

Leadership Efforts to Develop a Culturally Responsive Team in a Diverse Secondary School

Research Overview: Hong Kong faces instructional challenges to support its diverse South Asian populations. School leaders can support teaching in diverse school environments. By drawing from culturally responsive leadership theory, this study explored how secondary school leaders support educators in a diverse institution while facing contextual challenges in the city.

Keywords: culturally responsive school leadership; ethnic minorities; equity; diversity; school leadership

Purpose of Study

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China is historically diverse. Different ethnic groups compose the social fabric of the city with South Asians having a growing presence from the British colonial until today (O'Connor, 2018). South Asians are also among the fastest growing groups in the city, but continue to lag behind in educational achievement and socioeconomic prospects (Census and Statistics Department [CASD], 2022). Hong Kong has made considerable progress in supporting the education of South Asian and other Ethnic Minority (EM) groups; however, most resources have been focused on the acquisition of Chinese language (Gao, 2019). Teachers' understanding of diverse students' cultures; ability to create welcoming environments for diversity; and instructional support diverse assets in the classroom continue to be achievable goals (Author; Bhowmik et al., 2018; Karim & Hue, 2022). Pre-service teacher training in diversity also continues to be an issue (Bhowmik et al., 2018).

School leaders have the potential to develop and support school policy to prepare in-service staff and shape culturally responsive teams who can support diverse students (Khalifa et al., 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this research is to use a culturally responsive leadership lens (CRL) (Khalifa et al., 2016) to learn about how school leaders in Hong Kong support in-service teachers to better serve diverse students. It is thus that this research asked the following question: How do school leaders develop a culturally responsive teaching team in a South Asian-majority secondary school in Hong Kong? In doing so, the research can contribute to the field in two ways: 1) Advancing equity work in the Hong Kong educational system; and 2)

advancing CRL theory and practice in East Asian contexts to continue advancing the field with more global perspectives.

Research Methods

The study employed a dataset from a larger case study. New Hope Secondary School was chosen based on the following criteria: 1) A school with a considerable South Asian and other diverse student population (at least 8% in comparison to the total EM inhabitants of the city), 2) located within a diverse area, 3) had facilities, curricula, and educators who were focused on diverse education, 4) showed recent progress in post-secondary enrolment and student retainment. Participants were notified about their rights, and consent was obtained before data collection. During a three-month and a half data collection period, 51 interviews were conducted. The following participants were interviewed: seven school leaders (including principal, vice-principal, and department heads), six teacher leaders, four teachers, and one support staff, 11 South Asian parents and 16 students (12 with South Asian backgrounds) were also interviewed. Observations were conducted in the following school settings: School events, humanities and social sciences classes, leadership team meetings, and daily activities at the school during walkthroughs with the principal. Different documents such as school annual reports, school annual plans, government policy to support EM students, teaching materials, and annual teaching plans were also part of the dataset. Data was triangulated. Abductive thematic analysis was conducted to find pragmatic solutions and explanations to phenomena by basing findings on previous knowledge and also empirical influences that are unique to each study (Thompson, 2022).

Results and Discussion

The results shed light on leaders' strategies and challenges to recruit, maintain, and support educators with the potential to advance the education of diverse students at New Hope. School leaders were found to : 1) Challenge stigma about diverse schools; 2) constantly strive to recruit culturally competent educators; and 3) develop school-based policy to advance cultural competence. The findings overall shed light on how school leaders leverage their positions to find community support to prepare teachers to serve diverse students. New Hope leaders also established recruitment policies that allowed them to find potentially culturally competent

teachers even though there is a current shortage in the city. In addition, leaders constantly sought ways to train and retain such teachers.

Overall, this study presents how school leaders in Hong Kong tackle the issue of lack of training on diversity for pre-service teachers in the city. The study can potentially inform policy-makers in Hong Kong and growingly diverse East Asian contexts. In addition, the study contributes to the CRL field by advancing global perspectives in a field that until now has mainly been developed in the US and other Western liberal democracies.

Word count: 790

References

Author

- Bhowmik, M. K., Kennedy, K. J., & Hue, M.-T. (2018). Education for all—but not Hong Kong's ethnic minority students. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 21(5), 661–679.
- Census and Statistic Department. (2022). *Thematic report ethnic minorities 主題性報告少數族裔人士*. <https://www.census2021.gov.hk/doc/pub/21c-ethnic-minorities.pdf>
- Gao, F. (2019). Ethnic minority students' progression to university in Hong Kong: Access and equity. *Multicultural Education Review*, 11(2), 135–148.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/2005615X.2019.1615245>
- Karim, S., & Hue, M. T. (2022). Acculturation and sense of belonging: A study of young Pakistani students in Hong Kong. *Asian Ethnicity*, 23(3), 463–483.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2020.1807911>
- Khalifa, M. A., Gooden, M. A., & Davis, J. E. (2016). Culturally responsive school leadership: A synthesis of the literature. *Review of Educational Research*, 86(4), 1272–1311.
<https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316630383>
- O'Connor, P. (2018). Ethnic minorities and ethnicity in Hong Kong. In D. Lü, S.W.K. Chiu, & R. Yep (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of contemporary Hong Kong* (pp. 259-274). Routledge.
- Thompson, J. (2022). A guide to abductive thematic analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27 (5), 1410-1421.