

‘Segregated schools’ only causes further segregation in society

De facto segregation in schools is an ongoing serious problem in Hong Kong and the adverse effects that it can have on an ethnic minority student are endless. Despite the government having removed the label of ‘designated school’ in 2013, the problem of de facto segregation continues to exist. Many have gone through this system and suffered on a personal, economic and social level. Here we will discuss the effects de facto segregation has on ethnic minorities' employability, integration into Hong Kong's society and advice for actions that can be taken.

The employability of ethnic students who have gone through the designated schools or schools with similar systems is usually alarmingly lower than an average ethnic minority, as can be seen from the thematic report on ethnic minorities. The report showed that the majority (75.8%) of the working ethnic minorities were engaged in “Elementary occupations”. It should come as no shock that students graduating from designated schools tend to have lower levels of Chinese proficiency because of the primary level c Chinese curriculum and the non-Chinese speaking environment they are immersed in when studying. Finding good employment opportunities becomes a nearly impossible task for them in a city like Hong Kong where Cantonese is one of the main languages and a must for many positions. Many of the successful cases of ethnic minority employment which are highly appreciated in the media and society are often ethnic minorities with fluent Cantonese proficiency. Individuals who do not know Cantonese go through much struggle, however, such cases are often not reported, downplaying the severity of this issue. To conclude, it is discriminatory, unfair and cruel to allow such segregation to exist despite knowing the undesirable effects it has on ethnic minorities. It is high time the government takes action and puts an end to such systems.

The chances of ethnic integrating into mainstream society are greatly hindered by de facto segregation in schools as well. The fear of the unknown accumulates into nothing but prejudice and discrimination. One of the major downsides of de facto segregation in schools is that it leads to the lack of sensitivity towards people of different cultural backgrounds. This is due to the lack of exposure to ethnic minorities, this makes it hard for Chinese students to understand, accept and respect them because both parties were never given the opportunity to communicate with or learn about each other. Thus, social integration becomes an impossible task in the Hong Kong community. It is crucial that the government puts a halt to these segregated schools and increases the chances of ethnic minorities to be desegregated and to be integrated into the society of Hong Kong.

A school might not be a ‘designated school’ in books but in reality, it can still function as a ‘designated school’ and recognized as such among the community. Therefore, the government is urged to take action immediately and put an end to this problem by implementing and introducing stronger policies for schools like a diversity and inclusion policy for schools to better integrate ethnic minority students into mainstream classroom, eliminate de facto segregation and

level the playing field for both Chinese and non-Chinese students . It is also advised that schools with a proportionate percentage of ethnic minority students should be desegregated.