ability was poor;
- the recent spate of student suicides in Hong Kong also suggests that the current education system needs improvement; and
- parents have the primary legal right (“prior right”) for their children’s education. The UN Declaration of Human Rights Article 26.3 states: “*Parents have the prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children*”. Parents must have the freedom to choose the kind of education they want for their children: to choose a school, to choose the Medium of Instruction as Chinese (with the option of either Cantonese or Putonghua) (CMI) or English (EMI). For children choosing EMI they will learn Chinese as a subject (Cantonese or Putonghua). For ethnic minority children learning their native language as a subject in school should be an option for parents.

Key areas of consensus

Classroom practice

The Forum began with an anecdote from Dr Liz Walker, who had supervised an EdUHK student on her teaching practice at a primary school. The class contained students predominantly from Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. Dr Walker noticed that despite the children being very enthusiastic, the trainee teacher became frustrated with the students and often angrily told them to keep quiet. After recording the lesson and reflecting back on her teaching, the trainee teacher was able to recognize her lack of sensitivity. Nevertheless, this then raised the question amongst participants at the Forum as to whether the teacher did not have the appropriate classroom practice or whether she was having difficulty specifically teaching minority language students.

Dr Tae Hee Choi reported having observed teachers at an international primary school who focused on keeping students quiet. She was also concerned about the method of teacher recruitment at such schools, where English language proficiency was prioritized in candidates.

Linguistic issues

Discussion on linguistic issues followed on from concerns raised in the first Forum, including the rights of the child to their sense of identity, access to their own language and access to languages of power and high status, including English, Cantonese and Putonghua. Parental choice over medium of instruction and schools was also raised. The difficulties that many minority language students face when learning in Cantonese were addressed; for example the loss of potential employment opportunities faced by students who do not know Cantonese. The role of both English and Cantonese as a form of linguistic capital in Hong Kong was addressed by Dr Gao Fang. Similar to the first Forum, the role of biliteracy and trilingualism was highlighted, with a focus upon a balance of languages to fit individual lifestyles, situations and experiences.

Linguistic minorities

The role of linguistic minorities in Hong Kong was discussed. Dr Lisa Lim gave a detailed overview of her research on linguistic minorities and explained the corresponding course that she ran at the University of Hong Kong. The lack of contact between minority language and Chinese students was raised – for some Hong Kong Chinese students on Dr Lim's course, it was the first time that they had spoken to a peer from South East Asia. Dr Lim also stressed the importance of getting students to reflect upon their own cultural backgrounds throughout her course on linguistic minorities. Ms Lucinda Pike suggested incorporating a module on linguistic diversity in teacher education programs at the Education University of Hong Kong, by getting pre-service and in-service teachers to reflect upon their own diversity before commencing and during teaching practice.

Cantonese as a second language – the role of preparedness and storytelling

How best to teach Cantonese as a second language was discussed amongst the group. Professor Hin Tat Cheung observed that what we mean by “Chinese as a second language” has not yet been well defined in the literature. For instance, there is the need to distinguish between interpersonal linguistic abilities (i.e. expressing feelings) and academic language use. His recent project had explored the relationship of oral language to written language in bilingual development, examining the role of preparedness and narrative in learning Cantonese. The first part of Professor Hin Tat Cheung’s longitudinal study focused upon examining personal narratives and storytelling, by presenting pictures and scenarios to participants, such as going to see a doctor. Different prompts were given in Cantonese, however preliminary findings showed that most of the minority language children could not respond with more than two sentences in Cantonese. Professor Cheung therefore argued that developing Cantonese narrative and storytelling in minority language children is essential to learning Cantonese effectively.

Dr Cheung Chi Kin suggested that the difficulties of learning a second language may be a shared by people in Hong Kong. For instance, for most Hong Kong Chinese learning English, they do not have an English home learning environment but yet recognise that speaking English is a form of social capital in Hong Kong. Therefore, there may be more similarities between Hong Kong Chinese and ethnic minorities in terms of having to learn another language to be able to advance in Hong Kong.

Diversity of students

The different learning styles between minority language students and local Hong Kong Chinese students was touched upon, following Dr Liz Walker’s anecdote describing enthusiastic minority language students. Dr Gao Fang raised the concern that local Chinese students may be quieter in a classroom environment compared to minority language students who may be more active. This cultural stereotyping she argued may not be negative, but may in fact be a positive way of teaching students from different backgrounds. Ms Phyllis Cheung added that unfortunately many teachers were not sensitive to these differences, misdiagnosing active minority language students as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD).

Mr Chura Bahadur Thapa considered that how teachers engage with minority language students and make topics relevant are crucial. Ms Phyllis Cheung reported only seeing one school where minority language students who had difficulty learning Chinese were placed in the same class as other Chinese students, effectively dividing them by their learning difficulties rather than by their ethnicity. She argued that teachers need to consider each individual student’s learning needs rather than their ethnicity.

Parental support

The role of parents in educating minority language students was discussed. Professor Bob Adamson recounted his experience finding a school for his son

in Hong Kong. His son spoke English and Cantonese fluently, however needed help with his written Chinese. As such, finding a school was initially difficult because he failed the Chinese written tests set by schools. Despite receiving 14/100 on his written Cantonese test at the EdUHK Jockey Club Primary School, the Principal recognised the fact that he was bilingual as a positive asset to the school, bringing a diverse cultural perspective, new ways of thinking and doing, and that he would help improve the English language skills of other students. Professor Adamson conceded his son did need a lot of parental support with his Cantonese homework, for instance learning Mathematics through the medium of Chinese. Nevertheless, his son was happy at the school, made a lot of friends and achieved 86 out of 100 in his final Chinese test. Ultimately though, the success of schools accepting similar students requires a level of support and commitment from schools, along with parents and teachers being willing, open and cooperating together.

However this led to discussion that for some minority language students, parents may have difficulty in supporting students with their Cantonese homework, when they may be unable to speak the language themselves. Research has also shown that some parents may prioritise other after school activities, such as religious homework.

EdUHK has nevertheless explored ways of teaching parents of minority language students Cantonese. Professor Cheung outlined a recent project where sixteen parents had enrolled, however none attended the first day of the course. This was attributed to the course taking place in a secondary school which was far away from the community. Subsequently, the course was moved to a local community centre, and three parents ultimately completed the ten week program, comprising a total of 20 sessions. The group therefore agreed upon the importance of parental support and involving multiple parties in order to provide sufficient language support to minority language students and their parents.

Other forms of learning

EdUHK service learning initiative

Dr Andy Chin discussed a course that the Department of Linguistics and Modern Language Studies at EdUHK had recently launched called “Co-curricular service learning” which sends students to work in the community applying knowledge they have learnt at university. The course partnered with the HK Playground Association, an NGO offering community services to students, and focused on understanding linguistic barriers for language minority and socially underprivileged students (such as newly arrived students from Mainland China). One of the students from EdUHK was particularly keen to learn more about the motivation of minority language students, and found that many did not get support from their families, particularly female students who were expected to work after leaving school or to return to their countries to marry and consequently had less motivation to learn. Many minority language students that participated in the course had a good level of proficiency in oral Cantonese, but lacked the skills to read and write. An EdUHK student participating in the course devised cards to teach minority

language students Cantonese. Some examples were matching names such as kinship terms, vocabulary and numbers. Dr Chin stressed that this was not a formal learning environment and so through this informal learning, EdUHK students were keen to try to engage with minority language students, through examples such as learning cards, games, treasure hunts and matching idioms. Many students reported enjoying the course, and as such, EdUHK plans to work with the HK Playground Association again.

Dr Chin also suggested that despite having the training, knowledge and experience to deal with minority language students, many social workers do not have the specific training to help students with their education, for instance understanding what they may lack in their language skills. Thus, the course provides a bridge for EdUHK to provide training for social workers in language and teaching, to prevent the isolation that may arise at school when minority language students cannot express themselves well in Cantonese.

Diversifying pathways for minority language students

Ms Shida Lee from the Hong Kong College of Technology (HKCT) discussed the launch of their Applied Learning Chinese course for non-Chinese speaking students with the aim of opening up vocational options for minority language students, for example in the hospitality sector. Dr Celeste Yuen concurred that it was important to engage students in different vocations and to diversify pathways available. The difficulty of recruiting teachers for such courses was discussed as many teachers had found it difficult to adjust their pedagogy to minority language students. In the first cohort of students, retention of teachers for the course had been low, with some reporting varying levels of motivation and learning diversity amongst students. Now on their second cohort of students, HKCT were keen to engage with local communities.

The launch of the Youth Life Planning Programmes was one such way that the HKCT were cooperating with communities. HKCT were also working with organisations such as in the aviation industry to improve upward mobility opportunities for minority language students. Ms Shida Lee indicated that given this was only the second cohort of students, there was still some course development needed, both in terms of pedagogy, curriculum and materials. HKCT anticipate that half of their students would move into further study, and another half into work.

Ms Phyllis Cheung expressed concern that the Applied Learning Chinese was not part of the Learning Framework launched by the Education Bureau in 2014. She stated that when the course was first launched, there were concerns as to whether it would be an alternative qualification to enter university and whether this would be an elective or a required course. Furthermore, despite suggestions that the course could pave the way to university, Phyllis maintained that the course content was focused on hospitality and retail, and as such neither course was preparing minority language students for university level Chinese, despite claims that it would be a higher level of Chinese than GCE. Phyllis also expressed concern at the length of travelling time for students attending the course – either at HKCT or the Baptist University. There had been offers that if there were enough students in a different school,

instructors would travel to the school to teach the course however this had not yet happened. She agreed that many students do lack motivation, but it was unclear if this was from the students themselves or whether they saw their chances of upward mobility as low.

Child poverty

Dr Cheung Chi Kin presented his research on child poverty in Hong Kong, stating that whilst the overall level of child poverty has not changed, child poverty for vulnerable groups (e.g. ethnic minorities, single parent families) has risen. The recent government report on child poverty however does not separate out ethnic minorities but instead combines immigrants and ethnic minorities, masking the fact that Chinese migrants and ethnic minority migrants have very different trajectories. For instance, Chinese migrants show improvements in poverty levels by their second generation, whereas ethnic minority migrants become worse off. He stressed the importance of understanding different ethnicities have varying socioeconomic status, for instance, South Asians are more likely to experience child poverty compared to Koreans and Caucasians and therefore each group has different needs in terms of social mobility. However from a practical perspective, in order to lift vulnerable groups out of poverty and provide more social capital, learning languages is crucial. Dr Cheung made the important point that ultimately the aim was poverty reduction and improved quality of life for Hong Kong residents. Education was a means to achieving this but was not an end in itself.

Conclusion

This Forum provided key areas of consensus amongst stakeholders on key areas of concern and measures that can be taken by the Education University of Hong Kong to continue to improve educational pathways and opportunities for minority language students. It also raised priority areas for teacher education programmes at the University, with the goal of raising awareness of multiculturalism and diversity through such programmes.

Contact details:

For more information, please contact: @EdUHK.hk

Appendix One: Forum programme

The role of the Education University of Hong Kong to enhance teacher education and cultural sensitivity

The Education University of Hong Kong
6th May 2016. 9:00am-12:45pm

PROGRAMME

08:45 – 09:15am	Arrival
09:15am	Introduction Professor Bob Adamson, Director of Centre for Lifelong Learning Research and Development, EdUHK a) Purpose of Forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To consider the role of the Education University of Hong Kong to enhance teacher education in terms of handling and cultural diversity; and• To explore the issues in more detail with development of plans and actions.
9:30-10:00am	Keynote Presentation Mr Paul Tarrant, Chairman of the Yuen Long Minorities Parents' Concern Group
10:00-11:00am	Discussion Session One What are the key issues for the University to consider?
11:00am- 11:30am	Group Photo Session – Short Break
11:30-12:30pm	Discussion Session Two Exploration of key issues in further detail
12:30pm	Summary and consensus on areas of focus for further workshops
12:45pm	Way forward. Thanks to participants (Professor Bob Adamson). End Forum.

Appendix Two: Forum attendees

Professor Bob Adamson (EdUHK)
Dr Chi Kin Cheung (EdUHK)
Professor Hin Tat Cheung (EdUHK)
Ms Phyllis Cheung (UNISON)
Dr Andy Chin, (EdUHK)
Dr Tae Hee Choi (EdUHK)
Dr Manynooch Faming (Yew Chung Community College)
Dr Gao Fang (EdUHK)
Professor Kerry Kennedy (EdUHK)
Ms Shida Lee (HKCT)
Dr Joanna Lijuan Li (EdUHK)
Dr Lisa Lim (HKU)
Ms Lucinda Pike (EdUHK)
Mr Paul Tarrant (Yuen Long Minorities Parents' Concern Group)
Mr Chura Bahadur Thapa (Yuen Long Minorities Parent's Concern Group)
Dr Elizabeth Walker (EdUHK)
Dr Celeste Yuen (EdUHK)