

Exercise 9:

Study the text in the boxes below and answer the following questions.

- a) Who are considered having “difficulty integrating fully into the community”? What does the term “community” stand for?
- b) What issues are considered the barriers for their integration into the community?
- c) Which issues are addressed in the policy?
- d) What would it mean by “migration” of ethnic minority students to “mainstream Chinese classes”? What might be the implications for the ethnic minority students’ education? List out the implications.
- e) What roles should different stake holders be playing according to Figure 3.1?
- f) Which medium of instruction should be prioritized for ethnic minorities? Discuss and write a short report (200 words).

Box 1 Chinese as a Second Language Framework

There are more than 60,000 South Asian ethnic minority people living in Hong Kong, an increase of 50% over the past decade. They have much difficulty integrating fully into the community due to differences in culture, language and ethnic background. The government will strengthen education support and employment services for them. Most South Asian ethnic minority residents call Hong Kong home. To integrate into the community and develop their careers, they must improve their ability to listen to, speak, read and write Chinese. We will strengthen the Chinese learning support for ethnic minorities from early childhood education through to primary and secondary levels.

From the 2014/15 school year, the Government will implement a Chinese Language Curriculum Second Language Learning Framework with supporting learning and teaching materials as well as assessment tools for ethnic minority students in primary and secondary schools. Annual funding of approximately \$200 million will be provided from the 2014/15 school year to enhance school support, such as an intensive teaching mode to improve the Chinese foundation of ethnic minority students at junior primary levels to facilitate their migration to the mainstream Chinese language classes.

From Policy Address, 2014

<http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/2014/eng/p76.html>

Box 1 CMI school a nightmare for ethnic minority students

Nepalese and other ethnic minority students will experience a nightmare if they go to CMI schools, says a CMI graduated Nepalese student. Speaking to Hong Kong's Nepalese language radio programme "Saptahik Sandesh" on RTHK, Miss Mina Thapa (pseudonym) shared her painful journey throughout her primary and secondary school years in Chinese medium (CMI).

Mina went to a bi-lingual kindergarten and learned some basic Cantonese there. Based on that, and based on the kindergarten's recommendations, her parents sent her to a Chinese medium primary school. However, although she was fluent in speaking Cantonese, she found it terribly hard to handle the content related subjects such as Mathematics, General Studies, Science in Chinese medium. "I did not understand the textbooks in my primary school. Therefore, I always depended on tuition class. I used to ask the Miss in my tuition class to help me to do my homework.", she says.

After she went to the CMI secondary school, it even became more challenging to handle the Chinese language textbooks in higher grades. "The higher forms we go, the harder it becomes. The teachers expect us to understand deep meaning, but I did not have any idea what they were talking about, and what the deep meaning was about."

Due to the difficult concepts in Chinese medium textbooks and classroom instruction, she had to depend on tuition classes after school to pass some subjects. Mina's school itself was not a high banding school, and the teachers did not support the students that well, especially the students from the non-Chinese background. "My teachers did not give that much helpful comments. They always asked me to read more Chinese books, and I also knew that. But they never understood what my problems were, or may be, I was not able to let them know." she says.

Chinese NGOs and the media discourses have been suggesting that ethnic minority students should go to CMI schools to learn Cantonese and pursue higher studies. As a result, the HK government has also introduced a CSL policy framework which aims at "migrating" the ethnic minority students to so called "mainstream CMI classes". However, it seems that such "migration" of the EM students will have negative consequences in their overall educational development, and even passing the HKDSE examination.

Mina faced a tremendous difficulty in taking the HKDSE examination in Chinese language for all the subjects except English. But luckily, she was able to pass the elective subjects in which she had a keen interest. She is now pursuing a higher diploma in Visual Arts. However, she is facing now a challenge of learning English because all the course materials are provided in English in her class, and even the teachers in her College use English.

Thus Mina suggests that the EM students should go to EMI schools, and find alternative ways such as to have more interaction with Chinese people to learn Cantonese, instead of just going to a CMI school to learn Cantonese.

Source: RTHK- Saptahik Sandesh report and Chura Thapa's blog:

<https://churathapa.wordpress.com/2016/01/26/cmi-school-a-nightmare-for-non-chinese-students-a-story-of-a-cmi-student/>