

# EDUCATIONAL PLANNING FOR SCHOOL GUIDANCE: TEACHERS' NARRATIVES OF THE DIVERSE NEEDS OF ETHNIC MINORITY STUDENTS IN HONG KONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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## ABSTRACT

*Many Hong Kong schools are concerned about the effective use of educational planning for fulfilling the diverse needs of ethnic minority students particularly given their growing numbers. No matter what educational plans for ethnic minority students are made, how they are implemented becomes critical. This article examines teachers' narratives of the cross-cultural experiences of ethnic minority students from India, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal and Thailand, and the diversity of those students' different learning needs. Qualitative data were collected from interviews, through which the constructs of thirty-two teachers from three secondary schools were explored. This paper argues that when devising and implementing an educational plan for promoting the welfare of ethnic minority students, it is not only necessary for the plan to promote the intercultural sensitivity of all practitioners, but it is equally important to develop a connected school system where ethnic minority students and parents can be consistently supported in the subsystems of classroom, school, and home.*

## INTRODUCTION

Hong Kong schools are responsible for catering to the diverse needs of students, regardless of their background, ethnicity, and spoken languages (Education Commission, 2000; Education and Manpower Bureau, 2004a, 2004b). School guidance, also known as pastoral care, has a crucial role to play in recognizing students' individual differences and uniqueness and in creating a safe, positive, and nurturing environment wherein differences among students can be explored. The ultimate goal of pastoral care is to care for students in need, help them deal with difficulties, and promote the whole-person growth of all students (Best, Ribbins, Jarvis & Oddy, 1983; Hamblin, 1978; Marland, 1974; McGuinness, 1989; Watkins, 2001; Watkins & Wagner, 1987, 2000). School guidance also aims to encourage student's self-esteem and the development of various aspects of *self*, including personal, moral, and social dimensions and to help all school practitioners embrace and celebrate the rich dimensions of diversity contained within each student. It has been suggested that it be made an integral part of any educational program (Marland, 1974; Miller, Fruchling & Lewis, 1978; Watkins, 1992, 1995), and could include educational planning for supporting the learning of ethnic minority students. In Hong Kong schools, school guidance is offered at two levels: individual and departmental. At the individual level, all teachers are expected to have a guidance role in caring. At the department level, the guidance team or department, also known as the counseling team or department, is formed to offer counseling services for students, to support students in need, and to organize whole-school programs for enhancing the personal growth of students (Education Department, 1986). The counseling team is responsible for formal educational planning for school guidance.

Since the introduction of quality assurance, school self-evaluation, and the external school review in 2004 (Cheng, 2006; Cheng & Chan, 2000; Cheng & Cheung, 2001; Education and Manpower Bureau, 2001, 2004), educational planning for school improvement and the development of caring work, congruent with the school ethos and mission, has become a crucial task for all school managers and leaders involved in school guidance. This is a challenging task as there are no official government policies or guidelines about school guidance upon which educational planning could be devised, implemented and evaluated. Since 2002, with the Postgraduate Diploma in Education Program, guidance teachers are more intent on making the management and leadership of their caring work more accountable. Accordingly, the department or team of school guidance has focused more on measurable performance. The department head has put effort into linking the organizational aims of caring with organizational processes, whereas guidance teachers feel it is necessary to engage in various planning efforts which lead other school practitioners to implement the developed plan.

In Hong Kong, the majority of the ethnic minority students who do not speak Chinese are assigned

to special schools that have traditionally served these students. In 2006-07, 20 schools were designated by the government for this purpose. Among them, five were secondary schools. To date, no study has explored the views of teachers from these designated schools and particularly examined their narratives of planning for school guidance. This study, therefore, aimed to examine how teachers involved in school guidance addressed the diverse needs of ethnic minority students from India, Pakistan, Philippines, Nepal and Thailand. The concept of diverse needs underlying this study is built upon the conventional understanding of diversity, related to race, ethnicity, languages, socio-economic status, religious beliefs, and other ideologies. Understanding teachers' views about the schooling experience of these students is a way to help school managers plan for effective school guidance relating to the challenges both teachers and students face. Researchers have explored the learning difficulties of ethnic minority students in schools and recommended factors for enhancing the effectiveness of educational planning for school improvement and development. This article first explores that literature, posits a theoretical framework to examine the cross-cultural experiences and diverse needs of ethnic minority students, and describes this study of teacher perceptions of the student experiences. Last, the implications for educational planning for the provision of education to ethnic minority students will be discussed.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

According to the Hong Kong population census statistics, the number of ethnic minority students has been growing in Hong Kong while their needs and rights have not been properly addressed. In 2001, the number of ethnic minority students under 15 years, who were legally required to be enrolled in schools with free education, was 11,204. By 2006, the number had grown by 20% to 13,472, and in 2007 there were 28,722 ethnic minority students studying full-time in schools or educational institutions in Hong Kong (Census and Statistics Department, 2007). Compared with local Chinese students, the rate of school attendance of ethnic minority students, aged above 15, was relatively low, particularly for those enrolled in educational programs at the post-secondary level. This difference in attendance rate can be compared between the whole population of students in the two age groups of 17 to 18 and 19 to 24, which are 82.8% and 37.3% respectively, whereas, for the population of ethnic minority students in these two age groups, the rates are 74.3% and 6.7% respectively (Census and Statistics Department, 2007).

There is a developing body of literature on the education of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong. Loper (2004) found that many ethnic minority students such as Indians, Pakistanis, Nepalese and Filipinos were excluded from Hong Kong schools (Loper, 2004; Yang Memorial Methodist Social Service, 2000, 2002). Public concern about the education of ethnic minority students has been reflected in stories reported in Hong Kong newspapers of these students' experiences, difficulties, and struggles in Hong Kong schools and communities (Ku, Chan & Sandhu, 2005; South China Morning Post, 2006a, 2006b). Yet, some positive experiences have been reported from teachers in classrooms where ethnic minority students participated. Kennedy, Hue and Tsui (2008) showed that teachers reported a higher level of self-efficacy when teaching non-Chinese compared to Chinese students and that they were equally able to engage all students in their learning.

Educational planning for supporting the learning of ethnic minority students is also an issue of great concern in western societies. It is accepted that the enrollment of ethnic minority students has brought diversity to schools. The diverse needs of these students have been highlighted in studies into their cross-cultural experiences in mainstream schools (Codjoe, 2001; Haque, 2000; He, Phillion, Chan & Xu, 2008; Mansouri & Trembath, 2005; Rassool, 1999). In general, these ethnic minority students had difficulty in learning the local language, while their families struggled with economic insecurity or poverty (Cummins, 1989, 2000; Cuypers, 2001; Rutter, 1994; Stevenson & Willott, 2007). It is evident that for these students, their personal growth as well as associated economic insecurity is exacerbated by language barriers, migration and acculturation processes (Ruiz-de-Velasco, Fix & Clewell, 2000; Rutter, 1994).

While the diverse needs of ethnic minority students have been examined, extensive research has been done on multiculturalism and other diversity issues that should be addressed by school managers when relevant educational plans are developed. These studies seek to discover how ethnic minority students can be better supported in schools (Caballero, Haynes & Tikly, 2007; Cheminais, 2001; Dentler

& Hafner, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Phillion, 2002), and how an educational plan which is congruent with the school mission and ethos could be made at the classroom level (Erwin, 2003; Marzano, 2003). They include studies on the management of students' behavior problems (Atzaba-Poria, Pike & Deater-Deckard, 2004; Fuligni, 1998) and learning styles for students from different ethnic groups in different school subjects (Ali, 2003; Nabobo & Teasdale, 1994; Paku, Zegwaard & Coll, 2003; Taylor & Coll, 2002). Some studies have raised concerns for teacher education in the context of multicultural education and the understanding of ethnic minority students (Arora, 2005; Garcia & Lopez, 2005; Santoro, 2009; Solomon, Portelli, Daniel & Campbell, 2005; Thomas & Kearney, 2008).

Having examined the studies into the education of ethnic minority students, many authors look closely at educational planning from an organizational perspective. Educational planning is a strategic process for school improvement and problem solving (Fullan, 2005). This is also regarded as a crucial way to deal with changes and transitions, especially during the time when new challenges and reform initiatives are dealt with (Spillane, 2004). This process is dynamic, continuous and organic (Ferara, 2000; Fullan, 2005; Morgan, 2007). To ensure effective educational planning, researchers have suggested that leadership should not be centralized but distributed both vertically and horizontally within a school organization (Spillane, 2004), and the commitment from school managers and leaders should be maintained and enhanced (Detert, Bauerly Kopel, Mauriel & Jenni, 2000; Detert, Louis & Schroeder, 2001), otherwise teachers merely make sense of educational planning as an administrative and executive task and view it as a function of the school superintendent (Casey, 2005; Lily, 1985). It is further suggested that culture and values are crucial elements forming an effective school organization and determine how schools are managed (Brytting & Trollestad, 2000; Hofstede, 1980, 1991). Only by understanding the culture of practitioners can communication, leadership, and program administration be conducted effectively. In contrast, possible constraints to quality management and educational planning include insufficient knowledge, lack of tools, lack of financial support, lack of feasible leadership commitment, inflexibility, piecemeal implementation, unrealistic expectations, and inadequate managerial skill (Chan & Wan, 2009; Detert, et al., 2000; Munro, 2008; Sergiovanni, 2001). The findings of these studies lead school managers to rethink their educational planning for supporting the learning of ethnic minority students from school-wide and school-based perspectives.

## METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the sociological framework of social construction of reality to help make sense of the ethnic minority students' schooling experience as described by the teachers, and how their knowledge of social realities was constructed in everyday school life (Berger & Luckmann, 1973; Holzner, 1968). To explore this knowledge, the methodological approaches of narrative analysis and personal experience were employed for interviews (Anderson, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Denzin, 1998; Geertz, 1973; Holstein & Gubrium, 1995). Specifically, the methodological approach suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (1995) was used to explore what constructs the teachers used when talking about the cross-cultural experiences of ethnic minority students across three dimensions, namely 1) the change of the *space* from the school to the home of ethnic minority people; 2) in the *place* of the Hong Kong schools where they participated, and 3) throughout the *time* when they were in the school and the home and how they interacted with others. Furthermore, the analytical framework of moving *inward*, *outward*, *backward* and *forward* was adopted. *Inward* analysis was to discover teachers' and students' inner feelings towards the others' cross-cultural experience, whereas with *outward*, the constructs of the host society of Hong Kong and the community of the ethnic minority people were explored. Regarding *backward* and *forward*, this was to narrate how these teachers related the stories of their *past* experience to *the present* and how it shaped their aspirations for *the future*.

This study was qualitative in nature. Unstructured interviews were conducted in three designated secondary schools where large numbers of ethnic minority students were enrolled. Having received school permissions, 32 teachers were invited to attend one-on-one interviews. Among them, 20 participated as part of the school guidance department or team. Each interview lasted about sixty minutes and was tape-recorded. This was intended to provide the interviewees with substantial freedom to talk about the issues concerned. The unstructured interview method adopted for this study could be considered

a type of active interview as proposed by Holstein and Gubrium (1995), in which the teachers and the interviewer play significant roles in constructing a conversation regarding the foci of this study, that is, the plan of school guidance and support for the diverse needs of ethnic minority students. Because this kind of study involved gathering information about individuals or individual situations, as suggested in the literature (Alderson, 1995; Ball, 1981; Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, 1999; Hargreaves, 1967; Hill, Laybourn & Borland, 1996; Lacey, 1974), precautions were taken to ensure ethical data collection and confidentiality (Bentley, Oakley, Gibson & Kilgour, 1999).

## FINDINGS

The study showed that diversity was constructed as a challenge for planning school guidance. While the ethnic minority students enjoyed studying in Hong Kong schools, they experienced cultural differences and struggled with differences in school systems and academic programs. The findings also showed that when developing educational plans for supporting the learning of ethnic minority students, teachers developed a sense of intercultural sensitivity, struggled to fulfill the diverse needs of students using the streaming policy, built up a partnership with parents, and worked on broadening students' aspirations of education and a future career. These themes are illustrated below.

### *Developing a Sense of Intercultural Sensitivity*

When a plan for school guidance was developed and implemented, the teachers incorporated knowledge of cultural differences into their caring work. They engaged in an intercultural process when interacting with ethnic minority students which enriched teachers' understanding of the differences, similarities and uniqueness of all students. During one interview, this point of view was highlighted by a teacher who further insisted that understandings of cultural differences between the majority and the minority groups should be adjusted to ensure that ethnic minority students should not be understood only in relation to the culture of the dominant group, that is, the Chinese. As she narrated,

We don't see them (ethnic minority students) as non-Chinese students. It is very wrong for you to put ethnic minority students as a single category of students, especially compared to Chinese. If you look at them (ethnic minority students) closely, you would understand that they are all so different. The differences are so vast, much more different than you could imagine. They occur because the students come from different countries, with different religions. They have different family backgrounds, and different characters. Even students with the same ethnic background, can be so different. It is just like Chinese students. They are so vastly different. . . . In my eyes, there is no distinction between Chinese students and non-Chinese students. Rather, I try to see them all individually. Race is one of the differences between them.

The insistence on intercultural sensitivity was reflected by the teachers' strong sense of empathy that was developed to understand the social behavior of ethnic minority students from the perspective of the ethnic minority peoples. They reflected on their interpretation of social signs related to ethnic minority students and avoided stereotyping ethnic minority people. For example, one teacher explained why some ethnic minority students liked sitting with their peers on the ground in the park and on the floor in the compartment of MTR (underground train) while chatting loudly. This behavior was described as a way of expressing friendship and togetherness. Negative perceptions of such behavior as *selfish*, *noisy* and *the result of poor parenting*, comments made by some Hong Kong Chinese, were considered inappropriate.

According to the teachers' narratives, the educational plan for caring should be developed and implemented based upon an understanding of the ethnic minority students' culture and traditions. One example was how a teacher helped his Pakistani student examine his viewpoint on the September 11 incident. The teacher engaged in an intercultural process reflecting a frame of reference based upon his interpretation of the student's behavior and needs. As the teacher reflected,

After the incident of 9-11, a Pakistani student just felt very happy about what happened in New York; he laughed and in the classroom said loudly how happy he was. How could he be so happy? I was surprised at first. Certainly, I realized it was something I really needed to handle carefully. It would not be good if I told the student directly that his view was wrong, as I assumed that not only his family members, but also most of his relatives and mosque tutors

might also feel happy and hold the same view as he did. Therefore, I remained calm and had a long talk with him, and tried to encourage him to examine the incident from different angles. I asked him many questions, like ‘If something like this happened in your country, or in Hong Kong, how would you feel?’

### *Fulfilling Students’ Needs under Streaming Policy*

When talking about the development of an educational plan for fulfilling the diverse needs of ethnic minority students, four categories of students were discussed: Hong Kong Chinese students, ethnic minority students born in Hong Kong, new immigrant ethnic minority students, and new immigrant students from Mainland China. The different combinations of these students brought a number of unique characteristics to the schools involved. One example was the learning behavior of Hong Kong-born ethnic minority students. As the teachers narrated, when compared to Hong Kong Chinese students, this category of students liked engaging in learning activities. They responded quickly to teachers’ requests in the classroom, and raised hands when questions were posed by teachers. However, they had relatively short concentration spans, and disliked the *chalk-and-talk* teaching approach, which they usually found boring. Understanding this, teachers tended to make learning more student-centered and activities-based.

In addition to learning behavior, language was the most prominent type of diversity among the students which needed to be fully addressed, especially for the two categories of immigrant students. Because of the wide range of students’ abilities in English and Chinese, as highlighted by the narratives of teachers, the policy of streaming [commonly known as “tracking” in the U.S.] was adopted in which students were streamed into different classes according to their language abilities. The three types of classes included *Chinese classes*, *ethnic minority classes* and *mixed classes*. Basically, students who could be taught in Chinese were streamed into Chinese classes, whereas students who could not speak and read Chinese were streamed into one of the other classes. Chinese classes were mainly for local Hong Kong students and immigrant students from Mainland China, while ethnic minority classes were for the other two categories of ethnic minority students - new ethnic minority student immigrants and ethnic minority students born in Hong Kong. Some Chinese students who had an ability to learn in English were put in mixed classes to learn with ethnic minority students.

The teachers found that this streaming policy was “a relatively good strategy” for the school to adopt. They also described it as “the no-other-alternative way, the only way or the relatively good way” to manage the diverse learning needs of students, especially in those schools where the percentages of Chinese students and ethnic minority students were almost the same. While the positive aspects of the streaming policy were discussed, one of the prominent side effects caused by this policy was segregation between Chinese students and ethnic minority students. In both Chinese and ethnic minority classes, Chinese students and ethnic minority students had no opportunity to interact with each other, except when brought together in other school contexts beyond the classroom. In mixed classes, segregation could also be seen. Even though Chinese students and ethnic minority students were in the same class, the interaction between these groups tended to be limited. They seemed to interact only when requested by their teachers to engage in collaborative learning activities. Most of the time, Chinese students stayed together and ethnic minority students did the same.

### *Collaborating with Ethnic Minority Parents*

To develop an educational plan for promoting school guidance, teachers realized that it was crucial to take parents into account and devise various ways to establish a positive partnership with them. However, when the plan was put into practice, they experienced difficulty in achieving their targets. This was partly because, compared to Chinese parents, ethnic minority parents had different expectations of their parental role and different aspirations for their children’s education and future careers. As the teachers narrated, minority parents, especially of Pakistani and Indian students, made sense of their role only in terms of complying with the law, which required them to send their children under age 15 to school. Most were not keen on helping teachers improve their children’s classroom behavior and only very few worked with teachers to supervise their children’s learning at home. The teachers estimated that almost 70% of ethnic minority students did not submit assigned homework by the date requested.

Although the parents acknowledged that they had to take responsibility for working with teachers, they did not have sufficient knowledge about how to support their children's success in school, especially those parents who did not speak and read any Chinese or English. The underlying message of teachers' narratives was that the parents were overwhelmed with a sense of powerlessness. This feeling was intensified when teachers attempted to engage the ethnic minority parents in collaborating with the school, but were rejected by the parents.

When teachers developed a plan for enhancing home-school collaboration, they realized that cultural and religious perspectives should be taken into account. The gender roles of ethnic minority students' families impacted the ability to collaborate. This was particularly the case for Pakistani and Indian parents. Mothers were expected to stay at home and do housework and cooking whereas fathers should earn money and refrain from all housework. In general, a wife was not supposed to leave home or get in touch with males without the permission of her husband. There was no exception made even when male teachers needed to discuss a student's learning. This was one of the reasons why teachers found it hard to work with ethnic minority parents. As one teacher explained,

If the males (in a student's family) work outside, they definitely do not have any holidays or have to stay at home (rarely leave home by their own). For the females, it may be their natural tendency. They keep 'the self' from the outside world. Ever since they arrived in Hong Kong, they have rarely gone outside. More often, they are subordinated to their husband. They even feel shy when they participate in school activities, even in the company of their husband. It may be related to their religious beliefs.

From the religious perspective, what made ethnic minority students distinctive from Chinese students was that most ethnic minority students were devoted to their religion, this included, Muslim, Sikh and Hindu faiths. Many students had to attend classes after school to learn the holy texts in Mosques or Sikh Temples, and these finished at approximately 7:00 pm. When students went back home, they felt too tired to study and complete their homework for school. For most ethnic minority students, religion played a very important role in their everyday life and it should be taken account when caring or guidance is offered to them. As a teacher narrated,

The Muslim church puts a very strong emphasis on children's religious education. The first priority is to pray and participate in religious activities. It is completely different from what our school emphasizes, that is, academic achievement. If the schedule of their religious activities clashes with the schedule organized by school, especially religious activities not relevant to academic matters, it goes without saying that they will certainly choose praying and chanting.

The narratives of teachers showed that religion was regarded as first priority, especially for Pakistanis and Indians, whereas academic matters came second. In the school setting, the teachers insisted this religious priority be put aside, so that academic matters should always have first priority. Due to the differences in priorities between home and school, any practices or policies from the school which went against the teaching of the home religion was abandoned or ignored at home. For example, in an art lesson, *Fai Chun*, the poster displayed over walls and doors during Chinese New Year, with blessings printed on it, was made but some students were not allowed to display it at home, as it was in school, because it was considered to be against the teaching of Muslims. Parents of ethnic minority students were also unable to understand why it was inappropriate to encourage their children to be absent from school when celebrating religious or cultural festivals which were not included in the school calendar. In summary, the differences in religious values between the school and the ethnic minority students' family, and between teachers and ethnic minority parents, sometimes became a factor which made teachers find it hard to work with ethnic minority parents.

### *Broadening Ethnic Minority Students' Aspirations of Education and Career*

In addition to building a connection with ethnic minority parents, teachers found it challenging to develop an educational plan for broadening ethnic minority students' aspirations for their education and future career. As the teachers narrated, most students did not establish a plan for pursuing their education at post-secondary levels. Nor did they have any plan for their career development in Hong Kong society. Even if they had a vision of becoming a professional, they had no idea how it could be realized, or in

which programs offered by local universities they should enroll. What they envisioned was completing the public examination of The Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE), equivalent to The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in the United Kingdom; even though very few declared they planned to further their study either aboard or in their home country. Most ethnic minority students were not confident of getting good results on the public examinations and being able to master the local Chinese language, and so the students planned to engage in the same careers as their parents, such as musicians, chefs, and construction workers.

When talking about the diverse needs of ethnic minority students, teachers found that ethnic minority students and their parents were used to comparing opportunities offered in the host society, Hong Kong, with what were the likely opportunities in their home country. They believed that they would have more and better opportunities in Hong Kong. The frame of reference which allowed them to maintain an optimistic view of their future possibilities was, as related by the teachers, the notion that “life in Hong Kong will be a lot better than in the home country; at least they [ethnic minority students] would be able to find a job and earn a living in this city.” Once ethnic minority students completed their secondary education, they were expected to assume culturally prescribed roles. Girls were encouraged to take on women’s domestic roles and marry at a very young age, such as fifteen years old. They were not expected to achieve a high level of education. Boys were expected to start working and earn money to support the family. They were normally introduced and encouraged to get involved in the careers or businesses run by their family, relatives, and friends. Most careers were types of laboring work, such as working on construction sites, loading and unloading goods, and working in restaurants as waiters or waitresses. As one teacher put it,

I have discussed it with many colleagues. We think that they do not have any sense of belonging (to the society of Hong Kong). What they want to do is to earn more money and transfer it to their family (in their own country). They hold the belief that education is not important. Even without education, they can easily access the career of their parents or relatives, such as chefs, construction-site workers, waiters and so on. Most ethnic minority students in this area rely on the social welfare subsidy from the government. In their mind, there is not such a strong sense of ‘future’. If they can live today, it’s fine for them; and they do not think it is necessary to think about tomorrow. Probably it is their religious belief too, so it is easy for them to feel satisfied. . . . They know they have not yet been accepted by the [local] society, so they think they are merely ‘visitors’. Even if their children do well in education, they [the children] still find it hard to get a job.

When teachers talked about the school lives of ethnic minority students, the students were found to make sense of their social reality by using a frame of reference based on their perception of their own country’s social reality, rather than that of the host society, Hong Kong. It allowed them to compare their present situation in their host society with their former situation or with their *back-home* experience. Although such a frame of reference enabled them to develop and maintain an optimistic view of their school lives, and diverted their thoughts to positive aspects of their schooling experience, their teachers aimed to broaden the way they thought about their future. The teachers passed onto ethnic minority students a belief that education was a means of integration into the host society and a way towards occupational and social mobility. In the view of some students, deciding to stay in Hong Kong appeared the most likely way to break the cycle of poverty and create different lives from their parents.

Under the current government education plan for school guidance, in particular at the levels of individual counseling, classroom learning, and whole-school programs, ethnic minority students were encouraged to think about their future in more expanded ways. In doing this, the teachers had to simultaneously work with the values of two cultures, that is, the examination-oriented culture of local Hong Kong society and the traditional culture of the students’ home. On one hand, they intended to help ethnic minority students deal with the local examination-oriented culture and so taught according to the examination syllabus, rather than to the academic ability of the students, all the while encouraging them to think about possible careers and offer information on educational programs at post-secondary level. On the other hand, they stressed gender equality, which was lacking in most ethnic minority students’ homes and intentionally encouraged girls to develop their full potential and create a vision of their own future.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PLANNING

Teachers' views of ethnic minority students were expressed through the use of stories, showing vividly how they could narrate the diversity students' needs and cross-cultural experiences in school and home, and how they underwent a process of cultural integration into the host society of Hong Kong. This study has shown that teachers intended to develop an educational plan for fulfilling students' diverse needs. The plan was composed of four elements: (a) developing intercultural sensitivity, (b) adjusting teaching strategies under the streaming policy by dealing with the segregation between Chinese students and ethnic minority students, (c) establishing partnerships with parents, and (d) helping students broaden their aspirations for their education and careers. Based upon these findings, this article argues that when educational planning for school guidance is undertaken, two challenges should be dealt with: making caring connections between classroom, school, and home, and enhancing school practitioners' intercultural sensitivity.

With regard to the first challenge, an educational plan should ensure that caring is connected across the various subsystems of classroom, school, and home within the school organization. Teachers were aware that students' home life and values have a great impact on their academic success and their ability to deal with the difficulties encountered with acculturation. The weak connection between these subsystems is partially rooted in the differences in expectations of schooling and aspirations for education and future careers between the minority and the majority, that is, between the Chinese and the non-Chinese, and between the school and the home. It is suggested that these differences are linked to the weak connection of the subsystems, which makes the school organization unable to function effectively as a system caring for the diverse needs of students. This is evident from the fact that within the subsystems of classroom and school, teachers are not connected in appropriate ways to care for students where the peer relationship between Chinese students and ethnic minority students is segregated. Furthermore, teachers feel that they are working against the examination-oriented culture, streaming policy, and some traditional values of students' families when promoting positive peer relationships between Chinese students and ethnic minority students, and broadening students' aspirations for education and future careers. With the weak connection of the subsystems in mind, there is a need to formulate an educational plan for building a school environment wherein the key sub-systems of classroom, school, and home can be connected in dynamic ways, rather than improving each of them separately. This connected approach will promote culturally responsive approaches to school guidance and ensure that every individual student can be treated equitably by receiving equal opportunities for caring and learning.

Furthermore, this study argues that whenever any educational plans for school guidance are devised and implemented, school practitioners' mutual understanding of students' differences, similarities, and uniqueness should be taken into account. Caring should also be built upon an understanding of ethnic minority students, from the point of view of the minorities themselves, rather than an evaluation or interpretation made from the perspective of the dominant group or local people's narrative of their social reality. To achieve this, under the educational plan for school guidance, school practitioners' intercultural sensitivity should be enhanced. As well, the frame of reference they adopt for making sense of the cultural background of others has to be broadened. When interacting with ethnic minority groups, school practitioners should be aware of engaging in a cross-cultural process. In this process, they should learn each other's culture, re-learn their own culture, and re-examine the rationale underlying cultural responsiveness. This is proposed to apply, not only to teachers as shown in this study, but to all other school practitioners such as students, parents, and professional parties who work closely with teachers.

Developing an educational plan for promoting the welfare of ethnic minority students is an educational challenge for school guidance. It is also a crucial aim of schooling that school managers ensure the values of caring and cultural responsiveness are connected across the various subsystems of classroom, school, and home, and the intercultural sensitivity of all school practitioners is enhanced. The points made above may not be the only ways to make caring culturally responsive. By identifying the unique organizational features of schools in terms of the combinations of different ethnic groups of students, and the relationships between the majority and the minority groups of students, it would be easier for the school to develop appropriate educational plans for identifying the diverse needs of all students and identifying effective strategies for putting caring into practice. This is one of the ways to



create a just and fair society and as such school managers and all teachers have a vital role to play if this important goal is to be achieved.

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