香港教育大學
The Education University of Hong Kong

A project entitled:

Exploring the perception teachers of ethnic minority students have of social justice and equity in education, and its effects on their teaching

submitted to The Education University of Hong Kong for the degree of Bachelor of Education (Honours) (English) (Primary)

by JABEEN, Maria

Supervisor: Ms SAMSON, Elizabeth

Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Abstract

This study explores the perception teachers of ethnic minority students have of social justice and equity in education and its effects on their teaching, in the context of Hong Kong.

Ethnic minority students' parents have cited a number of problems flooding their children's lives (Pike 2015). The problems range from having inadequate opportunities of learning spoken Cantonese to not feeling they are supported. It utilizes qualitative method to explore the following research questions; 1) How do teachers of ethnic minority students view social justice and educational equity in teaching?, 2) Do these teachers make a conscious effort to incorporate social justice and equity in their teaching? If yes, how so?, and 3) To what extent does the presence of social justice and equity in teachers' minds (or lack thereof) affect their practice of teaching and the classroom environment?

Interviews and lesson observations were used as the research instruments. It was found that there is indeed a strong correlation between teachers' perception of equity in education and their practice of teaching. It was also found that the teachers have varying viewpoints on equity in education, with reference to their personal experience and their cultural background.

.

Contents

1. Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the perception teachers of ethnic minority students have of social justice and equity in education and its effects on their teaching.

1.1 Background and Significance of the study

Pike (2015) reported that, in Hong Kong, ethnic minority students' parents have cited a number of problems flooding their children's lives, ranging from having inadequate opportunities of learning spoken Cantonese to not feeling they are supported. He criticizes the apparent lack of sufficient actions taken by the government, not only in terms of policy but also in terms of lacking a conceptual model of educating and integrating minority students.

Over the years, social justice and equity in education has started to appear at the center of numerous educational debates, and the focal point of the debate has shifted from questioning the relevance of its existence in education to tackling one of the biggest challenges faced by teachers and teacher educators: how can schools become more effective and equitable for *all* learners in increasingly diverse classrooms (Kaur, 2012). In essence, Bell (2007) sees social justice as a goal to encourage "full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs" (p.1), while equity is one of the many pillars to achieving social justice, wherein it advocates for fair and just distribution of wealth, opportunities, social privileges, in a society, without factoring in a person's race, socioeconomic status, gender or any other strand of social stratification. Therefore, the words 'social justice' and 'equity' often appear together in the present literature, and thus this paper will use the terms interchangeably as well.

Judging by this definition and the problems ethnic minority students are facing in terms of their schooling, the importance of social justice in education seems evident, and thus Chiu and Walker (2007) define the role of social justice *in education* as primarily concerning itself with "positively equalizing and improving the opportunities and prospects for disadvantaged (often linked with race, ethnicity, culture, social class, gender, and more) and disaffected members of our societies" (p.725).

Although, it is often emphasized that teachers are given a curriculum coupled with strict instructions (and less autonomy) to moderate their lessons, the ultimate power of implementing the curriculum rests in the hands of the teachers. The way a teacher carries out the lessons may be governed by multiple contributing factors, such as their personal beliefs (Dunne, 2011). Therefore, it is imperative to explore the perception teachers (of ethnic minority students) hold of social justice and equity in education (an angle that has not been sufficiently explored) and to measure how it affects their teaching, in order to possess a better understanding of its role in the Hong Kong education system.

A large array of literature can be found on how ethnic minorities in Hong Kong are facing significant hurdles in the education system, and how various policies and efforts from different stakeholders can be utilized to better equip the schools for minority students. However, the literature is comparatively thinner when it comes to how teachers' understanding of social justice and educational equity can play a massive role in aiding marginalized groups of individuals, in the context of Hong Kong.

Consequently, the purpose of this research, is not only to fill the missing piece but also to provide a fresh set of insights on the topic by looking through the lens of minority students' teachers. This research paper will also serve as an additional reference point that informs the current debate about social justice and equity in education, specifically the perception teachers have and how that affects their way of teaching ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. As an ethnic minority student myself who experienced the Hong Kong education system first hand, teachers played a massive role in shaping my school life, I have had teachers who took my socio-economic background into account and those who did not, a clear difference between the two groups of teachers was reflected on the self-confidence I had in their classes. Therefore, this paper hopes to yield data that can paint a better image of the linkage between the teachers' perception and their practice, which then can highlight various steps needed to be taken to alleviate the problems for ethnic minority students.

1.2 Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions that are categorized into three themes :

1)	How do teachers of ethnic minority students view social justice and educational equity in teaching? (Perception)

2)	Do these teachers make a conscious effort to incorporate social justice and equity in their teaching (i.e. address the inequities, create a more inclusive environment, respect the diverse cultures by allowing the students to showcase their values derived from culture, etc.)? If yes, how so? (Practice)

3)	To what extent does the presence of social justice and equity in teachers' minds (or lack thereof) affect their practice of teaching and the classroom environment? (Effect)

2. Literature Review

Before delving into the research methodology and findings and in order to better understand the results of this research, this section briefly details the ethnic minorities in the context of Hong Kong, the education system for them in relation to social justice and education, and teachers' role in the education the ethnic minority students receive.

2.1 Ethnic Minorities in Hong Kong

The term 'ethnic minorities' refers to non-Chinese individuals, according to the Population By-Census report (2016), which pertains to all individuals belonging to a non-Chinese ethnic background. However, Loper (2004) notes that the term is largely used to refer to South/Southeast Asians, thus, this research will follow the same definition.

The metropolitan city, Hong Kong, is home to a largely homogenous society, whereby, 92% of its population is ethnically Chinese, according to the Population By-census report (2016). Yet, an increasing amount of ethnic minorities seem to be shifting the figures, the percentage of non-Chinese individuals – including 'the Whites' or commonly known as the 'Expatriates' but excluding the foreign domestic helpers, however the report does not explicitly indicate which category the migrants from mainland China belong to- living in Hong Kong has drastically increased since the 90s, and currently, 8% of the population is non-Chinese (referred as ethnic minorities from hereon), compared to a mere 5% in 2001. The change in the demographics of the city warrants more attention, especially in the education sector, as more and more ethnic minority babies are being born in Hong Kong (14% of the overall ethnic minorities were born in 2016, compared to 11.1% and 13.3% in the years 2006 and 2011, respectively), not to mention the already present students studying in local schools, that will become an important part of the education system.

2.2 Ethnic Minority students and Social justice and Equity in Education

Although there is no unanimous way of defining social justice and equity in education and scholars have differing views on this (Chiu and Walker, 2007, Kaur, 2012), depending on the issues they are largely

concerned with. For instance, Chiu and Walker (2007) see leadership as one of the prime ingredients of reducing social injustice and inequity in schools, Kaur (2012) sees social justice and equity as the importance of focusing on investigating intersectionalities of differences, in terms of various socio-economic factors. Therefore, it is imperative to fine-tune the definition of social justice and equity in education that best fits this study. Keddie (2011)'s definition of the broad term seems to be the most fitting for the scope of this research, he suggests that schools should foster inclusive environments, where political justice, cultural justice and economic justice is achieved simultaneously by giving a platform for marginalized voices to be heard, recognizing and valuing marginalized culture, and supporting marginalized students in terms of their academic achievements in order for these students to successfully collect material benefits of society. The reason Keddie (2011)'s definition best fits this research is that it seems to be covering a wider range of views regarding our understanding of the key terms which in turn will allow for a broader perspective for analyzing the data collected.

As mentioned earlier in the Literature review section (section 2.1), the numbers reported by the Population By-Census (2016) imply that the Hong Kong classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of its students' cultures. In such a scenario, Richard, Brown and Forde (2007) see the need of employing a more culturally responsive pedagogy. They state that a culturally responsive pedagogy "facilitates and supports the achievement of all students" (p. 64). It comprises of three dimensions; namely, i) institutional, ii) personal, and iii) instructional. The Institutional dimension refers to the administrative level and policies and values, the personal dimension relates to the teachers' cognitive and emotional processes that they must engage in to become more culturally responsive, whilst the last dimension alludes to the key ingredients that form the basis of instruction or also known as materials, strategies, and activities.

2.2.1 Inequitable Education system

In connection with the Hong Kong education system, various studies conducted over the last decade or so have consistently found that the system is inequitable for ethnic minority students (Loper, 2004; Chiu and Walker, 2007; Bhowmick and Kennedy, 2012; Pike, 2015). The results have highlighted a number of difficulties ethnic minority students are facing in the current educational provision, including, but not limited to, language barriers, difficulties in finding school placements, racial segregation, quality of education provided to ethnic minority students, and more.

Bhowmik and Kennedy (2012) have noted an interesting characteristic in the school attendance rate of ethnic minorities, they have found that there are groups of 'out of school' ethnic minorities at all pre-primary, lower secondary, upper secondary and post-secondary age groups. The Population By-Census' Thematic report (2016) confirms this by stating that the school attendance rates of ethnic minorities "at age groups 3-5, 12-17 and 18-24 were (only) 90.7%, 96.2% and 29.2% respectively, while those for the whole population were 92.5%, 97.8% and 51.8% respectively" (p.9). There seems to be a strong correlation between the dropout rate of the ethnic minority students and their access to and equity in education. (UNICEF & UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2010).

Equality of educational opportunity, as a political theory of social justice in education, is defined as a fair allocation of opportunities, hence to take advantage of a certain educational opportunity, students should be given a chance to qualify for the said opportunity in terms of their demonstrated abilities as well as be given a fair shot at acquiring the abilities that would allow them to qualify for it (Bull, 2008).

Theoretically speaking, public schools (that were built on the basis of providing free access to all citizens), should generate equal educational outcomes. Nonetheless, it is evidenced by the previous studies mentioned that in Hong Kong schools, ethnic minorities are often stripped of some opportunities that other students (from a different demographic group) enjoy. For instance, they are majorly deprived of the second component of 'educational opportunity'. In other words, ethnic minority students are faced with poor policies for learning Cantonese efficiently (i.e. not given a fair chance of acquiring the ability) which inherently puts them at a disadvantage when it comes to university placements and internship positions (i.e. to qualify for a certain educational opportunity).

An example of ethnic minority students being stripped of such opportunities, and according to the report submitted by Hong Kong Unison, de facto racial segregation in the mainstream Hong Kong education system still occurs albeit the Education Bureau officially removing the 'designated schools' label in the year 2013 (Hong Kong Unison, 2017). There are at least 10 public schools with over 90% of its students being ethnic minorities, encompassing over 60% of the ethnic minority students' population.

2.2.2 Teachers' role in ethnic minority education

This paper primarily concerns itself with the teacher's role in social justice and equity in education in the context of Hong Kong. Therefore, it is critical to look at the current state of affairs in Hong Kong.

Lee (2011) has identified a significant problem that may be hindering teachers' full potential of 'teaching for social justice and equity'. He states that the demographic gap between students and their teacher is seen as a contributing factor at play here. Although, the gap itself is not the problem, but the fact that this gap essentially proves, more often than not, that these teachers (with racially and ethnically different background from their diverse students) have a somewhat restricted understanding of differences between races, cultures, and class. Unison (2016) in its report titled *Hong Kong Unison Submission to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minority on Education issues*, stresses on the limited knowledge teachers and Chinese students seem to possess in terms of racial equality, diversity, and human rights, which results in ethnic minority students (studying in mainstream schools) suffering from isolation and bullying.

Kaur (2012) believes that the key to successfully teach for social justice and equity involves a number of equally crucial steps, one of them is to understand their lives inside and outside of classrooms, respect their values and beliefs, which may be influenced by their culture (Bull, 2008), and build on the experiences they bring in. On that account, it is inevitably essential for teachers to implement this in their classroom by being equipped with the relevant skills and professional training (if lacking) to foster a much more inclusive environment for *all* students.

The literature (Loper, 2004; Chiu and Walker, 2007; Bhowmick and Kennedy, 2012; Pike, 2015) found seems to be suggesting that language barrier seems to be the root of all problems for the ethnic minority students. However, this is debatable as the research in the area of social justice and equity in Hong Kong's education for minority students seems to be lacking significantly to begin with, one cannot neglect to analyse whether this is a contributing factor. Much of the reports and scholarly views informing the debate of how educational provisions can be improved for ethnic minorities are based on the assumption that language barrier is the only predominant issue. As a result, social justice and equity in education field foresees an urgent need to re-evaluate the existing literature by considering different lenses. The fact that teachers are the front line force students face every day in their school life prompts sufficient need to

explore their perception as well as whether the teachers are aware of social justice and equity and incorporating it in their pedagogy.

Chan and Wong (2005) conducted a survey that aimed at analysing the perception and public acceptance of local ethnically Chinese Hong Kongers hold of ethnic minorities. The survey found that over 60% believed ethnic minorities are viewed negatively, and while over 80% believed they should be provided with equal educational opportunities, a third of the respondents with children studying in schools disagreed with the statement. Yet again, this proves that equity in education should be given the limelight for it to be considered a serious issue to be tackled.

3. Research Design

3.1 Research method

In order to answer the research questions comprehensively, qualitative method was utilized in the study for data collection purposes. There were two stages to the data collection process. The first step utilized the framework of semi-structured interviews to address all of the research questions. Barriball and While (1994) state that semi-structured interviews are well-suited for interviews that aim to yield data in the form of perceptions and opinions of the participants, as they allow for probing for more information and clarifying some pieces of information, particularly in regards to the issues that may be sensitive.

The second step aimed to use classroom observations to answer part of the second and third research questions mentioned. This step was used as a way of triangulating the collected data. Olsen (2004) suggests that triangulation is often used as a tool to see if the data yielded from one data collection method is similar to that resulted from another method used, this is to increase the validity of the data obtained. In other words, the observations partly served this purpose of cross-checking the data collected from the interviews, and partly for possibly yielding additional information.

3.2. Research participants

The convenience sampling method was used to choose participants for the research. The research was conducted in a 'designated school' (Secondary) with over 95% of its students coming from ethnic minority backgrounds. A total of 10 in-service teachers were interviewed from that school, wherein five of them were local ethnically Chinese teachers and the other 5 were ethnic minority teachers. All five out of five of the ethnic minority teachers interviewed were raised in Hong Kong, they received their education in Hong Kong schools (from kindergartens all the way up to tertiary institutes). The teachers were separated into the two categories in order to measure whether teacher's ethnic background plays a role in their perception and practice. These two groups, the local ethnically Chinese teachers and the ethnic minority teachers, will be referred to as Group A and Group B respectively. The participants from each group will be titled as participant A1, A2, A3, and so on.

3.3 Interviews

The teachers were contacted through email and instant messages (Whatsapp) and were invited for an interview. In order to accommodate every participant's availability, some interviews were conducted in groups of 2 or 3. The participants were given the information sheet and consent form to have a look through and sign. Then, they were asked a set of questions that explored all three of the research questions (see Appendix I). The open-ended questions aimed at indirectly yielding participants' honest views. For instance, regarding the core concept of this study 'Social justice and equity in education', the participants were not directly asked what their opinions are on and whether they teach for social justice in education, rather they were asked a set of indirect questions that alluded to what their opinion on the matter is. Following the semi-structure nature of the interviews, follow-up and/or clarifying questions were asked during the interviews, depending on the participants' answers.

3.4 Observations

For this stage of data collection, 2 participants were chosen out of the 10 interviewed, 1 from each category (i.e. ethnically Chinese teachers and ethnic minority teacher). The observations were conducted mainly for analysing whether the teachers' answers for the last two research questions match what will be observed. I took on the role of a complete observer, although this may have triggered the observer effect, Gardner (2000) found that it does not pose as a substantial threat to the validity of data collected. Again, a convenience sampling was used, due to the limitation of time and resources.
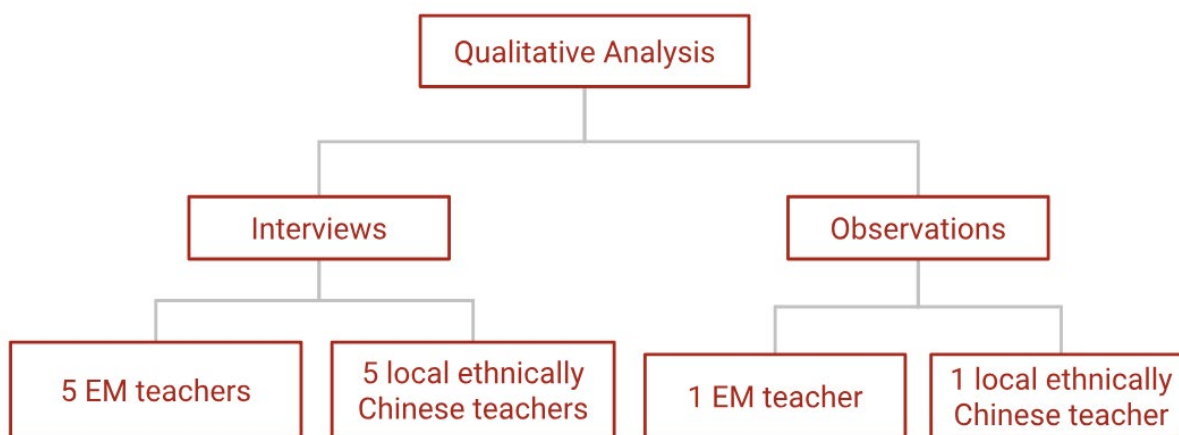

Figure 1 – A graph explaining the research method

4. Findings

Qualitative Analytical Process is adopted to organize the data into various categories by using the method of coding. When it comes to analysing qualitative data, much is needed to be done to unpack and reorganize the raw data in order to transition from description to explanation and interpretation (Miles and Huberman, 1994). For the purpose of this study, this is deemed as a suitable method as the expected data is fitted for the requirement of this analysis method. The data collected is first divided into three big categories, namely; perception, practice, and effect, respectively for the three research questions. Then, through coding the broad categories are broken down into various subgroups, based on their similar themes. This method was also used to analyse the data retrieved from the observation notes, with reference to the field notes taken during observations. The comparison between two groups of participants' (i.e. local Chinese teachers, Group A, and ethnic minority teachers, Group B) data is also presented in order to measure the effect of the demographic gap (and more) on their perception of equity in education and its effect on their pedagogy.

4.1 Interviews

4.1.1 Perception

Teachers' opinions on the education system provided for Ethnic Minority students

The opening question asked in the interviews involved asking the participants to state their opinion on the current education system for ethnic minority students. They were given the freedom to comment on the negative or positive aspects of it or alternatively comment on both. Almost all of the participants mostly commented on the drawbacks the education system has for ethnic minority students while one of them (from group A) seemed to hold the opinion that the government is already doing its best, participant A5 said, "I think the Hong Kong government gave them [EM students] a lot of resources, especially when it comes to teaching Cantonese...it is quite good". However, at the same time she recognized how Chinese as a language acts as a barrier for EM students to get into tertiary education. In other words, 90% of the participants largely focused on giving their opinions on 'the problematic' aspects of the education system

for EM students while only one out of 10 participants viewed the government's efforts at helping EM students as sufficient.

There were quite a few problems identified by the participants. Following is a list of self-explanatory code phrases for the problems stated by the participants: *problematic Chinese curriculum, no proper support network, difficult to further their education, unable to climb up the social ladder, Government giving out unmonitored funds, unpromising future job prospects, need skills for functioning in the local society, difficulties in getting admissions to all levels of schools, Maths syllabus is too difficult for EMs, English curriculum is too easy, low motivation to learn, students' lack of interest in the local happenings, and huge diversity between students.*

This list is showcasing what *all* of the participants stated. Figure 2 further breaks down the codes into 2 separate categories illustrating the issues two groups of participants perceive as being problematic.

Local ethnically Chinese teachers (Group A)	Ethnic minority teachers (Group B)
- Problematic Chinese curriculum - Maths syllabus is too difficult - English curriculum is too easy - Low motivation to learn - Students' lack of interest in the local happenings - Huge diversity between students	- Problematic Chinese curriculum - No proper support network - Difficult to further their education - Unable to climb up the social ladder - Government giving out unmonitored funds - Unpromising future job prospects - Need skills for functioning in the local society - Difficulties in getting admissions to all levels of schools

Figure 2 – Further categorization of the codes

All teachers (from both categories) mentioned the problematic Chinese curriculum for ethnic minority students. From acting as a barrier for students to getting into universities or successfully getting a job to "not having a proper Chinese curriculum" (participant A2), teachers see Chinese language curriculum as one of the major flaws of the education system.

One key difference between the kind of issues identified by the two groups of participants is that the local Chinese teachers tended to mostly see how different subjects (i.e. Chinese, Maths, English) are problematic for their students and seemed to stay within the boundaries of the school while the ethnic minority teachers briefly touched upon the controversial Chinese curriculum but saw that as just one of the many other problems that may be rooting from the pupils' family and cultural background or socioeconomic status.

4.1.2 Practice

Teachers' awareness of the students' cultures

When asked what ways the teachers have tried to learn more about their students' cultures, most EM teachers tended to relate back to their own experience as children growing up in multicultural environments or the fact that they share the same cultural background with some of their students. Consequently, they were exposed to different cultures from a young age and "picked up bits of other cultures along the way".

Participant B1 stressed on how her ability to speak some of her students' first language has allowed her to serve them and their families better by having open communications with no language barrier. She found that parents were more willing to communicate their concerns to her, "I found that when they speak in English to the teachers, they will have very short conversations which mostly involved a lot of nods from the parents. However, when I would speak to them in our native language, they would go on and on telling me much more about their concerns".

Participant B4 has realized how students, due to their Third Culture Kid identity seem to be significantly uninformed about their own cultures. "In fact, one of my students came up to me and told me how she felt

like she was a "fake" Nepali because she didn't know much about her culture or how to read and write her native language". This teacher, a Nepali herself, then decided to take it upon herself and opened a Nepali club in order to help with these students' sense of belongingness and help pave way for them to learn more about their own culture.

Another ethnic minority teacher (a Filipino), participant B5, told the researcher how he has been trying to learn his students' languages (Urdu and Punjabi). He believes that it has helped him converse with the students a lot more efficiently during casual chats and at the same time it helps build ties with the Pakistani and Indian community.

On the other hand, the local Chinese teachers admitted how they are largely unaware about their students' cultures because none of them grew up in a multicultural context. Therefore, in order to learn more about their culture, they mostly relied on casual chats with the students and/or activities organized by their school such as inviting an Indian local celebrity to give a guest talk, visiting the religious Sikh temple, and having cultural days in schools that are led by students.

Incorporating culture into lesson planning

The participants were asked if and how they have tried to integrate culture into their lessons. "I could see that they don't see themselves being represented in their textbooks, there is no chance to learn about their culture in an academic setting", participant B4 shared her observation regarding her students' feelings about their representation in the curriculum. Participant B2 shared the same thoughts, he expressed how he thought the government can do so much more with the representation of ethnic minority in the curriculum, "the government introduced Chinese history, which. as a small part on EMs but it is not enough, in fact their representation is not accurate enough…".

Additionally, teachers from both Group A and Group B found that the students were often complaining about dealing with 'unfamiliar cultures'. Participant B4 recalls an incident where one of her students asked her who Taylor Swift (a well-known Western singer) was and she was shocked. The participant realised how some of these students do not necessarily treat western pop culture as 'their culture'. The teachers

17

have noticed how most of the characters, either in English textbooks or other subject textbooks (e.g. Biology) tended to have characters with "white names".

Therefore, to tackle these problems and more, the teachers who were interviewed shared how they adapted their lesson materials in order to better accommodate their students' needs. For English subjects, the participants (all from Group B) shared that they tried to include more voices such as using more names that are from their culture, introduce novels written by POC (people of color/Ethnic minorities), invite guest speakers that are EM celebrities, use news articles from Southeast Asia, gear towards teaching unfamiliar western elements as well. An ethnic minority teacher (participant B5) who was mentioned earlier (see "*Teachers' awareness of the students' cultures*") expressed how he tries to use the little Urdu that he has learned to figure out why his students make some of the grammatical mistakes in English lessons by comparing the way a certain sentence is spoken in Urdu.

Two out of five of the teachers interviewed from Group B were Maths and/or Science teachers, and although they admit there is not a large leeway for them to incorporate culture into their lessons, they still try to make the materials relatable. For instance, participant B3 reflected on his experience and said that, "when I teach about food pyramid, I ask which cuisine tends to have more of this and which one has more of that and so on".

From Group A, three out of five teachers (two of which are Chinese language teachers and one is Science) admitted that they do not incorporate culture into their lessons because they see their lesson planning and the students' cultures as two distinct matters. Also, they shared that they are not that familiar with the students' cultures to begin with, hence the hesitation. However, the other two participants (an English language teacher and a Chinese language teacher) have had experience with consciously trying to integrate cultural elements into their lessons. For instance, when the topic of Chinese New Year comes up during Chinese lessons, the Chinese teacher (participant A2, also teaches Maths) asks the students to compare the festival with their own festival. On the other hand, participant A3 (English teacher) shares her experience, "I try to choose more international news, preferably coming from southeast asian countries because I think it is also important for the local Chinese students - the minority in our classrooms - to learn about their classmates' diverse cultures".

4.1.3 Effect

Creating a more 'equitable' learning environment

Based on their own perception on the current Hong Kong education system for their ethnic minority students, the participants were asked if and how they have tried to create a more 'equitable' or fair learning environment for their students. All of the ethnic minority teachers answered in the affirmative. Some of the major ways they have utilized are:

- changing their pedagogy after realizing the difference in social behavior and socio-economic status between the local students and ethnic minority students
- providing support in various aspects, such as real-world connections (career and jobs), financial management for the future (taxes and bills)
- Further polishing the students' English skills so they can fully master at least 1 second language
- Preparing the students mentally for the future (e.g. job prospects, their future kids' education, etc) in order to prevent the same problems from recurring in the subsequent generations

On the other hand, two out of the five teachers from Group A answered 'yes' while the rest of them stated they are not quite sure how they can do that. The ones who have tried to make it more equitable have tried to do so by pairing the local Chinese students with the ethnic minority students so they can have more chances of intercultural communication and help each other with English and Chinese. Participant A2 has mentioned before how she thinks the math syllabus is "too difficult" for the students so she offers extra tutorial classes during her own time. There was one teacher (participant A5) who believed that there are already many opportunities given to EM students that are helping make the system more 'equitable', such as the Junior Police Call (JPC) program organized by the Hong Kong Police Force, a program that aims to foster a better relationship between the Hong Kong youth (all of them, *not just ethnic minorities*) and the police to fight against crimes and help nurture the youth's sense of responsibilities towards the society.

4.2 Observations

This section will report the findings of the data collected during classroom observations, as specified in section 3.4.

4.2.1 The local Chinese teacher's lesson

Background Details

This lesson observation was carried out in a Secondary One class, during their English lesson. This class contained a mix of local Chinese students and ethnic minority students. However, the large majority of students were coming from ethnic minority background (approximately 90%). The lesson lasted for 40 minutes.

Flow of the lesson

1. The teacher started off the lesson with a casual chat with the students, asking about what they had been up to in the weekend
2. Started the lesson with the PowerPoint, asking questions relating to the target grammatical item (using students' picture)
3. Asked them to finish a couple of exercises on the textbook
4. Asked them to form a sentence using the target grammatical item
5. Randomly picked a few students and asked them to share their sentence with the class

Teacher's notable behavior

- T mostly stayed in front of the class (near the blackboard and computer), and spoke from that position rather than walking around. Therefore, some students at the back of the classroom were seen to be doing their own thing or talking to their seatmates.
- She taught all of the grammar items at once (in the beginning of the lesson), none of them were prior knowledge as declared by herself.
- When students would try to speak in their language, she asked them to speak in English so she can also understand what they are saying.
- She paired the local Chinese students with the ethnic minority students.

4.2.2 The ethnic minority teacher's lesson

Background Details

This lesson observation was also carried out in a Secondary One class (albeit a different one), during their English lesson. However, when compared with the previous lesson observed (see section 4.2.1), the ethnic minority students made up approximately 95% of the class population. The lesson lasted for 40 minutes.

Flow of the lesson

1. The teacher started the lesson by writing "Menu of the Day" on the blackboard which has a 5 course meal that referred to the 5 "steps" of the lesson.
2. The first step was revision and activating prior knowledge (reported speech)
3. The second step involved a group activity where each group had to come in front of the class to perform
4. The third step was the short quiz the students were asked to prepare for (testing the prior knowledge)
5. The fourth step was reading a new short story that involved reported speech
6. The last and final step was assigning homework

Teacher's notable behavior

- T had a "food for thought" (Beside using dialogue, how else can we make a story exciting?) that was related to the grammar item they were taught in the lesson and the short story, all the while maintaining the "food" theme
- The students were allowed to talk freely without being too noisy or disruptive, they were not asked to maintain complete silence
- T listened to their opinion, when the group activity was introduced the class asked for it to turn into a competitive game (which was not the original plan)

- T although allowed them to be active in discussions and voice their opinions, he maintained classroom discipline and asked them to stop when it got too noisy
- T carried out immediate reflection after the group task "Why do you think this happened?" "What could you have done better?"
- When a group of students started to tease a classmate in Urdu, T joined in on "the fun" and joked back in Urdu for a short moment. Then, asked the class to focus back on the task
- The class seemed to have a routine, T said "Class formation" and the students separated their tables and put away everything on the table

<center>**5. Discussion**</center>

This section carries out a discussion with reference to the findings presented in the previous section (section 4), wherein the sub-sections explore and answer the three mains research questions (listed in section 1.3) using contextualized examples.

5.1 Perception of equity in education

5.1.1. Participants' different viewpoints on the problems EM students face

Based on Figure 2 found in section 4.1.1, it becomes evident that the kind of issues participants from both groups see as being problematic and 'unfair' for ethnic minority students are vastly different. On top of simply seeing problems within the boundaries of the school (e.g. problematic Chinese language curriculum, English being too easy, etc), teachers from Group A seemed to touch on the surface issues such as students' lacking the motivation to learn or lacking interest in Hong Kong issues. Most of the issues they raised are problems that they associate with the students themselves, implying that the students are to be blamed for the "problems". For instance, the opinion that "Maths syllabus is difficult" for them implies the largely problematic notion that the ethnic minority students do not possess the same level of intellect to do well in the same curriculum that is used for their Chinese counterparts. On the other hand, participants from Group B, to a larger extent, identified the root causes of the issues such as students not having a proper support network or the government giving out unmonitored funds.

Therefore, the need to employ a more culturally responsive pedagogy is established (Richard, Brown, and Forde, 2007). The personal dimension of the pedagogy states that a teacher should develop a consistent habit of self-reflection in order to assess whether any biases have been influencing their value system. On top of this, limited understanding of the students' culture or learning habits may also be a factor that affects their perception. Consequently, this leads to the next subsection relating to the existing demographic gap between the teacher and the students. A clear contrast is seen in section 4.1.2, and section 4.2 (comparing a local Chinese teacher's lesson and an ethnic minority teacher's lesson), between the participants from Group A and those in Group B, wherein Group B teachers are seemingly implementing a more culturally responsive pedagogy.

<center>23</center>

5.1.2. The demographic gap effect

Gershenson, Holt, and Papageorge (2016) state that the demographic mismatch between the teacher and the students – in terms of ethnicity - influences how teachers form expectations of their students. They found that the socio-demographic gap not only resulted in teachers having low expectations for students, the low expectations when communicated to students often also lead to harming their academic performance.

For instance, taking "the Maths syllabus is too difficult" as an example, both Maths teachers belonging to Group A shared the aforementioned opinion that perhaps it is the syllabus that is hard for the students hence they have relatively low academic score in the subject when compared with local Chinese students in other schools. This baseless assumption may not only be stemming from their low expectations, it may be influenced by the absence of culturally responsive pedagogy by the teachers. Therefore, they may be neglecting the fact that students from different cultures learn differently (Morgan, 2010). Walker (2007) puts forward the view that "Too often, ethnic minority students' opportunities are limited because of others' perceptions of their ability to do mathematics".

5.1.3. Personal experience factor

Furthermore, an observation can be made that the points of view of both groups of participants are different. That is to say, the Group B teachers tend to view the system through both their role as teachers as well as through the eyes of the students (due to their own past experience studying as minorities) while the Group A teachers tended to only view it from a teacher's point of view. Participant B3 vocalized his concerns by stating how "most ethnic minorities come from relatively low income families "many EMs are put in proper Chinese CMI schools, where they are the minority so they struggle due to less manpower and hence they are abandoned...teachers are not willing to do much for just a couple students so they lack the support they need to adapt to the new environment".

This occurrence may be stemming from the fact that the two groups of participants have largely different experience in terms of schooling. As mentioned in section 3.2, the ethnic minority teachers at one point

were in a similar situation as their students thus they have the added benefit of empathizing with the students as they may have face similar issues, and inadvertently are able to identify problems on a much deeper level.

Therefore, to answer the first research question, it is apt to deduce from the findings that the teacher participants seem to have varying perceptions of social justice in education, depending on their personal experience. Additionally, the demographic gap between the students and the teacher also plays a role in forming this perception.

5.2 Strong correlation between participants' perception and practice

Park (2008) found that the essential ingredient in carrying out a social justice pedagogy is first recognizing that there *is* injustice. In other words, a teacher's solid understanding of social injustice in his classrooms is the decisive driving force of altering his pedagogy. Similarly, the results of this study imply much the same notion, that is to say the participants' viewpoint on the education system for the ethnically diverse student body governs their teaching approach.

For instance, taking participant A5 as an example, his take on the current state of affairs in the education sector - with respect to ethnic minority students – is that there are already sufficient actions taken by the government to aid these students. His opinion, thus, led him to have a passive attitude towards what he can do for the students and his pedagogical views seem not to be adopting the culturally responsive pedagogy.

In essence, to answer the second and third research questions, section 4.1.2 gives a detailed account of how the teachers incorporate social justice in their teaching while it is proven that the presence of equity in the participants' beliefs largely affects their practice of teaching.

6. Limitations

This study had a number of limitations. Firstly, this is a small-scale study with only ten participants carried out in just one secondary school. Each group of teachers (Group A and Group B) had only five participants, further narrowing down the numbers. Thus, the probability of the findings being generalizable is, to some extent, decreased.

Secondly, all of the teachers interviewed belong to the same secondary school, which refrains the study from measuring the kind of role different schools may be playing in forming their teachers' perception of social justice and inevitably the effect on their pedagogy.

Thirdly, the school where this study was conducted is a "designated school" which implies that ethnic minority students are a majority in that school. Therefore, teachers' perceptions of equity in education for these students may have been influenced by this factor. At the same time, more depth could have been added to this research if a comparison was drawn between teachers working in designated schools and teachers working in local schools (where the ethnic minority students only comprise a small proportion of the school body).

Moreover, it can be assumed that the researcher's cultural background may have influenced the teachers' answers. The sensitive dynamics created are addressed as a requisite since this factor has not majorly affected the findings.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, this research is largely centered on exploring the perceptions teachers of ethnic minority students have and how their perceptions affects their pedagogy or practice of teaching. The research findings suggest that there is indeed a strong correlation between their perception and their practice. It was also found that the teachers have varying viewpoints on equity in education, with reference to their personal experience and their cultural background. It is stressed that culturally sensitive pedagogy should be adopted to better facilitate the ethnic minority students' learning.

For future directions, and with regards to what is explored in section 5, more research should be done on the field on teachers' perception, preferably on a larger scale than this study. Additionally, the importance of having minority teachers in schools teaching students of similar cultural background is also realized.

8. References

Banai, A., Ronzoni, M., & Schemmel, C. (Eds.). (2011). *Social justice, global dynamics: theoretical and empirical perspectives*. Routledge

Bell, L. A. (2007). Theoretical foundations for social justice education. In *Teaching for diversity and social justice* (pp. 25-38). Routledge.

Bhowmik, M. K., & Kennedy, K. J. (2012). Equitable educational provision for Hong Kong's ethnic minority students: Issues and priorities. *Educational Research Journal*, *27*(1/2), 27.

Bull, B. (2008). *Social justice in education : An introduction*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Chiu, M.M. and Walker, A. (2007), "Leadership for social justice in Hong Kong schools: addressing mechanisms of inequality", Journal of Educational Administration, Vol. 45 No. 6, pp. 724-39

Dunne, M. (2011). Who do you think you are….and who do you think you will be as a teacher? In D. McGregor & L. Cartwright (Eds.), *Developing reflective practice: A guide for beginning teachers* (pp. 39-54). Berkshire: Open University Press.

Gardner, F. (2000). Methodological issues in the direct observation of parent–child interaction: Do observational findings reflect the natural behavior of participants?. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, *3*(3), 185-198.

Hong Kong Unison Limited. (2016) *Hong Kong Unison Submission to the Subcommittee on Rights of Ethnic Minority on Education issues*.

Kaur, Baljit. (2012). Equity and Social Justice in Teaching and Teacher Education. *Teaching and Teacher Education: An International Journal of Research and Studies, 28*(4), 485-492.

Keddie, A. (2011). *Educating for diversity and social justice*. New York: Routledge.

Lee, Y. A. (2011). What does teaching for social justice mean to teacher candidates?. *The Professional Educator*, *35*(2), 1.

Loper, K. A. (2004). Race and equality: A study of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong's education system.

Barriball, K.L., & While, A. (1994). Collecting Data using a semi-structured interview: a discussion paper. *Journal of advanced nursing*, *19*(2), 328-335.

Miles, M. B. & Huberman, A. M. (1994). Qualitative Data Analysis (2nd edition). Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.

Morgan, H. (2010). Improving Schooling for Cultural Minorities: The Right Teaching Styles Can Make a Big Difference. *Educational Horizons*, *88*(2), 114-120.

Olsen, W. (2004). Triangulation in social research: qualitative and quantitative methods can really be mixed. *Developments in sociology*, *20*, 103-118.

Park, S. C. (2008). *Teachers' perceptions of teaching for social justice* (Doctoral dissertation, The Ohio State University).

Panthi, R. K., Luitel, B. C., & Belbase, S. (2018). Teachers' perception of social justice in mathematics classrooms. *Journal of Research in Mathematics Education*, *7*(1), 7-37.

Pike, L. C. (2015). Inclusive and Equitable Education for All in Hong Kong Forum Series: the prioritization of issues relating to the education of minority language students in Hong Kong, the Education University of Hong Kong

Population By-census (2011). Thematic Report: Ethnic Minorities. Census and Statistics Department: The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Retrieved from: https://www.statistics.gov.hk/pub/B11201002016XXXXB0100.pdf

Richards, H. V., Brown, A. F., & Forde, T. B. (2007). Addressing diversity in schools: Culturally responsive pedagogy. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *39*(3), 64-68.

Walker, E. N. (2007). Why aren't more minorities taking advanced math?. *Educational Leadership*, *65*(3), 48.

Appendix I - Questions for the semi-structured interview

By applying the funneling theory, there are three stages, a few sample questions are included in each stage;

Perception (1st RQ):
1)   What is your opinion on the current education system for ethnic minority students?
2)   What is your opinion on the Equality of Educational Opportunity?

Practice (2nd RQ):
1)   What are ways you have tried to get to learn more about the cultures of your students?
2)   How have you tried to incorporate this learning into your lesson planning?

Effect (3rd RQ):
1)   How have you consciously tried different ways of creating a more just or equitable learning environment for your students?
2)   To what extent do you think your personal understandings on equity have affected your students?