

Geopolitical Rivalries and its Impact on Ethnic Minorities in Higher Education in Hong Kong: Access and Representation

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary research recognizes higher education as vital to national competitiveness, reflecting social change and political interactions. Therefore, higher education acts as reflection of social change of one state entity and its political interaction with another. In Hong Kong, geopolitical rivalries between China and Western nations have intensified since the 2019 protests. The erosion of autonomy and subsequent sanctions have catalyzed the implementation of the National Security Law, increasing scrutiny within academia and impacting ethnic minorities' access to higher education (HE). This study employs qualitative meta-synthesis to explore the challenges faced by ethnic minorities in Hong Kong's HE system, focusing on: a) monocultural curriculum frameworks; b) academic freedom and self-censorship; and c) cultural segregation. Findings indicate that geopolitical tensions are driving a shift towards a China-centric HE system, prioritizing Chinese knowledge production and further marginalizing ethnic minority students. The increasing focus on Chinese histories and ideologies fosters cultural alienation, limiting opportunities for these students to express their voices and identities. Additionally, the National Security Law exacerbates barriers for ethnic minorities in asserting their knowledge connectivity, hindering their ability to maintain cultural identity and epistemic presence within HE discourses. Longitudinally, persistent knowledge exclusion may widen inequalities in access to HE for ethnic minorities, perpetuating cycles of poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage within Hong Kong's social fabric. Furthermore, the neglect of multicultural education risks diminishing the cultural diversity essential for social cohesion and knowledge innovation in higher education.

Keywords: Curriculum Research and Development; Education Decolonization; Education Practice Trends and Issues; Education Research and Globalization; Higher Education