

The Politics of Preferential Policy in an Ethnically Diverse School

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ABSTRACT

China, a country with a significant number of ethnic groups, has established a form of multiculturalism known as "preferential policy" to foster social cohesion between a dominant ethnic group and minority ethnic groups and to reduce social and economic disparities. In addition, preferential policies have been integrated into educational policy and practice. This led to the development of a school curriculum based on ethnicity. Through the lens of critical pedagogy, this paper examines the Dai language curriculum implemented in an ethnically and linguistically diverse school located in Yunnan. The data was collected through conducting in-depth interviews with the school's principal, teachers, and students and observing teaching sessions without participation. An examination found that ethnic Dai pupils were taught language, history, cultures, and Dai values by a Dai school teacher who is the school principal. This has enormous ramifications for Dai students' identity preservation. Yet, when the multicultural curriculum focuses exclusively on the Dai ethnic group despite the presence of other ethnic groups in the school, it contradicts the tenets of multiculturalism and perpetuates educational disparity based on ethnic identity.

Keywords: Multicultural Education; Critical Pedagogy; Education Equity; China