



Department of Curriculum and Instruction

TLS4029 Honours Project

**The Challenges Faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian
Teachers Teaching in Hong Kong Educational Institutes**

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Declaration

I, Khan Anita , declare that this research report represents my own work under the supervision of Dr. GUBE Jan Christian C., and that it has not been submitted previously for examination to any tertiary institution.

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Abstract

The number of South Asian and Southeast Asians entering the teaching field in Hong Kong has been on the rise. These teachers face numerous challenges when teaching. However, little research has been done in this area in the context of Hong Kong.

This study aims at exploring the difficulties faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers teaching in Hong Kong educational settings. Semi-structured interviews were carried out for this study, involving 10 South Asian/Southeast Asian teachers teaching in Hong Kong. The interviews revealed that these teachers faced three main challenges, namely social isolation, catering to the needs of students with Special Education Needs (SEN) and inadequate professional development. The participants attributed the issue of social isolation to language barrier and cultural differences, and attributed the challenge of catering to the needs of students with SEN to inadequate knowledge and trainings. The professional development courses the participants have been receiving/received were perceived as basic and superficial by the respondents.

It was interesting to find that the challenges faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers teaching in schools with Chinese Medium of Instruction (CMI) and those teaching in English Medium of Instruction (EMI) were diametrically opposite. This paper further illustrates the possible reasons behind such differences. The study concludes with suggestions that can be implemented by various stakeholders to alleviate the challenges faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers in Hong Kong, and hence improve their working environment.

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1. Research Background and Significance

The earliest settlement of Southeast Asians in Hong Kong was in 1841 during the British Empire (Erni & Leung, 2014). Their existence has made Hong Kong a multicultural society, where seeing people of colour has become common. Previously, South and Southeast Asians in Hong Kong contributed to the society mainly by working in elementary occupations.

According to the Equal Opportunities Commission (2015), the lack of appropriate language qualifications is one of the reasons why South and Southeast Asians are relegated to low-pay, blue collar work. However, with the exposure of education, children of the previous South and Southeast generations now graduate with degrees and diplomas. The Population By-census (2016) stated that 34.6% of Southeast Asians have attended post-secondary education in 2016. Many of them have begun giving back to Hong Kong through pursuing a career in the field of education (Soto, 2019). They have taken up teaching positions in kindergartens, primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong.

Despite offering their services in the education field, their growing contribution has yet to be studied. A large array of literature can be found surrounding the hurdles South and Southeast Asian students face in the education system in Hong Kong, educational policies implemented by different stakeholders to equip schools to cater for the needs of these students more effectively, etc. For example, according to Kapai (2015), South and Southeast Asian students faced issues such as discrimination as some schools were not willing to give them admission, inadequate learning assistance as teachers were not given enough training to manage multicultural students, etc. Another study done by Loper (2004) found that many Southeast Asian students were dissatisfied with the special Chinese classes provided to them in schools as its oversimplified content was unable to train them for the job market. However, the aforementioned pieces of literature are mainly centred around the challenges of South and

Southeast Asian students instead of teachers. With the rise in the number of South and Southeast Asian teachers in Hong Kong, this paper hopes to provide insights and yield data to address their problems and bring awareness to the educational environment they face so as to improve the overall education quality in schools.

2. Literature Review

Overview of South and Southeast Asians in Hong Kong

Southeast Asians in Hong Kong are not new people in the territory as their history can be traced back to the 1800s (O'Connor, 2018). During the British colonial period, the contribution of Southeast Asians was vast. They performed important roles such as soldiers, sailors, etc. However, in the postcolonial period, large number of Southeast Asians remained distinctly marginalised in terms of employment, education, and rights (O'Conner, 2018). As a result, majority of them lagged in education and landed in blue-collar occupations such as security guards, construction workers, etc. Nevertheless, in recent years, Southeast Asians in Hong Kong have been climbing up the social ladder. Approximately 34.6% of ethnic minorities have attended post-secondary education comparing to 3.1% in 2001, out of which 6.4% have studied in the field of education (Population By-census, 2016). These statistics explains the increasing number of South and Southeast Asian teachers in Hong Kong schools and reflect their growing contribution in the education sector. Hence, it is necessary to provide a platform for these marginalized voices to be heard as it would be an essential step towards creating a positive enduring change in education (Navarro, 1992).

South and Southeast Asian teachers often face numerous challenges when teaching in educational institutes. A wide collection of literature has identified two main and common challenges faced by them in their workplace, namely culture shock and racial discrimination.

2.1 Cultural Shock

Culture shock is a more or less sudden immersion into a nonspecific state of uncertainty where the individuals are not certain what is expected of them or of what they can expect from the persons around them (Pedersen, 1995). It is one of the most known problems minority teachers face when teaching in a different culture. Non-local teachers are likely to experience culture shock due to the difference in their culture and the adopted country's culture (Atwater, Russell, & Butler, 2013). The issue becomes even more problematic when the teachers' culture is very different than the culture they currently teach in.

Hong Kong, which is primarily a Chinese society, has an education system that is largely influenced by conventional Confucius values. According to these values, it is believed that good teachers need to embody the form of life they advocate, display all the virtues themselves, and be a good role model for students, thereby allowing students to learn by good example (Hui, 2005). Such highly demanding beliefs and roles may be difficult for non-local teachers to follow. For instance, although the education system of Southeast Asian countries, such as Pakistan, also leans largely towards teacher-centred teaching methods due to the limitations of physical, financial and human resources (Rawat, Thomas, & Qazi, 2012), it does not have a defined set of beliefs or values to follow like Confucianism. Thus, these Southeast Asian countries, such as Pakistan, have gradually started to utilize a student-centred approach in education due to the influence of globalization (Khan, 2007). When minority teachers shift to teaching in an environment that has a culture significantly different than that of their own, they may face adaptation problems (Lam, 2014). They may feel inadequately prepared to teach in classrooms and would be less effective in their teaching roles compared to local teachers. In addition, the disconnection between the cultural and

pedagogical understandings between teachers and students may also cause communication and understanding gaps in teacher-student relationships, negatively impacting the teaching and learning quality in classrooms (Kaur, 2017).

How long the issue of culture shock lasts often depends on a teacher's personality and support he/she receives from their new environment. According to Kaur (2017), an Indian minority teacher working in New Zealand emphasized the importance of utilizing their existing skills to make adjustment to their teaching approach and norms to meet the needs of students. As mentioned by Luwisch (2005), teachers would have to bring to their work or create for themselves and their classes "some sense of place" in their teaching environments. Another minority teacher working in New Zealand also highlighted the importance of developing and applying new knowledge in classrooms to overcome the challenges caused by culture shock (Kaur, 2017). She took extra courses to understand the fundamentals of teaching and learning in New Zealand and later applied them when teaching (Kaur, 2017).

2.2 Racial Discrimination

According to the International Labour Conference (2003), to discriminate is to treat differently and less favourably because of certain characteristics, such as their sex, the colour of their skin or their religion, political beliefs or social origins. It is not uncommon for discrimination to occur in Hong Kong since according to Equal Opportunities Commission (2016), ethnic minorities in Hong Kong complained that they face discrimination in various aspects of their lives. Due to this, it is likely that ethnic minority teachers face discrimination in Hong Kong schools. Carmmett and MacDowell (2016) found that many immigrant and minority teachers are victims of prejudice and discrimination by their colleagues, parents, students and school administrators. Such discrimination often stems from a lack of understanding about the culture of the minority teachers by the mainstream culture (Ozbarlas

& Yee, 2008). They may feel as if they are being treated differently or less favourably than their peers due to their ethnicity or may also observe stereotypical views regarding their culture or language among other local teachers working with them. Furthermore, minority teachers may experience a sense isolation as they may think they are not welcomed by their colleagues, negatively affecting their self-esteem and working motivation. Dibrito and Cháovez (1999) mentioned that due to discrimination, minority teachers may not develop a sense of belonging, therefore, they may feel less than desirable within their working environment.

Unlike issues such as culture shock, there is no direct solution to solve racial discrimination. This is also supported by a study done by Zhang (2005), which stated that unlike language and cultural differences, racial and ethnic difference cannot be negotiated through learning and conformity. For instance, as mentioned above, minority teachers thoroughly tackled the issue of culture shock through learning about the culture of the new country and conforming to the teaching norms of the schools. On the contrary, there are no firmly established strategies to tackle racial discrimination which makes the issue more challenging to resolve. Nonetheless, according to Lee (2010), teachers who were being discriminated in the United States tried adopting different strategies to cope with discrimination in schools. For instance, one of the minority teachers decided to stand up for herself and report her concerns to the principal which worked in solving her issues with her supervisor who discriminated her (Lee, 2010). Meanwhile, Lee (2010) study also found that another minority teacher decided not to respond back to her colleague who was passing discriminatory messages and instead showed her respect. Her positive attitude and open-mindedness enabled her to have a good relationship with her colleague in the end (Lee, 2010).

The literature above summarizes the challenges faced by minority teachers in countries such as United States, New Zealand, etc. Due to the shortage of research on this topic in Hong Kong

context, it was necessary to look for research from other countries which provided insights into the barriers faced by minority teachers. This proves the need to carry out research in Hong Kong context as doing so can provide more insight to the government and education policy makers when advancing educational reforms in Hong Kong educational institutions, thus improving the educational experience of all students and teachers (Abramova, 2012).

3. Research Question

In light of the above discussion, my research aims to investigate the following area:

- What are the challenges faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers when teaching in a Hong Kong educational setting?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Method

Interview was chosen as the qualitative data collecting method to identify the challenges faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers when teaching in Hong Kong. The interviews were conducted in English and were semi-structured. The aforementioned qualitative data collecting method allowed the collection of comprehensive and in-depth data for this study.

4.2 Participants

A total of 10 participants with South Asian and Southeast Asian backgrounds living in Hong Kong were interviewed. For the purpose of preserving anonymity, the participants are labelled with letters. The details of the participants' backgrounds are shown in the table below.

| Participants | Gender | Nationality | Total no. of years teaching in HK | Teaching English in.. |
|--------------|--------|-------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| A | Female | Pakistani | 2 | Kindergarten (CMI) |
| B | Female | Filipino | 4 | Secondary school (CMI) |
| C | Female | Filipino | 3 | Primary school (CMI) |
| D | Female | Indian | 10 | Kindergarten (CMI) |
| E | Female | Pakistani | 4 | Kindergarten (CMI) |
| F | Female | Indian | 5 | Primary school (CMI) |
| G | Female | Sri Lankan | 2 | Secondary school (CMI) |
| H | Male | Indian | 20 | Secondary school (CMI) |
| I | Female | Pakistani | 7 | Secondary school (EMI) |
| J | Female | Pakistani | 11 | Secondary school (EMI) |

**Note: The EMI schools are schools that were previously labelled as “designated” schools*

**Designated schools are schools with a majority of non-Chinese speaking students*

**EMI = English Medium of Instruction*

CMI= Chinese Medium of Instruction

4.3 Interviews

The teachers were contacted through emails and instant messages (WhatsApp) and were invited for the interview. Due to the pandemic, the participants were sent the consent form through WhatsApp and were asked to read through it before signing. Then, based on the participants’ availability, online Zoom interviews were arranged.

In the interview, participants were asked about their personal and teaching backgrounds, teaching beliefs, the difficulties they encounter during teaching and the strategies utilized to overcome the difficulties, and any available external support they receive or require (Appendix). The interview questions asked were open-ended and spontaneous to ensure an in-depth discussion on the topic for the purpose of collecting comprehensive data. Following the semi-structure nature of the interview, follow-up and clarifying questions were asked if the participants' answers were unclear or not detailed enough.

4.4 Motivation for becoming a teacher

When participants were asked why they chose to pursue a career in teaching, most of them stated that they were interested in teaching. A small number of participants mentioned that they chose teaching due to the high pay. Only one participant chose teaching due to her interest in exploring Hong Kong's culture.

4.5 Analysis of interview data

Qualitative analysis process was used to analyze the data. Qualitative data analysis predominantly involves coding the information or data, and subsequently assigning them into categories (Wong, 2008). This form of analysis was adopted as it was the most efficient and convenient way to draw data that would directly answer my research question.

The data collected from the interview was first transcribed, where long answers by participants were shortened without affecting the main ideas of the response. Next, the data was divided into two broad categories, namely; difficulties and the reasons behind the difficulties, for the research question. In the broad categories, words, phrases and sentences with similar themes were highlighted and coded. The codes were then grouped up into subgroups based on similarity, after which themes were generated for the subgroups based on the main idea.

The flow chart below demonstrates an example of how the data analysis process was carried out.

| Words/Sentences/Phrases | |
|--|---------------------------|
| Don't feel included in their groups | → code = segregated |
| Trainings keep recycling the content which isn't helpful | → code = no new knowledge |
| Feeling of alienation | → code = loneliness |
| Feel excluded from them | → code = exclusion |
| Expect me to teach perfectly without training | → code = no training |



Grouping the codes based on similarity

| Group A | Group B |
|------------|------------------|
| exclusion | no training |
| loneliness | no new knowledge |
| segregated | |



Generating themes based on main idea

| Social isolation | Inadequate professional development |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| exclusion | no training |
| loneliness | no new knowledge |
| segregated | |

5. Findings

After the data analysis, three main challenges were identified in the participant's responses. The three main challenges faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers teaching in Hong Kong are, 1) social isolation 2) catering to students with Special Education Needs (SEN) and 3) inadequate professional development (shown in figure 2 below).

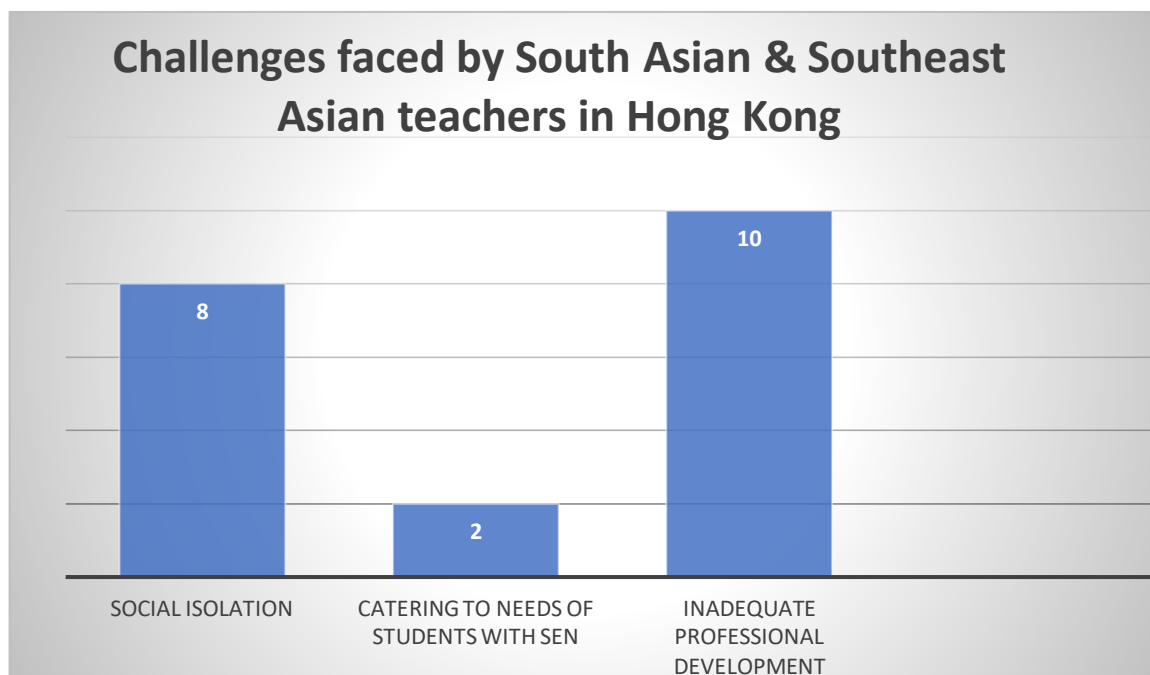


Figure 2: Challenges faced by South Asian & Southeast Asian teachers in Hong Kong

5.1 Social isolation

Social isolation refers to an individual's perceptions of lack of availability of support and recognition, missed opportunities for informal interactions with co-workers or and not being part of the group (Marshall, 2007). Social isolation was a theme identified in majority of the participant's responses. All the 8 participants who were teaching in a CMI school stated that they felt lonely at work. They emphasized that they faced great difficulties establishing good relationships with their colleagues.

Participant F mentioned:

“I don’t feel included at work. It’s like.. the Chinese teachers have their own group where they eat, sit and talk. They don’t talk to me much unless it’s related to work.”

A similar opinion was expressed by participant A:

“There’s no free communication between the EM teachers and Chinese teachers. We usually have only superficial conversations. Other than that, we are often kept aside from them.”

Upon further elaboration, 5 participants attributed the issue of social isolation at work to language barrier while 4 participants attributed it to cultural differences. For instance,

Participant E mentioned:

“My colleagues are not good at English. So, I think they don’t feel confident talking to me.”

Participant A and B mentioned:

“They don’t get our jokes and we don’t get theirs. Chinese people have a different way of talking and making jokes comparing to us EMs you know. So it’s hard to connect with them.”

5.2 Catering to students with Special Education Needs (SEN)

Both participant I and J working in the EMI schools highlighted their difficulty of carrying out differentiated teaching in a classroom. They mentioned that it was difficult for them to address to the needs of students with SEN as they lacked the relevant knowledge required. In addition, they mentioned that they were not given any further training or support in this area.

Participant J quoted:

“I don’t know how to cater for the SEN students. They should have a SEN teacher but instead the school just expects me to be able to do it.”

Participant I quoted:

“Its challenging to cater to the SEN students. I remember having only one course about SEN in my undergraduate degree program when I was studying to become an English teacher. I didn’t receive any kind of training in this field after that.”

5.3 Inadequate professional development

All the participants mentioned that they do not receive adequate support from their workplace or the Education Bureau (EDB) in terms of enhancing their teaching or tackling other workplace difficulties. 5 out of 10 participants attended the workshops offered by their workplace and EDB, and said that the workshops were not useful as it only “scratched the surface” and the content was too basic and superficial. The remaining participants revealed that they did not attend the workshops since they believe they are not useful in addressing the issues they are facing, such as integrating into their workplace.

Upon asking the participants what kind of professional development they have been receiving/have received, they mentioned that they mostly received trainings on how to teach the four English Language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing, and were introduced to some activities on how to increase students’ learning motivation levels.

Majority of the participants further added that there was a huge disconnect between the content in the workshops and real-life classrooms. For example, Participant I stated:

“They give you tips on how to increase motivation level of students, but it doesn’t really work in a real classroom since all students have such different learning styles.”

Meanwhile, Participant H mentioned:

“None of the teaching pedagogies they introduce in the workshops are applicable when teaching in Band 1 schools. The content is too basic and only works when teaching students with lower English proficiencies, like those in Band 3 CMI schools.”

6. Discussion

Unlike other research conducted overseas which stated that minority teachers often face the challenge of discrimination and culture shock, the findings in this study differ. In the findings, it was discovered that one of the challenges South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers in Hong Kong particularly face is developing relationships with their Chinese colleagues. This reflects their difficulty of sociocultural adjustment. Sociocultural adjustment is the ability to ‘fit in’ and negotiate interactive aspects of the new culture (Ward et al., 1998). According to most of the participants, language barrier has played a negative role in terms of socialization and has caused a potential disconnect between the South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers, and their Chinese colleagues. In CMI schools, as all the subjects except English are taught in Chinese, it is valid that majority of the school employees might not be fluent in English (as mentioned by participant E) and hence, may hesitate to communicate with South/Southeast Asian teachers in the fear of making mistakes. The finding can also be associated with the Face-Saving theory, which mentions that Chinese avoid doing something that might damage their ‘face’ or social standing (Zhang et al., 2006). This, however, has a negative effect on how South/Southeast Asian teachers perceive the Chinese colleagues’ willingness to facilitate an international environment. As participant F mentioned:

The Chinese workers always have their own group where they talk to each other a lot, but with us, they tend to avoid us.

Participant F’s response shows that Chinese workers unwillingness to communicate can serve a factor for exclusion, making the South/Southeast Asian teachers feel alienated in the workplace.

As for the cultural differences, Hong Kong is a largely homogenous city with little assimilation policies encouraged by the government to integrate with the ethnic minorities.

There has been an invisible divide between the Chinese and the ethnic minorities with limited

interaction among each other. When a culturally homogenous group interact with each other, the shared norms and behaviour fosters understandings and intimacy between the members. Hence when interacting across cultures, differences in language and behavioural norms can make it more challenging to create shared meaning which contributes to misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. This is also supported by a study done by Florence (2011), who found that cultural misunderstandings and disconnections made foreign trained teachers feel like aliens.

It is interesting to note that the difficulties faced by South/Southeast Asian teachers working in CMI schools and those working in the ‘designated’ EMI schools are diametrically opposite. South/Southeast Asian teachers working in the ‘designated’ schools encounter challenges that are not specific to ethnicity but are rather universal instead. For example, those working in CMI schools mainly encounter problems associated with socializing with their Chinese colleagues while those in ‘designated’ EMI schools experience difficulty in catering for the needs of SEN students which is likely to be encountered by all types of teachers. A possible reason as to why South/Southeast Asian and Chinese teachers in ‘designated’ EMI schools have built positive relationships with each other as opposed to those working in CMI schools, may be attributed to the ethno-racial dynamics within the school environment. In contrast to a homogenous setting, working in an environment with staff from various backgrounds can ease the feeling of alienation and increase one’s sense of belonging. This makes it easier for teachers of different backgrounds to reach out to each other, improving relations as a result. Furthermore, communicating with students and staff from different backgrounds may have introduced the Chinese teachers in the ‘designated’ schools to new cultures that they may never have been exposed to, allowing them to learn new cultural insights, reducing prejudice and becoming more accepting in general. This idea can also be explained by Allport’s (1954) Contact Theory, which suggests that increased

contact between members of different groups under appropriate conditions can reduce the amount of prejudice that members of different groups hold towards each other, improving relations as a result.

Carrying out differentiated instruction, which is a challenge for South/Southeast Asian teachers working in the EMI ‘designated’ schools, is an adversity faced by many teachers worldwide. According to a study done by Wever et al. (2016), graduate teachers identified catering for diverse learners as the most challenging. In Hong Kong schools where large classroom sizes are common, it is not unusual to have diverse learners, including students with special educational needs in the same class. Particularly after the surge in the number of students with special educational needs (SEN) in Hong Kong by 170% in the last 10 years (Leung, 2019), a teaching dilemma has risen for educators. Correlating with the difficulty of inadequate professional development as indicated by all the participants, the South/Southeast Asian teachers working in ‘designated’ EMI schools may not be qualified or have the professional knowledge to cater for such special educational needs. This is also shown in a study by Leung (2019), where most local teachers in Hong Kong expressed concerns that they do not have adequate SEN training. In addition, as schools sometimes try to cut the cost of educating students by not hiring additional staff such as qualified SEN teachers, regular teachers are often required to figure out how to solve the problem on their own, leaving them in an unfavourable situation.

In contrast to the remarks made by participant I regarding the provision of inadequate teacher trainings to cater for students with SEN, teacher education universities (with the support of the EDB) do provide plenty of courses for teachers to enhance their knowledge on supporting students’ special educational needs. For instance, the Education University of Hong Kong offers part time courses such as Supporting Students with ADHD, Supporting Students with

Emotional Behavioural Challenges, etc. However, most of these courses are conducted in the evenings (6:30 – 9:20 pm) on weekdays which teachers might find difficult to attend due to their school workload or because they might be too fatigued to attend the courses after a long day at work. In addition, the quality of the courses offered is questionable since half of my participants stated that the content of the teacher training workshops they have attended was impractical and too idealistic to be applied to a real classroom.

There are, however, no courses that aim at equipping teachers to tackle challenges outside teaching, such as those targeted towards creating interpersonal relationships at work, cultural diversity among staff, etc. This may explain why half of my participants are unwilling to join the trainings as they do not help with their problems outside teaching. Non-teaching related challenges do not seem to have been studied enough or brought sufficient attention to in Hong Kong which may account for the lack of support provided in these areas to teachers.

7. Suggestions

The following suggestions can be implemented to mitigate the challenges faced by South and Southeast Asian teachers in the workplace.

7.1 Diversity training

As workplaces are becoming increasingly diverse, diversity training should be offered by schools or the EDB to alleviate challenges caused by cultural barriers among teachers of different cultures. It can provide new cultural insights to teachers and encourage teachers to understand different perspectives, reducing unconscious prejudice or stereotypes. As a result, a more inclusive work environment can be developed which would allow teachers of all cultures, especially the minorities, feel comfortable and valued.

7.2 Diversify workforce

Schools should aim to be more open to hiring teachers from different cultures and diversify their teaching force. Since Hong Kong is a largely homogenous city, inclusion of minority cultures in the workplace will diminish the segregation of Chinese and South/Southeast Asian people, and allow smoother cross-cultural integration. This will facilitate the creation of a more unified teaching environment in schools.

7.3 Hire Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers

With the increasing number of students with special education needs in Hong Kong classrooms, schools should opt to hire SEN teachers as they are qualified and possess the relevant skills in handling and teaching such students. Comparing to regular teachers, SEN teachers can better understand the needs of students who require special education and hence, provide them with a more suitable and effective learning environment. Hiring SEN teachers can also reduce the workload of regular teachers and allows them to focus on providing quality teaching to other students.

7.4 Professional development workshops

The EDB and schools should re-evaluate the content of their workshops and trainings to effectively enhance teacher's professional development. Since most of the participants mentioned that the content of the trainings are basic and superficial, the EDB and schools can aim at providing quality and practical content that can be used by teachers in real-life settings. This can be achieved by frequently surveying teachers to learn about their needs and hence, provide a more diversified set of workshops such as Cantonese classes for South/Southeast Asian teachers, tips on adjusting to work environment, etc. In addition, the EDB and schools should also consider providing more flexible options, in terms of the days and timings of the workshops, to make it feasible for teachers to attend these trainings.

7.5 Widening the scope of teacher training programmes

With the number of students with SEN increasing in regular Hong Kong classrooms, universities should strive to equip prospective teachers with the relevant skills to cater for such diverse learning needs. As mentioned by one of the participants, there was only one course related to SEN in her degree programme. This reflects the narrow scope of some of the undergraduate programmes that run to train future teachers. Universities should widen the scope of their teacher training programmes through providing more courses related to SEN education so that it can raise prospective teachers' professional standards in special needs and inclusive education along with subject teaching. Although there are specific degree programmes targeted towards SEN education, it is essential that every degree program aimed at training teachers also has sufficient integration of SEN-related content since students with SEN are often placed in mainstream classrooms. This would not only enhance prospective South/Southeast Asian teachers' competencies but the competencies of every type of teacher, and train them to become more effective, well-rounded teachers that can cater to the learning needs of all types of students.

7.6. Diminishing the invisible divide within society

As mentioned previously, there has long been an invisible divide between ethnic minorities (i.e. South/Southeast Asians) and Chinese people in Hong Kong, resulting in limited understanding between the two. The limited understanding of culture and background is also one of the reasons contributing to the difficulty of South/Southeast Asian teachers' integrating into their workplace. To diminish this divide, the government can collaborate with different bodies or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly those aimed at helping ethnic minorities, to organize activities that will benefit the coexistence of both communities, such as cultural awareness talks, cultural performances, etc. Through such

activities, people of all races in the city can get a fair chance to openly communicate and gain awareness about the cultures of their fellow citizens, allowing them to better integrate into the society harmoniously. This can subsequently facilitate the process of smoother communication between South/Southeast Asian teachers and Chinese teachers in the workplace, alleviating the issue of segregation.

8. Limitation of the study

Due to time limitation, the sample size of this study is small due to which the findings of this research may not be considered as a representative of majority of the South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers in Hong Kong. In addition, the participants mainly included females. There is a possibility that a different set of challenges could have been identified if there were a similar number of male and female participants in the study.

In future research, it is suggested that a larger number of participants be interviewed with a similar number of males and females to attain more accurate findings. In addition, it would be beneficial to interview Chinese teachers working with South/Southeast Asian teachers to understand the opposite perspective and gain a better understanding of the situation. This would help schools and EDB in formulating more concise and effective solutions to mitigate the challenges of these teachers.

9. Conclusion

This study identified three main challenges faced by South Asian and Southeast Asian teachers working in Hong Kong educational setting institutes. The first challenge found is social isolation faced by South/Southeast Asian teachers working in CMI schools due to language barrier and cultural differences. The second challenge faced by these teachers is catering to students with SEN due to the lack of knowledge and the last challenge is inadequate professional development.

The research confirms that the government, EDB, schools and universities play an important role in mitigating the challenges faced by South/Southeast Asian teachers. It is hoped that this research can raise awareness of the problems faced by South/Southeast Asian teachers and serve as a reference for different stakeholders when formulating solutions to provide a better work environment for these teachers.

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11. Appendix

Interview Questions

Personal Information

1. Which country are you from?

Where are you parents from? (if applicable)

2. How long have you been living in Hong Kong? (if applicable)

3. Why did you decide to live in Hong Kong? (if applicable)

Work

5. Why did you choose to work as a teacher in Hong Kong?

6. How many years have you been teaching in Hong Kong?

7. What grade do you teach?

8. How many students are there in each class?

9. Which countries are your students from?
10. Which subjects do you teach?
11. Can you describe your typical day at school?

Difficulties

12. Have you faced any type of difficulties while teaching?
What kind of difficulties have you faced? (if applicable)
13. If no, what do you think helped you adjust so well to working as a teacher in Hong Kong?
If yes, what difficulties have you faced when working as a teacher in Hong Kong?
14. How did you cope with these difficulties?
15. How is your relationship with your students? Why do you think it is that way?
16. How is your relationship with your local colleagues? Why do you think it is that way?

Teaching beliefs

17. What is your ideal teaching approach?
18. What is your current teaching approach? Do you think its different from the approaches that are used in the school you work in? If yes, how?
19. Do u think the mismatch of your teaching approaches and the school's teaching approach is causing problems in your teaching career? (if applicable)
20. Do you think you've adjusted to teaching in your school that may have a different set of teaching approaches than yours? Why or why not?
21. If adjusted, how? If not adjusted, how do you think you may be able to adjust in the coming future? (follow up)

External support

22. What type of support has been available for you to adjust to the teaching approach of Hong Kong schools? E.g. support from EDB, support from tutorial centre? Etc.
23. Have you attended any workshops to familiarize yourself with the teaching philosophies of Hong Kong local schools/education system?
24. If yes, who organized them? What did they teach?
If no, why not?
25. Do you think the EDB/school provide enough support for you to adjust to the teaching beliefs of local Hong Kong schools? Why/why not?
26. Do you think there should be any other types of support available to you to adjust to the teaching beliefs of local Hong Kong schools? If yes, what should it be and why?

Overall experience

27. How would you describe your overall working experience as a minority teacher in Hong Kong?

28. Would you recommend your ethnic minority friends to teach in Hong Kong? Why/why not?

29. Do you have any other questions you wish to ask?

Thank you so much for your time.