

## **Chances, Considerations and Choices: School Choice of Ethnic Minority Families in Hong Kong**

This project focuses on the school choice decision-making needs of ethnic minority families. It aims to elucidate how their social and cultural circumstances shape the possible patterns of school choice practices for students through multifarious relations across home, school and society. This issue has not previously been studied in greater depth in Hong Kong's school system. Parents who are new to an education system because of resettlement and migration can face dilemmas in choosing the "best" schools for their children. In Hong Kong, a report by the equality watchdog has revealed how ethnic minority parents, particularly those who work in low-income sectors, are prone to making decisions "without much knowledge" of the school support and examination systems (Equal Opportunities Commission, 2019). As documented elsewhere (Crul, 2018), the detrimental impact of uninformed school choices includes impediments in further education and delay in employment. Thus, the challenge for schools and for families new to Hong Kong is to foster greater mutual awareness of cultural expectations and educational needs. Yet, the experiences of ethnic minority students often reveal language, social and cultural barriers as they navigate the local education system. The empirical evidence of how these processes impact their school choices is limited. To address this gap, we will investigate how considerations, access to school information, ethnic minority parents' relationships with schools and their children, relate to parental secondary school choice decision processes. Using a mixed method design and adapting a training program applied in a prior study (Phillips et al., 2021), we will: 1) establish a secondary school choice profile of ethnic minority students through a demographic survey; 2) uncover how they (may not) mobilize cultural knowledge and awareness of Hong Kong's education system as they make schooling decisions and why they make particular school choices; 3) feed the findings back to parents through strength-based parent-teacher workshops to promote mutual understanding of support structures and family culture leverageable by ethnic minority parents and schools. This study's multidimensional analyses offer an essential knowledge base to inform the reciprocal investments of ethnic minority families and schools in Hong Kong's future. This work is timely, given the continuous pressures on ethnic minority families who gradually populate the pre-tertiary education sector to adapt to Hong Kong's education system, and professional expectations on schools to cater to all students equitably.