

Abstract

Ethnic minority education in Hong Kong has been in the spotlight since the passing of the Racial Discrimination Ordinance in 2008. As Bhowmik (2014) shows, ethnic minority students are concerned about peer relationships, racism and future employment. This suggests more needs to be known about how schools address these concerns about identity and sense of belonging. However, as Fiske (2004) and Kune (2011) argue, the needs of ethnic minority students cannot be fulfilled unless they feel they belong to and are accepted as members of their school, community and Hong Kong society. From the perspectives of the social construction of reality and symbolic interactionism, this study will examine how Hong Kong's ethnic minority students perceive and experience a sense of belonging in the contexts of school, home and community. Consistent with symbolic interactionism, belonging will be examined as an everyday practice both within and beyond schools. Studies suggest that ethnic minority students' school and community engagement is low (Willms, 2003; Kuang, 2015), and that their sense of belonging intersects with their sense of identity (Anthias, 2001), language, socio-economic circumstances, as well as social categorizations and power in society (Yuval-Davis, 2011) as they explore the space between the dominant culture and other minoritized cultures. The impact of these multiple contextual influences will be the major focus of this proposal. We will use a mixed methods research design to examine ethnic minority students' sense of belonging. Quantitatively, a student survey in four schools (n=1200) will be conducted using the Hemingway Measure of Adolescent Connectedness (MAC 4). To provide qualitative in-depth insights with the use of participant observation, interviews and textual analysis, two case-study schools will be chosen, where the findings of the survey indicate highest and lowest levels of belonging. The identified students will be interviewed and their narrative and constructs will be compared with teachers' and parents' perceptions of these students' sense of belonging. The methodology adopted will not only cross-check the survey data but also gain more insights into ethnic minority students' sense of belonging (Phinney, 1992; Robert et al., 1999). The results will shed light on a missing dimension in the study of ethnic minority students in Hong Kong, and address a gap in the current research relating to ethnic minority education.