

There's a lack of proper recognition of Ethnic Minorities in HK's education sectors. In this paper, I'll be focusing on the inadequate and inaccurate depiction of EMs (Ethnic Minorities) in HK in Liberal studies classes, resulting in degrading stereotypes of EMs, making it harder for them to integrate into HK society

It's evident that the information taught about EM groups in HK in Liberal Studies (LS) classes are lacking in diversity and are shallow approaches in educating students on the religions, cultures and history of EMs. From a study¹, It was found that if teachers were to follow textbooks and allocate proportionate classroom time to textbook content, teachers would spend 4-10 hours overall discussing multicultural issues in class, or 1 or 2 weeks of the 3-year curriculum (though these weeks would be spread out across the modules). There isn't even a chapter on EM's significant contributions that formed and is continuously forming the 'Backbone of HK' despite their existence in HK for several generations. In the colonial era, the Parsees (Indians) did the majority of the banking through India, who helped plan the HSBC. It was a Parsee businessman, Dorbjee Naorojee, who created the Star Ferry company in 1888 and the 1911 donation by Parsee merchant, Sir H.N Mody of HKD 180,000 to establish the University of Hong Kong. Parsees were also noted philanthropists in the area of public health, with the Ruttonjee family name connected with several hospitals. Despite their prominence, intellect and financial aid to Hong Kong, they were social outcasts (excluded from local organizations and theatres). This shows that ever since the early colonial days, racial segregation has existed in HK but nowadays, it manifests itself in subtler forms. The blatant exclusion of these contributions and these people in history textbooks is an erasure of our existence and efforts which explains the negative perceptions that are rampant in HK. When EMs are called 'refugees' or are told to go back to their own countries, it stems from the lack of knowledge of their historical presence that constituted the strength of this land.

There's also inaccurate portrayals of EMs in LS textbooks. From the same study, it was found that Islam was equated to 'anti-western' and 'sexist' connotations as a textbook stated that 'women had to adorn headwear at all times' without giving any context to why they're worn, and how it's the woman's individual choice she makes with God. This is just one example of conflating predominant religions and cultures within the EM community to be 'conservative' and 'oppressive' which are inaccurate to say the least. This inaccurate portrayal manifests itself in some students feeling scared of Islam (despite being a religion that values

¹ Jackson, L. (2016, December 8). *Learning About Diversity in Hong Kong: Multiculturalism in Liberal Studies Textbooks*. The Asia-Pacific Education Researcher. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40299-016-0323-0>.

equality). Some students that are indoctrinated with these inaccurate conceptions of predominant EM religions and cultures, form these biases from a young age which then affects how they view EMs by conflating all EMs as one group rather than Hong-Kongers with in-community and individual differences. This explains the countless cases such as the Hijabi teacher being denied her teaching job or when a muslim woman wasn't allowed to work in a restaurant because of her hijab. This reduces a heterogeneous community to an extreme minority of the faith. What's being taught to students during LS classes is not as 'diverse' and 'in-depth' as the subject claims itself to be, but rather a one dimensional, biased narrative that has existed for generations in HK. There's countless ethnic chinese allies who have aided in debunking stereotypes surrounding EMs through community outreach and education but slight subject-curriculum changes by including accurate and adequate EM history in HK will result in positive systemic changes for a harmonious society.

I have two suggestions: having one chapter in history and LS textbooks that specifically highlights EM's contributions and historical presence in HK. Make diversity training in all schools mandatory for all teachers.