

**Race and Equality: A Study of Ethnic Minorities in  
Hong Kong's Education System**

**Executive Summary**

Project report and analysis by Ms Kelley Loper

***(A) Synopsis***

Reports of unequal treatment of ethnic minority students in the Hong Kong education system have in recent years appeared in the media and have been recounted by non-governmental organisations and social workers.

On the basis of interviews with young members of ethnic minority communities and their parents, teachers, education officials, and social workers, Ms Loper outlines the obstacles faced by ethnic minority pupils when interacting with the Hong Kong education system.

Such obstacles may affect the opportunities available to these young people in many areas of life, including employment, therefore curtailing their chances to integrate into and contribute to Hong Kong society.

Ms Loper examines these issues and current education policies in light of Hong Kong's international human rights obligations, and developments in local and comparative equal opportunities law.

She argues that certain local education policies could constitute direct or indirect racial discrimination.

The results of the project clearly indicate that more research must be done into the extent and nature of the difficulties faced by members of ethnic minorities attempting to enter and achieve in Hong Kong's education system.

Ms Loper also recommends certain key points for consideration when the government drafts its race discrimination legislation.

**(B )Major findings:**

Several barriers consistently affected the interviewees' ability to achieve within the school system:

**1. Limited school choice and places**

→ Schools appear to place limits on their intake of ethnic minority students.  
Some students miss years of schooling while waiting for places at school.

**2. School fees**

→ Few government aided schools accept ethnic minority students, and many families struggle to pay the fees of the schools on the government's list of 'Educational Facilities for non-Chinese Speaking Children'.

**3. Language of instruction**

→ The mother-tongue teaching policy has limited the number of schools available for non-Chinese speaking students. If Chinese-language classes are provided, they are not at a level to enable students to function at school.

**4. Perceived poor quality of education**

**5. Lack of information about the education system.**

→ Much of the information about the education system is only in Chinese

**6. Interaction with Chinese students limited**

→ Some interviewees felt they had few opportunities to form relationships with Chinese students.

**7. Lack of a coherent policy in relation to ethnic minority students**

***(C) Recommendations for future legislation prohibiting racial discrimination***

The legislation should cover the public as well as the private sector. An independent institution, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, should have the jurisdiction to receive and act on complaints of discrimination.

Recent developments in the definition of racial discrimination, such as the European Race Directive of June 2000, should be taken into account, in particular the strong definition of indirect racial discrimination. A reference to language as a basis of discrimination would be appropriate in the Hong Kong context.

The full report is available at: <http://www.hku.hk/ccpl>

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