

Book Review

MULTICULTURALISM, EDUCATIONAL INCLUSION, AND CONNECTEDNESS

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Celeste Y. M. Yuen. *Multiculturalism, Educational Inclusion, and Connectedness: Well-being, Ethnicity, and Identity Among Chinese, South, and Southeast Asian Students*. New York: Routledge, 2022. 226 pp. ISBN: 9781138343160.

Abstract: This book by Celeste Y. M. Yuen gives the readers a deep understanding of the well-being and welfare of Chinese and South/Southeast Asian students in Hong Kong. The focus and attention are given to spiritual well-being and how religious integration and association make a difference in giving some meaning to life and generating a positive mindset, experienced and narrated by the students. This well-knit volume commences by arranging major themes concerning the United Nations Convention on the Right of the Child, followed by a beautifully explained theoretical chapter, which outlines the main concepts and their interrelations. Right after this, some very interesting chapters are dedicated to the narratives of various groupings of students of less privileged backgrounds belonging to Chinese Mainland immigrants, Chinese Cross-boundary youth, South/Southeast Asian ethnic youth, and mainstream Hong Kong youth, whose voices are heard and construed as regards to themes of well-being and inclusion. The book then expands on the first-hand accounts of the students to provide bottom-up solutions and strategies leading to well-being and social inclusion.

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This volume, which is specifically about Hong Kong's schooling system, offers a singular illustration of the investigation of various facets of well-being, from spiritual to psychological to academic aspects, in a metropolitan whose multiculturalism is deeply embedded in its history as a region of China that evolved a distinct identity under British colonial rule for 152 years and has drawn a sizeable immigrant population from South Asia. The book is based on the results of three significant research studies that were conducted between 2013 and 2022 and gave special attention to listening to the voices of young people who were largely ignored and stifled in a schooling system that tended to be somewhat regimented and focused on the basic needs of the majority of Hong Kong's citizenry while not taking into consideration the various challenges faced by immigrants.

There are four distinct groups of students in Hong Kong: local students who grew up speaking Cantonese; students who immigrated to Hong Kong from Mainland China and spoke Putonghua (Mandarin); students whose families have settled on both sides of the border; and students whose parents had immigrated to Hong Kong from India, Pakistan, and other South Asian countries, for whom mastering Mandarin is a particular challenge.

These studies support the contribution of religious faith and spiritual health to people's overall well-being. These studies' academic metrics cover efforts to examine attitudes, involvement, academic results, and school connection. According to certain research findings, underprivileged and immigrant pupils are more likely to be religiously involved in their academic performance. Additionally, the frequency of students' prayers was agreeably correlated with their opinions on religion and spirituality. The frequency of religious activity had similar findings. Their ethnicity, religious beliefs, and spirituality significantly predicted their participation in religious activities. However, the educational level, the extent of education of the parents, and the amount of family

wealth did not significantly affect the frequency of prayers and religious activity. Moreover, some students may identify as Muslims. For example, some may choose religious involvement, while others may favour active interactions. The assortment of Chinese immigrant clans, organizations, and support groups have also given rise to various affiliations both within and outside their clan members and organizations.

The major objectives of Chapter 1 titled "Equity, Access, and Obstacles in Education across the Globe," were to describe the current state of educational policy and the challenges that Hong Kong's most disadvantaged youth face. The discussion raises questions about claims that Hong Kong offers "equality of opportunity" that fosters social advancements and engagement for these youngsters and confirms a close relationship between educational inequality and socially unfavourable conditions. The demographic background of these student groupings is explained in greater detail in the following chapters.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the multicultural student groups in mainstream schooling and their associated wellness and engagement issues. Chapters Three and Four emphasize the various theoretical groundings of spiritual health and life satisfaction and the assessment of students on their spiritual wellness. Chapter 5 debates youth civic engagement from a teacher's perspective. Chapters 6–10 probe deeper into the lived experiences of each of the student groups with an individualized focus. Chapter 6 examines the educational inclusion and self-identity of Chinese Immigrant Students (CIS), and Chapter 7 looks into the sense of belongingness and connectedness of Chinese Cross Boundary Students (CBS). Chapter 8 evaluates the educational assimilation of NCS South and Southeast Asian students. Chapter 9 talks about the aspirations of Hong Kong Mainstream Students (HKMS) for Post-Secondary Education PSE. And Chapter 10 inspects the wellness of Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) students. Chapter 11 outlines the crucial wellness and engagement issues and discusses implications for the senior secondary education curriculum. Chapter 12 talks about various issues regarding youth wellness and engagement

with specific reference to teacher preparation and research by spotlighting the role of intercultural accomplishments. Chapter 13 concludes the book by giving significance to the changing society and perspectives on youth development.

Yuen asserts that future opportunities can only be unlocked via education. Standard education is valued as a means of achieving high status in society, and it is stressed that effort and devotion are necessary for kids to succeed in school. The leading acculturation setting for immigrant and minority pupils to learn the values, terminology, and skills necessary for upward mobility is in school. We have discussed the intersections between students' educational experiences, life goals, and religious or metaphysical experiences.

The writer also firmly believes that to help students develop their nationalism, teachers must consider the distinctions between local and non-local student groups, particularly when such groups experience ongoing marginalization or prejudice from the host culture. On the other hand, minority students should appreciate the inherent cultural characteristics of their nation and learn to embrace their minority identity.

Positive cultural qualities from their native countries are reflected in the CIS students' assiduity and tolerance and the Non-Chinese Students (NCS) students' optimism and connectedness. At the same time, they must uphold the ideals of independence, accountability, and freedom as Hong Kong residents. As a result, they become Hong Kong citizens while acknowledging and embracing their cultural origins. Socially, CBS views itself as an outsider and feels estranged from society due to not having enough real-life exposure to Hong Kong society and engagement in public issues.

This book reiterates that the experience of crossing borders helped to create their unique personality, which amalgamates Chinese and Hong Kong features. As a result, CBS adopt a more affluent cultural identity than their fellow Chinese immigrants. Therefore, CBS has decided what its future objectives will be. They have chosen based on the two societies' various cultural norms. They must learn more about the city, improve their standards of judgment, and practice self-negotiation when faced with

unanticipated cultural clashes as they build their vision for a better future.

As for understanding the Non-Chinese students' (especially students with Southeast Asian backgrounds) assimilation into Hong Kong's educational institutions, the writer conducted scores of interviews. Data show that ethnic minorities who experience cultural conflicts, especially those brought on by their religion and socially elevated cultural ideals, find it challenging to develop their sense of self. However, it is the responsibility of every society to enable students of various racial backgrounds, nations, and talents to contribute positively to their communities. An inclusive society should deliberately design an inclusive educational system. An appropriate mechanism of quality assurance procedures will aid in promoting equal educational environments for the greater good of the whole society.

Moreover, one of the biggest problems facing the younger generation in Hong Kong is poverty. Young people nowadays may become trapped in an endless cycle of poverty that fully reflects the entrenched social strata in Hong Kong. Underprivileged youth frequently have a higher likelihood of dropping out of school early and don't have access to the educational resources they need to keep up with the networks, information, and skills they'll need as society changes. Additionally, their circumstances make it difficult for them to find high-quality jobs in a labor market that has arguably grown more demanding regarding academic credentials over time. Strong measures for educational equality and participation should be prioritized in an equitable society to promote the internal health and positive involvement of young people in Hong Kong in light of the shifting student demographic environment.

Transcendental well-being (TWB) can increase in a religious cultivation setting, which positively impacts the other domains. Adolescents' religious identities and the religious heritage of their schools are related to their spiritual well-being. Similar to this, Malaysian undergraduates' high levels of spirituality and life happiness were connected to their religious upbringings and the milieu at their universities. The group disparity in spiritual

development between religious NCS students and non-religious CIS students in Hong Kong suggests that the growth of a community with similar and steadfast religious beliefs and values between many minorities in schools is advantageous to the general spiritual health and life satisfaction. It is believed that a multidimensional religious domain measure will more accurately predict spiritual and religious well-being than a generic form. According to psychologists, there are three ways to participate in religion: intrinsically, by participating in religious activities; extrinsically, by embracing a belief system; and extrinsically, by searching for connections to the supernatural. Researching the link between the transcendent and other research study areas. This sometimes involves examining the significance and depth of religious beliefs as well as participation in religious activities. When considering spirituality, some research centered on religious fidelity, while others emphasized rituals and involvement. According to some eminent educationalists, multiple-dimensional measures of religious belief and participation in religious activities are more predictive of overall happiness than any random measures.

An inclusive, multicultural, and egalitarian society for microcultural Chinese and culturally diverse NCS student organizations within the ambit of Chinese national macroculture is more important than ever for both present and future instructors. For the duration of formal education, schools should at the very least work to maximize educational possibilities for both rich and impoverished students of immigration backgrounds. All privileged, as well as marginalized students, should have full liberty to exercise their religious beliefs without any fear of retribution. This insightful book will attract educationists and students involved in inclusive education regarding mainstream and marginalized Chinese, South Asian, and other students of ethnic minorities. This book will be a great addition to any premiere library around the world.

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