

Proposal for a Paper Presentation

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Abstract: As the representative of the winning team in the Policy and Research Training Programme organized by the OSL, Lingnan University and the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute, this paper illustrates how service learning can be practiced through policy formation. The paper will focus on the policy recommendation on Non-native speakers of Chinese (NCS) education, but concurrently drawing on the learning and services done through the programme. In times of social change, more similar programmes should be conducted in incubating new talents and thus benefiting the society.

1. Introduction

This paper will be divided into two sessions, with one accentuating on the Policy and Research Training Programme (PART) itself and the other on the researching findings and policy recommendations made by students of the education team.

Background of the Programme

PART is first held by the Office of Service Learning (OSL), Lingnan University and the Hong Kong Policy Research Institute (HKPRI) in the fall semester of 2018/19. 11 students from various disciplines are selected, and have attended weekly lectures conducted by experts from HKPRI. Throughout the four-month programme, participants will have to consult with the respective supervisor on a regular basis. They are also required to submit a research proposal and present it in January.

It is worth noting the participation of this programme is voluntary and does not count as fulfilling the graduation requirement (i.e. to accomplish a course-based Service Learning). However, to student participants, we would like to know the strengths and weaknesses/limitations of policy making in bringing social change, in particular from the perspective of Think Tank. More importantly, this is a unique and valuable opportunity for students who would like to transform and benefit the society.

Simultaneously, as suggested by Ms. Chloe Siu in the interview, the person-in-charge of PART, has attributed the existence of this programme to several reasons, in particular, her will to create a more interactive environment for students to learn about 'research' when pertaining to social issues. However, the desire of getting young adults' voices heard is perhaps the impetus that drives her to look for supportive Think Tank organizations, emphasize on the granting internship opportunities to distinguished students and eventually launching the programme which brings invaluable experience to students.

Background of the research policy

NCS accounts approximately 8% of the Hong Kong population, and is expected to share a larger proportion in the upcoming decades. Contradictory to the 20th century, more NCS are now born and raised here, symbolizing the rise of a second generation. Notwithstanding the multicultural background here, the city upsets the minority population in various aspects, ranging from the education domain to the labour market and welfare systems. Given of the limited time and capacity, the team chose to work on the (secondary) education of NCS students.

Segregation policy, or the designated school policy, has long become the policy when it comes to secondary education. The initial aim is to concentrate resources in several particular schools, ensuring the adequacy of professional aid and support for NCS families. However, this was overturned by the court, agreeing with the arguments that EMNCS families made: a discrimination policy that limits the degree of autonomy and number of choices available for them.

Despite winning the case, the Education Bureau (EDB) has not modified the funding policy. Currently, the number of headcounts determines the amount of subsidy for educating EM students made available to the secondary school on the ground they do intake them. Otherwise speaking, the fewer number of NCS students, the less resources will be allocated. Such static and rigid arrangement thus draws the attention among scholars and educators on the actual amount and effectiveness of school-based intervention work. By intervention, it refers to additional, affordable and tailor-made extra-curricular activities and/or tutorial class that correspond to the NCS specialized needs.

Objectives of the work

With all the previous reports on NCS secondary school students, and the flaws in the educational policy, the team would like to achieve the following objectives:

- i. To understand the actual needs of NCS students
- ii. To propose policy that echo to their voices
- iii. If possible, to take a step further and turn the idea into something practical

Rationales of having this project

Regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, and other socio-demographical factors, the team believes every citizen deserves quality education and equal opportunities in accessing different opportunities that endow them for their desired future. The current arrangement, has no doubt disappointed the families and potentially passionate educators in providing appropriate intervention work.

Whence language barrier is one of the many, and probably the dominant obstacle encountered by EM students. The impasse does not become one on itself. In other words, there must be other factors determining the experience of the less privileged. By giving a platform for EM students, the team hope they are having the power to voice out for themselves, and many of their fellows.

2. Theoretical framework/literature review

Neither the programme nor the research study employs any specific speculative work done by previous scholars. Characteristics of Service-Learning and how it is infiltrated and envisaged in students' actions are closely tied to some of the literatures. To be specific, two principles have been highlighted by John Dewey, quoted in the writing of Giles and Eyer in 1994: Continuity and Interaction. The former implies the continuous learning and experience which builds up on the previous one whence the interaction between learner and the environment is deemed essential.

Barbara Jacoby suggested that Service Learning should be written as "Service-Learning", symbolizing the connection between the two elements. Knowledge can be envisaged through services, regardless of its form (direct or indirect).

Service-Learning can be performed in various forms, ranging from granting credits to students to making it as a graduation requirements, as in the cases of University of Hong Kong and Lingnan University. The ultimate goal is however unified. When students incorporate the subject-/course-related knowledge into the service, they are able to have deeper understanding on the course (Ma & Chan 2013). At the community or social level, service-learning should serve the purpose and functions in helping learners to identify the community needs and raise their awareness towards issues (Jacoby 2015; Bringle & Hatcher 1995).

In retrospect, the programme highlights the significance of getting students involved in social policy (PART, n.d). Twining with the philosophy of Service-learning, this is no surprise that OSL wishes students can contribute to the formation of social policy which is also beneficial to both themselves and the society. Undeniably, this is the most ideal outcome but how is this being implemented drawn on the linkage and collaboration between parties. Otherwise speaking, the success of any social impacts depends not only on the participants' willingness, but the accessibility and openness of supporting organizations. Such observations can be further elucidated with Granovetter's work. Though initially meant to describe the access of jobs (which includes the flow of information), its conceptual framework is found to be particularly relevant in this study. One of the key arguments is that people with strong ties usually share or enjoy an overlapping social circles. This purports there is a high tendency that they are well-informed by the same piece of information and thus not fostering the spread of messages, albeit being a powerful mechanism in decision making (Granovetter, 1973; 1983). By contrast, weak ties favours the prevalent of information and prevent marginalized groups from staying away of "modus vivendi" (Granovetter, 1983:202).

The above paragraphs delineate the functions and roles of each stakeholder in making the programme to be a successful. Blending Granovetter's distinguished theory – social networking, it seems justifiable and crystal clear on how independent organizations can collaborate together. Goffman's theory accentuates on the strength of weak relationship, informing how individuals (students) can contribute to society in two various aspects: voicing out for the peripheral groups in Hong Kong; and active participation in the policy making of Hong Kong through collaborating with relevant parties. Details will be further mentioned in the discussion session.

3. Methods/analysis

Student-research Project

Different from the other research paper, the team's policy paper does not form any specific research questions at the beginning. Education is a broad topic and every single aspect can be and should be investigated in depth. Considering the obstacles they encounter throughout the years due to the inherent language disadvantages resulted from the family background (i.e. few parents are able to master Chinese Language nor having this as the mother tongue), using Chinese as the starting point, the team adopts a mixed method approach.

Generalised patterns are necessary to convince policy makers that fundamental changes are needed. The team extracts the PISA data set and accentuates on the educational experience of NCS with codes relating to the birthplace of students and their parents, first language and gender, for instance.

The moderator – school has also been emphasized, naming it as the school-fixed effect. This means the quality of schools are being monitored and taken into account when intertwining with the above suggested factors.

Stata is the software used to understand the relationships between variables with regression serving as the key method. The dependent variable is Chinese reading score with the independent variables listed in the graph below.

Variables		Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Test score					
APVREAD	Reading test score	542.5542	72.76708	281.2322	724.4401
Family Environment:					
escs	Index of economic, social and cultural status	-0.5078875	0.9229162	-3.4461	2.9958
language1	Language at home: English	0.0130952	0.1136996	0	1
language2	Language at home: Chinese dialects or language	0.0261905	0.1597252	0	1
language4	Language at home: Mandarin	0.0229167	0.1496601	0	1
language5	Language at home: Another language	0.0214286	0.1448297	0	1
Lang5XFemale	Interaction term: Language5 and female	0.0125	0.111119	0	1
Parents characteristics:					
birthplac~d1	Dad birthplace: China	0.3473214	0.4761898	0	1
birthplac~d2	Dad birthplace: Chinese Taipei	0.002381	0.0487441	0	1
birthplac~d4	Dad birthplace: Macao	0.0107143	0.1029691	0	1
birthplac~d5	Dad birthplace: Another country (HKG)	0.0318452	0.1756141	0	1
birthplac~m1	Mom birthplace: China	0.497619	0.5000688	0	1
birthplac~m2	Mom birthplace: Chinese Taipei	0.0050595	0.0709607	0	1
birthplac~m4	Mom birthplace: Macao	0.0107143	0.1029691	0	1
birthplac~m5	Mom birthplace: Another country (HKG)	0.0529762	0.2240193	0	1
durecec	Duration in early childhood education and care	3.0875	0.7369536	0	8
cursupp	Parental current support for learning at home	-0.3414254	1.093496	-5.7673	3.7447
emosupp	Parental emotional support	-0.5697124	0.9829459	-3.8153	0.7454
Individual characteristics:					
age	Age	15.75116	0.2898145	15.25	16.25
female	Female	0.5574405	0.4967636	0	1
birthplace1	Child birthplace: China	0.1994048	0.3996123	0	1
birthplace2	Child birthplace: Chinese Taipei	0.0014881	0.0385529	0	1
birthplace4	Child birthplace: Macao	0.0011905	0.0344879	0	1
birthplace5	Child birthplace: Another country (HKG)	0.0181548	0.1335308	0	1
lmins	Learning time (minutes per week) – <test langua:	302.2723	86.46583	0	1260
instscie	Instrumental motivation	0.2599969	0.9503734	-1.9301	1.7359
bsmj	Students' expected occupational status (SEI)	60.06935	15.03079	10	89
anxtest	Test anxiety	0.3697426	0.9483644	-2.505	2.5493
motivat	Achieving motivation	0.2916663	0.9080426	-3.0877	1.8543
repeat	Grade repetition	0.1285714	0.3347748	0	1
homesch	ICT use outside of school for schoolwork	0.1034504	0.8623253	-2.6907	3.6039

Fig. 1 Statistics Summary

Recognizing the need in empowering the NCS, the team has further conducted one-to-one in-depth interviews. Two university students of different ethnicities and a teacher educating NCS students are invited through personal contact whereas two secondary school students are interviewed during the Lingnan University Open Day in 2018. Interviews last from 1.5 hours to approximately 2.5 hours, depending on the content and depth of the conversation. Interviews were semi-structured, which allowed respondents to share their stories without getting swayed with the research topics.

Interviewees were invited to share about their life stories in secondary schools, though occasionally trajectories of their friends will be briefly recalled. Topics are primarily related to the adequacy support given in secondary schools, ranging from the aid on Chinese Language, extra-curricular activities to the reasons of gender differences among NCS families.

Blending both quantitative and qualitative method allows us to have a bigger and more holistic picture regarding the trajectories of students from all walks of life, as well as recognizing the nuance between ethnicities. It further allows researchers to cross-check the validity of the codes derived from literature, previous empirical study and the results found by employing different methodologies.

Along with the HKPRI, based on the collected data, the team has consolidated the idea proposed by our supervisor. The policy recommendation – a negative list for all NCS families, should be formulated and made accessible to all ethnic groups as long as this concerns their needs.

4. Results and Discussion

This session will consist of a binary division in the following chronological order: the results of the programme; and the research findings of the policy research itself.

Regarding the programme

Upon the completion of the programme, members of the team decided to take a step further in promoting social inclusion within society whilst assisting the HKPRI in preparing for the introduction of the suggested policy to the government. Below traced the two separate actions taken by the team.

Symposium in April

OSL has been actively facilitating the contact between students and the HKPRI. Beyond the administrative support, Ms. Siu is dedicated to help our team in making further impacts to the society. The team, during the last meeting before presentation in January, stated the will in taking further actions in raising the general public's awareness towards the education inequality encountered by the peripheral groups in Hong Kong. Thanks to the generous support of the OSL, in particular Ms. Siu and her colleague Mr. Chan Nam-kiu, on the 6th April, 2019, I act as one of the speakers on the event "Fight for Show – Teens Dialogue with Filmmakers", hosted at Lingnan University and sponsored by the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund. Over 120 secondary school students and their teachers were present. Within the 20-minute session, I shared three key messages that my NCS interviewees would like the audience to know about, especially messages for their minority juniors. It went beyond the demand for equality, social inclusion and harmonious relationship, but on means in attaining the goals at various levels: students themselves, the institution and society.

Continuous Cooperation

Apart from that, the team has continued aided the supervisor from HKPRI in proposing the policy to EDB. Students work as assistants, such as conducting interviews with potential targets, while the instructor will take the lead on what information may be needed in consolidating the recommendation and hence persuading the government to buy in such idea. Not only does he liaison with numerous parties, he continues coaching the team, and this brings insights to how policy can be modified/proposed through different channels.

	No school-fixed effect, robust			School-fixed effect, robust		
	APVREAD	Coef.	P>t	APVREAD	Coef.	P>t
Family Environment:						
Index of economic, social and cultural status	escs	12.324	0	escs	2.234	0.087
Language at home: English	language1	-13.932	0.293	language1	-10.175	0.417
Language at home: Chinese dialects or languages	language2	-13.542	0.06	language2	-9.960	0.188
Language at home: Mandarin	language4	-5.650	0.44	language4	12.213	0.088
Language at home: Another language	language5	-35.254	0.009	language5	-39.293	0.001
Interaction term: Language5 and female	Lang5XFemale	-30.341	0.265	Lang5XFemale	17.004	0.423
Parents characteristics:						
Dad birthplace: China	birthplac~d1	9.728	0.001	birthplac~d1	8.226	0.003
Dad birthplace: Chinese Taipei	birthplac~d2	-11.421	0.689	birthplac~d2	-24.489	0.269
Dad birthplace: Macao	birthplac~d4	-4.006	0.694	birthplac~d4	-4.110	0.699
Dad birthplace: Another country (HKG)	birthplac~d5	-0.006	1	birthplac~d5	-1.754	0.87
Mom birthplace: China	birthplac~m1	5.405	0.078	birthplac~m1	7.427	0.004
Mom birthplace: Chinese Taipei	birthplac~m2	-42.552	0.004	birthplac~m2	-42.229	0
Mom birthplace: Macao	birthplac~m4	1.034	0.933	birthplac~m4	-3.858	0.73
Mom birthplace: Another country (HKG)	birthplac~m5	-14.449	0.036	birthplac~m5	-3.688	0.528
Duration in early childhood education and care	durecec	-2.131	0.189	durecec	-2.762	0.042
Parental current support for learning at home	currsupp	-2.911	0.011	currsupp	-2.355	0.026
Parental emotional support	emosupp	7.009	0	emosupp	4.941	0
Individual characteristics:						
Age	age	18.586	0	age	11.039	0.001
Female	female	25.234	0	female	11.795	0
Child birthplace: China	birthplace1	-3.546	0.284	birthplace1	1.874	0.543
Child birthplace: Chinese Taipei	birthplace2	24.857	0.53	birthplace2	46.493	0.091
Child birthplace: Macao	birthplace4	-39.167	0.006	birthplace4	2.559	0.929
Child birthplace: Another country (HKG)	birthplace5	-16.449	0.156	birthplace5	-15.616	0.108
Learning time (minutes per week) – <test language>	lmins	-0.051	0	lmins	-0.029	0.035
Instrumental motivation	instscie	0.193	0.875	instscie	0.768	0.538
Students' expected occupational status (SEI)	bsmj	0.869	0	bsmj	0.465	0
Test anxiety	anxtest	-9.334	0	anxtest	-10.898	0
Achieving motivation	motivat	7.395	0	motivat	8.254	0
Grade repetition	repeat	-41.398	0	repeat	-32.486	0
ICT use outside of school for schoolwork	homesch	-1.104	0.489	homesch	-3.716	0.008
	_cons	219.574	0	_cons	356.046	0
	Number of obs:	3,292		Number of obs:	3292	
	F(30, 3261) =	28.22		Number of groups:	137	
	Prob > F =	0		Obs per group:	min = 2	
	R-squared =	0.2086			avg = 24	
	Root MSE =	64.2			max = 36	
				R-sq:	within = 0.1422	
					between = 0.3613	
					overall = 0.1602	
	Mean test score:	544.173		Mean test score:	544.173	

Fig. 2 Regression Result

Results of the Study

Language Proficiency

Considering the school-fixed effect, it is ostensible that when school-fixed effect is absent, holding all factors constant, NCS students whose first language is “Other” and is neither English nor other Chinese dialects or languages perform less well than their peers (Coeff = -35.524, $p < 0.01$). On the other hand, when the school effect is present, the outcomes among NCS students have worsened, with a coefficient of -39.293 ($p < 0.01$), symbolizing an even poorer performance in the reading test.

Not having Chinese dialects or Mandarin as the first language has inevitably illustrated the latter development of such knowledge and hence capacity in mastering the language skills.

Is Language the Only Barrier?

Gender is another factor that affects the performance of students. Female students in both conditions, perform better than their male counterparts ($p < 0.01$). However, the effect is much smaller when school-fixed effect is effective. Male may still be able to perform well upon entering the good schools.

Statistics has further demonstrated the anxiety level, technological support outside school, symbolic meanings of grades and the SEI have statistically significant negative relationship with the students' performances ($p < 0.01$). Otherwise speaking, the forces imposed by society and institutions including schools may directly influence the experience and developmental progresses of students.

Statistics merely illustrate and potentially illuminate the impasses marginalized students are currently posited in, but inadequate in offering a comprehensive picture of the everyday life of NCS. Though the team has only interviewed four NCS students (three are Muslim and one is Pilipino, all born and raised in Hong Kong) and another ethnic Chinese teacher who has been teaching NCS aged five to seven for three years. Yet, the ubiquitous codes obtained, in particular that of the NCS, have helped clarifying the measurements needed for the policy recommendation. The following part will give detailed accounts of the trajectories of NCS students and how it relates to the above quantitative results.

Negative List as the Intervention Work

Without doubt, existing predicaments entangling the lives of NCS are not on account of one single party. Intervention work carried out by secondary schools is considered significant based on the quantifiable data and trajectories of our interviewees. Hence, assessing the readiness of secondary schools is mandatory to ensure the quality of education, in particular when levels of supporting measures have been launched in both kindergartens and primary schools in recent years.

This is a policy that lists out the yet-to-be prepared schools in terms of cultivating NCS students. The primary objective is to identify institutions that are able to provide adequate support to these students based on a number of yardsticks. Otherwise speaking, it serves as a reference list for these families in evaluating the appropriateness of those schools in responding to their school-aged children's development; and simultaneously avoiding the occurrence of imbalanced distribution of resources between the local and ethnic minorities students, in particular when the headcounts of EM students determines the subsidy received.

In this policy, multi-facets of the school's performances are taken into consideration. It includes (a) the anti-discrimination policy, (b) the whole-person development programmes given to NCS students and (c) previous academic performance.

To be more specific, (a) concerns with the creation of an integrated environment where students from all walks of lives are enjoying a range of choices while having rooms for exercising their own autonomy, as in catering (e.g. halal food) and religious needs (prayer rooms).

In relation to their Religion

1. Food

NCS, though not necessarily, are characterised by their own religion and henceforth stringent regulations on the food and religious practices. Despite admitting NCS students into secondary schools, having an environment that caters and responds to the needs of NCS may not be created.

Not only shall we respect the differences between individuals, quality education is now further defined as the supply of healthy options for all school-aged student. Otherwise speaking, several arrangements have to be made to ensure the quality of education. Indeed, some families have taken a step forward in striking a balance between the religious needs and children's social lives by preparing lunchboxes.

Accidents, however, do happen from time to time. Similar to their ethnic Chinese counterparts, there are times when caregivers (usually mothers) are unable to provide lunches due to unforeseeable circumstances, including falling ill. Consequently, in tuckshops or canteens, few options are available for them. Molly recalled getting fishballs and fried noodles only at school, food that is "the safest one". It however, comes to our concern, and so as the student interviewees, that such food is considered unhealthy.

Similarly, corresponding to her religion, Jessica recalled how discriminated her colleagues were when working as an intern in a third sector organization,

"He (her supervisor) literally said to my teachers that I should fit in hk's culture, just cuz I said I can't eat goodbye lunch with them cuz of pork and stuff...Now I should leave my religion and start eating pork with him"

Though such incident did not happen at school, it highlights the potential obstacle that NCS may encounter at school and how it may impact the social well-being or interpersonal relationship between people with different religious and cultural backgrounds. Her statements further purported that no designated rooms are needed or constructed to accommodate their religion, but there should be area where they can practice the rituals freely and undisturbed.

2. Prayer Room

Though not this may not be applicable to every ethnic minority students, Jessica (Muslim) appraised the presence of a prayer room (not necessarily a standard one, but any room that makes available to them without any restrictions on the opening hours) at her current part-time work place. As mentioned, "the best thing is that I can even pray in any room I want at any time".

With education focusing on both the physical and human environment, this justifies the requirements of getting the above mentioned infrastructures. It is worth noting, other alternatives including hiring/cooperating with Social Enterprises in providing halal food should be identified as 'satisfactory', attributed to the fact that they do make attempts in altering the situation.

Beyond the Infrastructure

Aside from the school facilities that create a harmonious learning environment, another key mission of educators is about nurturing and preparing learners for the labour market, regardless of the final decision. Given of the different cultural background and inevitably ideologies, schools may have to investigate the need of providing individual programmes; or to the minimum, in-depth consultations for all students.

Whole-person Development. The second criteria is also worth noting as quoted by the interviewees. It is clear that secondary students (i.e. Molly and Wendy) thought the GCSE is sufficient for participating in the labour market. Yet, those who are now currently university students (i.e. Paul and Jessica) recognized the limitations of GCSE. Beyond this system, both university students revealed the segregation policies at their own secondary schools. They received identical Chinese Language education as to their Chinese ethnic students at both kindergarten and primary schools. It is however the secondary schools they enrolled into failed to provide appropriate levels of Chinese Language classes that delayed their continuous learning on this language, which itself not accessible in families. Otherwise speaking, the institution is the primary venue for acquiring this language.

Language is never the sole factor in determining the whole-person development, or to say the “holistic development of a person’s actions and behavior in situations as compared to just acquisition of specific content knowledge” (Lim, Hung & Cheah 2009). Concurrently, the secondary interviewees and Jessica, who are studying in secondary schools with a high proportion of NCS students, reported the absence of any workshops that prepare them for the future, purporting the absence of any specialized programmes for NCS students. On the one side, this could be interpreted as a signal that all students should be treated equally. On the other side, however, raise the concerns of the not addressing the hidden agenda. For instance, as Paul and Lian suggested, gender stereotype is the unseen issue within families. Male students may perceive and identify the blue-collar work as demonstrations of masculinity; female students are educated and expected to be caring thus being encouraged to pursue professional jobs including social worker, nurse and teachers that are much well-paid. This resonates to previous studies that discovered the preference of working as blue collars for Pakistani men, whom are less educated than their female counterparts (Chee 2015).

Although students enjoy the autonomy in choosing their own career path, their choices may be structured by parents and norms. Institutions could and should at least present the diverse spectrum of jobs available in the market regardless of gender and ethnicity. Intervention work does not stop at the future career development, but should also cover the extra-curricular activities made available to students. In retrospect, EM families are no homogeneous, but varied based on their socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, events or activities should be affordable whilst taking students’ interests into account.

Concerning the prospects and futures of EM students, academic performances should be one of the focuses in the Negative List policy. Educational attainment remains as an influential factor in pursuing post-secondary education as well as the types of occupations.

Hong Kong Poverty Situation Report on Ethnic Minorities 2016 (2018) shows that Pakistanis (35.3%), Thais(35.7%), Nepalese (40.3%) and Indonesians (41.4%) are the four major groups to engage in elementary work, which is three to four times than the overall percentage among the group EM (including the White, Japanese and Koreans), and even seven times higher than the Indians. Further, comparing to other ethnic minority groups, these four groups halved the chance to pursue higher education in Hong Kong than the overall population with a more deteriorating situation when compared to the Indians (ibid).

Academic Performance. The readiness of schools should also be evaluated through the previous years of academic performance, which serves as reflection of teachers' and institutions' capacities in fostering the NCS students' learning.

With the DSE score serving as the benchmark in determining the eligibility of prospective university students, there is no doubt the academic performance matter. Paul recalled moments in which his friends or even other ethnic minority students failed to perform well in HKDSE. Situation aggravated when they were doing the HKDSE Chinese instead of the GCSE, attributing to the fact that "they are super nervous about the Chinese subject and devoted much of the revision time on this and neglecting the other subjects." He further added that for those who have lower competency in Chinese Language also show lower interests and performances on other subjects. Though many of Paul's friends got into associate or higher diploma programmes and managed to transfer back to universities, it is worth noting these do not reflect the whole picture of NCS students' experience.

Notwithstanding this, the quality of teaching is worth addressing,

"It is not that we aren't willing to learn. But then the teachers' spoken English proficiency is kinda poor so they cannot express nor explain stuff well. If we know Cantonese, then probably it is easier for us to learn from them." (Paul, first language: English)

In reality, many of the ethnic minorities are more capable in using English for communication, even when this is not their first language, as in the case of Jessica. In contrast to the situation of Chinese Language, over 80% of those poor ethnic minorities in general are confident in using English whilst over 95%, 97% and 100% of the younger generation possess the ability to read, write and speak respectively (Census and Statistics Department 2018).

All these discourses and statistics may imply with good and suitable intervention work from teachers and the schools, NCS students could have higher efficacy and ability to perform well.

The Significance of Social Networks.

Towards the end of this paper, there is one commonality that can be drawn from the two experiences. Stakeholders are used not to be connected together: students are learning in the classroom setting, OSL is accentuating on the direct services, HKPRI is researching on topics according to the field of interests and NCS families have limited channels or platforms to talk about their thoughts openly. It is yet interesting to note that this programme has joint all the four groups together and work on a solution in guarding against educational inequality.



Fig. 3 Positions and Roles of each party

Referring to the weak relationship theory, the transfer of knowledge will be made available only when individuals are from different backgrounds. In this case, few collaborations, or even interactions, happened before the launch of this programme. In reality, according to Ms. Siu, the programme director, is the first person from Lingnan University that started this programme with Think Tanks.

Learning of the Students

Whereas outcomes of each student group varies, at least students whom have strong desires on knowing about the mechanisms of how social policy is formulated and came into power, as reflected in the interview of PART. As for our (Education) team, not only do we learn about the processes involved, apply the knowledge we learnt from lesson (e.g. data collection and analyses skills), we are indeed honoured to have an increasing closer relationship with our supervisor from the HKPRI. Only with his generous support and guidance, I can devote myself to this policy-making continuously. In other words, the bonding is no longer a weak one, but becoming stronger that allows the actual implementation of the recommendation.

With students involved in this programme, the utilization of their personal networks in reaching out service targets (NCS students) and potentially other related members (e.g. the teacher), the assembled opinion helps the consolidation and clarification of the benchmarks needed in the negative list. For instance, the spoken English proficiency of teachers as well as the present of career guidance scheme are deemed necessary, which are not covered initially in the plan. Supervisor, on the other hand, identifies the possible objective measurements in making every single yardstick.

Informing the General Public

In the previous paragraphs, I have mentioned delivering a speech in the April symposium with the aid from OSL. Without OSL serving as the logistician, it is impossible for students to spread their ideas to the secondary school students whom are fellows of their NCS counterparts. Briefly speaking, I convey three key messages that our NCS interviewees would like others to be aware: respect their religion through establishing facilities/services that catered their needs, to try to engage them with Chinese Language, and be aware of how NCS is being portrayed. Most importantly, they all call for actions that self-respect by becoming role models themselves. By constructing and sustaining positive images of NCS, established by themselves, will they be more easily included into the society.

Likewise, individuals like students could be powerful agents in bringing people of different ethnic groups together. While this entirely relies on the activeness and willingness of individuals, characteristics of service-learning “continuity” and “interaction”. Not only do these are practised individually, they have interwoven and came into power by extending the influence to other subjects outside the programme.

Hence, PART is an inspiring programme that satisfies the need from individuals without sacrificing the principles of Service-Learning. In addition, the results of the education team purports the pivotal positions of OSL and Think Tank in bringing social changes when ties are established between one and each other. Students thus highly recommend higher institutions and independent organizations to collaborate in investigating other way-out of Service-Learning.

5. Conclusions

This article covers both the PART and presenter’s own research project, ranging from the rationales to the results. Through the invaluable experience, it aims to reflect the potentials within the cooperation between parties, even not being professionals. Seeing the changes individuals can bring to reality, similar programmes should also be considered by other higher education institutions.

Keywords: Non-Native Speakers of Chinese, Ethnic Minorities, Social Policy, Policy Research

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